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EU Pre-accession Process of Turkey – Determinants and Prospects

Abstract: This article concerns the current pre-accession process of Turkey and the question of its prospects. In order to answer this question the author conducts an in-depth analysis of factors that can influence the process on three main levels: EU (i.e. general political and economic situation, EU enlargement policy, EU institutions), member states and Turkey. He wants to verify the hypothesis that although the situation in this candidate country is crucial for the future of Turkey-EU relations, the decisive factors are in the EU and member states. The pre-accession process of Turkey will be continued but its pace and course will depend to a large extent on the position of the main Union's powers, the clear vision of the EU as well as the economic/political situation and public feelings in Europe.

Key words: European Union, member state, Turkey, enlargement

In recent few years the accession negotiations with Turkey have almost come to a halt, which is due to the freeze placed by the EU on eight negotiation chapters at the end of 2006 (combined with the inability to close any chapter), with other areas put on hold by EU member states, such as France and Cyprus. The stalemate in the membership talks was particularly true with reference to the second half of 2012 during the Cyprus Presidency of the Council of the EU. Between 2005 and the first half of 2013 only 13 negotiation chapters were provisionally opened (the thirteenth chapter was opened during the Spanish Presidency of the EU Council in the first half of 2010) and only one chapter was closed. For a long time there had been a practical prospect for opening only three further negotiation areas – public procurement, competition policy as well as social policy and employment – all very difficult chapters (Szymański, 2012a, p. 11–16).

In 2013 the chance appeared to open another chapter concerning the regional policy – due to a more positive attitude towards Turkey of the new French president Françoise Hollande. The opening took place in November 2013 (Rettman, 2013). Right afterwards the talks about the liberalization of the visa regime reinvigorated. On 16 December 2013 the readmission agreement between Turkey and the EU was signed (European Commission, 2013). However, even the agreement on the visa issue did not change much the overall situation.

There are voices that because of this situation Turkey-EU relations are not worth analyzing any more. However, some researchers and analysts still acknowledge that the Turkish case has not been lost yet. The author of this article shares the latter point of view. He would like to contribute to the debate about the future of pre-accession process of Turkey within the broader context of the EU enlargement.

The author claims that giving some prospects for Turkey-EU relations requires first to answer the question of what factors influence the current situation. The article will present an analysis of the network of determinants of Turkey-EU relations. This involves both favorable and unfavorable factors existing at three levels – Turkey, the European Union and member states. The forecast in the later part will concern, in the first place, the short and medium-term perspective (the next two or three years). It would be very difficult to provide a credible, detailed long-term forecast due to high dynamics at the level of the main actors of the process – the European Union and Turkey. It will be possible only to outline long-term trends in very general terms. Since the prediction is based on the network of current determinants at three levels, the key method will be the so called extrapolation, used previously by the author in the working paper within a project concerning the whole EU enlargement process (Szymański, 2012b).

Several hypotheses are intended to be verified in this article. In spite of the situation in Turkey, equally crucial (if not more important) factors affecting the current very slow pace of pre-accession process are related to the Union and its member states. It is those factors that will largely determine the future of Turkey-EU relations, while the role of the candidate's activities will remain very important, influencing the actions of the EU institutions and member states. All of them will contribute to the continuation of the pre-accession process of Turkey, yet still at a slow pace and with an increasing uncertainty about the outcome.

The analysis includes in-depth interviews conducted in Brussels and Ankara in 2011–2013 period with representatives of the General Secretariat of the EU Council, Cabinet of the Commissioner for Enlargement and European Neighborhood Policy Štefan Füle, European Commission's Directorate-General for Enlargement and the European Union Delegation to Ankara, the Committee on Foreign Affairs of the European Parliament (EP), as well as Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Ministry of EU Affairs in Turkey.

Determinants

Turkey

The level of the candidate state is a key factor affecting the pre-accession process of each state. A very important issue is the character of a candidate with reference to objective factors. The pre-accession process is easier for states which are not large in terms of area and population, hence they do not generate high costs to the EU, have a "secure" geopolitical location, and which are culturally close to the EU mainstream. Therefore, Turkey's bid for membership is especially difficult and complicated, as it is a Muslim country (97 percent of the population) with a large area and population (more than 779,000 km² and more than 76 million people), situated in an unstable neighborhood.

An equally important prerequisite for the progress in the pre-accession process is the meeting of criteria for EU membership by Turkey. The current EU enlargement process differs from the 2004/2007 enlargements in that the requirements for candidates are greater and they are more strictly enforced. This is a consequence of the modification of the enlargement strategy by strengthening the conditionality mechanism (European

Commission, 2006). On the one hand, more stringent requirements are related to the situation in the EU itself, which expands the *acquis communautaire* in areas which are increasingly falling within the remit of the Union, e.g. the current Area of Freedom, Security and Justice. On the other hand, however, this arises from the experience of the “big bang” round and the EU enlargement to Bulgaria and Romania, which joined the Union without being fully prepared for membership. This is why the Commission is paying greater attention to the issues of justice and the rule of law, administration as well as the problems of corruption and organized crime (Phinnemore, 2009, p. 240–252).

These are the issues that pose problems in Turkey. Despite an enormous progress since 2001, it has been wrestling with many problems in meeting even the political Copenhagen criteria, not to mention economic issues or alignment of national legislation with EU law. This involves both internal issues, analyzed in tens of articles – failure to observe the principles of democracy and human rights, and external ones – primarily the pending issues that Turkey has in relations with its neighbors, including EU members – Greece and Cyprus. The external relations have actually an ambiguous impact on the pre-accession process of Turkey. For instance, the dynamic development of Turkey’s relations with the Middle East may be the candidate’s strength in membership negotiations – representing an added value to the EU Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP), whereas, on the other hand, it strengthens the position of the Turkish state as a regional power, which is increasingly able to satisfy its international ambitions while eventually remaining outside the EU. There are also specific issues – the Kurdish and Cypriot problems.

Reforms necessary to fulfill the accession criteria are hindered by a multitude of adverse determinants on the part of Turkey. They are problems concerning the political elites. The situation is changing when it comes to the army’s excessive influence on the political system of this state. However, the attitude of governing elites to the liberal democracy fall short of the EU standards. There is a question of a peculiar understanding of democracy or disbelief in some of its principles. This concerns, *inter alia*, the absolutization of the majority rule and reluctance to accept full rights of different minorities in Turkey, including the electorate who does not vote for the governing party. This is aggravated by ideological issues, connected with strong nationalism (as one of principles of Kemalism), in recent years also with conservatism placing in practice sometimes too much emphasis on the role of community at the expense of the rights of individual citizens, which adversely affect the relations with the EU (Szymański, 2008, p. 270–289; Yavuz, 2009, p. 79–117). They complicate not only the implementation of democratic reforms but also the resolution of external problems of a historical nature – e.g. World War I (the Armenian massacre problem).

The attitude of the Turkish society to the pre-accession process is an unfavorable determinant as well. The Commission’s representatives note a skeptical or critical attitude to EU accession among citizens of Turkey. This has been influenced in the recent years by the EU’s economic condition. However, the above-mentioned emotional issues related to history and nationalist sentiments as well as different religion are of key significance. The Turkish citizens pay great attention to the national sovereignty, which they can lose after the accession and notice the problem of a diminishing role of religion in Europe and unfriendly attitude towards Muslims, reflected e.g. in publishing of Mohammad’s carica-

tures a few years ago. The negative attitude of the general public in the candidate states may nowadays adversely affect the pre-accession process. This concerns mainly the situation where a membership referendum is provided for in the state's legislation. For instance, the MetroPOLL survey from January 2013 showed that 43 percent of the respondents would vote "yes" in a possible accession referendum in Turkey (in comparison to 69 percent in September 2008) and 40.7 percent of society would vote against accession (Sencar, 2013). The Transatlantic Trends survey from the same year shows that 44 percent of Turks see the EU membership as a "good thing" while 34 percent of the society share the opposite opinion (13 percent of respondents think that it is "neither good nor bad") (German Marshall Fund, 2013).

It is also worth noting that the consensus of the main political forces is a very important prerequisite for the operation of the mechanism of conditionality on which reforms in candidate states are based. However, the consensus is lacking in Turkey. In this country skepticism about EU accession is voiced first of all by the Nationalist Movement Party (MHP, *Milliyetçi Hareket Partisi*) – the third political force in this state, not to mention many marginal parties. It is obviously advantageous that ruling groups are most supportive of the European aspirations (although critical of the EU and some member states), but consent from the leading opposition parties is equally important.

European Union

In considering the network of determinants at the European Union level, attention should be drawn to the significance of both the general situation in the Union and the EU enlargement strategy, the related mechanisms and procedures as well as institutional aspects.

The very fact of entry into force of the Treaty of Lisbon is conducive to the continuation of the entire EU enlargement, which will be slightly easier to carry out after the institutional reform related to the Treaty. However, in 2008, a very serious unfavorable factor emerged, i.e. the economic crisis. As the EU is focusing on economic problems, the enlargement agenda has receded slightly into the background. What is more, the Union's and the member states' attitude to the current new entrants has changed. More and more often, the question is raised why "other Greeces" should be allowed to join the Union. It also concerns Turkey although this country is in a relative good economic situation. On the other hand, the economic crisis intensifies candidate countries' aversion to EU accession. Increasingly often, Turks wonder if accession to the EU, which is in poor economic condition, therefore losing its attractiveness, is beneficial to the Turkish interests. Although the economic situation in Turkey at the turn of 2013 and 2014 deteriorated, it has still quite a good position. But the economic crisis is just one of the factors having an ambivalent impact on the pre-accession process of candidate countries. It can be referred to as a favorable determining factor in the case of Turkey because it allows both parties time for the resolution of key dilemmas. Moreover, as it also happened in 2005 on account of the institutional crisis, in times of crisis the EU does not want to put itself even in a worse situation by decreasing the effectiveness of one of the most successful policies, i.e. the enlargement policy. It was reflected e.g. in a more familiar language (concerning Turkey's EU bid) of the German Chancellor Angela Merkel during the visit of the Turkish Prime

Minister Recep Tayyip Erdoğan in Germany at the end of October 2012 (although the harsher CDU rhetoric came back again during the German election campaign in 2013) (İdiz, 2012).

The current EU enlargement process is hindered in case of Turkey by lack of a clear vision of the future Union. There is no answer to questions such as whether the EU is to look inwards or become a global actor in the international arena, or whether European identity is to be based on a mono or multi-cultural model, and whether it is to be close to a federation or to a political system model with a prevalence of the intergovernmental element. In the absence of answers to those questions it is not possible to take determined steps with regard to Turkey's bid.

The list of disadvantages is extended by the EU's attitude to the enlargement process itself, i.e. "enlargement fatigue" that led to the modification of the EU enlargement strategy. It is now more cautious about the issue of admitting new states to the EU. It is conducive to the present process that the geostrategic significance of enlargement (enlargement as stabilization of admitted candidates) and the rule that commitments already made to candidates have to be met, i.e. *pacta sunt servanda*, remain at the heart of the strategy. However, there is no denying that the modification of the EU enlargement strategy also means clear deceleration of the entire process and an increased uncertainty about the future of the different candidates, first of all Turkey. Two principles are of key importance. One is about giving priority to the Union's absorption, or integration capacity, i.e. the principle that decision-making on its further enlargement should take into account mainly the EU's capability to admit new members. It gained even more importance during the economic crisis in the EU. This principle may slow down the pre-accession process of Turkey because of activities of states reluctant to see this country's membership, invoking the Union's integration capacity to block the candidate. Besides, by highlighting it, enthusiasm for reforms is weakened in Turkey. This is because there is a criterion beyond the control of this state and it cannot be ruled out that while meeting all criteria on its part, it may still remain outside the EU, because the Union itself will be unable to admit the Turkish candidate for a certain reason. This can fill Turkey's cup of bitterness to the brim (Tocci, 2007, p. 30).

The other principle, highlighted especially in negotiating frameworks, is that positive completion of the pre-accession process and membership negotiations is not prejudged (open-ended process). The principle, very often underlined by the European politicians with reference to Turkey, is disadvantageous for this state in that it makes the country's EU membership perspective unclear. It leads to a lack of a strong drive for reform (Uğur, 2010, p. 985).

While a generalization in the case of EU institutions is hard to come by, the conclusion can be ventured that the institution most favorably inclined towards the Turkish candidacy is the Commission, whereas the EP is slightly less supportive (being divided on the Turkish case), with the EU Council (and the European Council) being least enthusiastic about the issue.

The Commission supports Turkey in its reforms and defends it from member states' accusations, calling on the latter to deliver on their commitments in line with the *pacta sunt servanda* principle. On the other hand, it is also a strict judge of Turkey's actions and does not hesitate to express its negative opinions about the Turkish deficits. This is advan-

tageous for the candidate in the long run but in the short run it may prove a disadvantage, e.g. by aggravating frustration among the public. The office of the EU Commissioner for Enlargement and Neighborhood Policy, including his/her personality, is of major importance as well. From this point of view, the fact that the function was taken over in 2009 from Olli Rehn by Füle, a Czech who has a different view of the process than his Finnish colleague, is a favorable development for Turkey. Füle has emphasized since the beginning, i.e. since the time of hearing in the EP as a candidate for the Commissioner that he sees this country in the EU in the future (İçener, Phinnemore, Papadimitriou, 2010, p. 213–14). Because of this, it is also important for Turkey who will be the new Commissioner for Enlargement and Neighborhood Policy in the new cabinet after 2014 European Parliament elections.

Different political arguments clash in the European Parliament, therefore its position is an outcome of different points of view. In the area of enlargement, this means that the EP currently takes into account the need for a more cautious approach to the future of the whole process of enlargement. It can also be critical towards membership candidates. Criticism is most clearly visible in the case of Turkey, whose EU membership is not welcome by the largest faction in the EP – the European People’s Party (EPP). The EP’s position is an important determinant of the future of Turkey-EU relations as the institution is strengthening its formal and informal, political influence (pressure on member states) on the enlargement process. The results of 2014 European Parliament elections are not favorable for Turkey. The EPP won again and the number of deputies from the far-right parties – the opponents of the Turkish accession – has increased (European Parliament, 2014). This means that in coming years debates on Turkey will be even more heated than before and the overtone of documents concerning this candidate can be a little more critical, depending also on the current events in Turkey. What can be particularly harmful for the pre-accession process of this state is a further development of the parallel discussions about the European identity on the EP and national level. It is very probable, taking into consideration the increasing role of the (far)right-oriented parties.

The Council of the European Union has a key role in the decision process with regard to the EU enlargement policy – owing to its intergovernmental character and the requirement of unanimity not only in taking the final admission decision, but also in giving consent for a candidate to move to the next stage in the pre-accession process (e.g. opening and closure of negotiation chapters). What is more, the Treaty of Lisbon strengthened the importance of the European Council, which now has the capability to agree qualification criteria. Hence the position of those institutions on the EU membership of Turkey is extremely important. What is found to be an unfavorable determinant in this context is the division between the EU states.

Member States

A disadvantage affecting the current enlargement process is the difference of interests between the member states around the Turkish accession. On the one hand, there are states that support the “open door” principle and the Turkish candidacy (e.g. the United Kingdom, Sweden or Poland), but on the other hand there are EU members that consider the deepening of the Union a priority and demand that limits of the structure must be set

(e.g. France, Austria or the Netherlands). This makes it difficult to decide on the Turkey's future in a situation where unanimity of the member states is required in the area.

The growing skepticism among some of the governments of EU member states about the continuation of the EU enlargement process, particularly in reference to Turkey, arises from a phenomenon that Christophe Hillion calls “creeping nationalization” of EU enlargement (Hillion, 2010). Governments of at least some of the EU member states no longer treat this policy predominantly in terms of efforts towards stabilization of candidates that undergo transformation into member states. The EU countries address their own needs in the first place and are focused more on the consequences of enlargement for themselves. The “nationalization” leads to further politicization of the enlargement process that concerns specifically the Turkish bid for membership. According for instance to the governments of Austria and France, not all states with European aspirations can join the EU (read Turkey). It is necessary to set its limits, and the EU neighbors that would stay outside them should be offered the tightening of relations with the EU through the implementation of concepts alternative to membership. The concepts presented – usually first by academics and only then by politicians from member states – include “privileged partnership”, “extended associated membership” (called also the European Economic Area Plus or Norwegian model) or “gradual membership” (Szymański, 2007, p. 55–72).

The prospect of parliamentary or presidential elections and the appointment of a new government or president, i.e. the short and long-term aspect, is an important determinant of the pre-accession process on the member states' side. The prospect of elections in a member state where the public is reluctant to accept Turkey as the EU member makes the ruling parties toughen their position *vis-à-vis* this state and potentially contribute to slowing down the pre-accession process through their election-driven activities (e.g. no consent to open a new negotiation chapter). It is equally important for Turkey who will be in power after elections – especially in states such as France and Germany. In 1999, power was held in those states by politicians in favor of Turkish accession (or not strongly against it). A different position was taken by successive governments. This is why Turkey was concerned about the result of the presidential elections in France in 2012 and the Bundestag elections in Germany in 2013. The composition of the government may hence be an advantage or disadvantage to the pre-accession process of a candidate country. The very fact of waiting for a change of government in a given state is an additional disadvantage, as it is sometimes perceived by the Turkish politicians as somewhat humiliating.

The negative attitude of the general public in many EU states is an unfavorable determinant of the pre-accession process of Turkey. It does matter that the French and German citizens are at the end of the list with reference to the question if the EU membership of Turkey is “a good thing”. For instance, in Transatlantic Trends survey from 2013 46 percent of Frenchmen and 38 percent of Germans shared the opinion that the Turkish accession is “a bad thing.” (General Marshall Fund, 2013) What makes the situation worse is that in many EU countries populist and extreme right groups, e.g. the Freedom Party of Austria (FPÖ, *Freiheitliche Partei Österreichs*) or the National Front (FN, *Front National*), but also more moderate right-wing politicians use the issue of Turkey as the Muslim country for their own purposes. Showing the problems of Muslim immigrant integration, they are trying to prove that the same would happen after the Turkish accession,

but on a larger scale. It is particularly worrying for Turkey in the situation when the support for this kind of parties and their rhetoric is constantly growing.

The state of affairs outlined above poses a major challenge to the European aspirations of Turkey. Firstly, governments of the EU states, including the most powerful ones – Germany and France, take into account public opinion, having regard to the next elections. Thus, the societies of those states influence decisions on the admission of Turkey to the Union. Secondly, further enlargements, including the Turkish accession, will be decided on by EU citizens to a greater extent than has been the case so far, in line with the focus placed in the enlargement strategy on the communication principle. At the institutional level, this may be reflected by the obligation for a prospective accession treaty to be accepted through the institution of referendum (see France or Austria).

The problems of Turkey as well as the Union and member states have then an impact on the stalemate in the Turkish pre-accession process connected with the current shape of a more cautious enlargement policy of the EU. However, the process has been continued – among others due to certain (though not sufficient) reforms in Turkey, institutions able to affect the decision-making process, which are in favor of the Turkey's membership bid (although Turkey has lost some "friends", first of all in the EP, due to the government anti-democratic actions starting from the Gezi Park protests in May–June 2013) (Kongar, Küçükkaya, 2013) as well as basic rules of the EU enlargement policy, indispensable to maintain the effectiveness and credibility of the Union.

Nevertheless, the pre-accession process of Turkey is characterized in recent years by a particularly strong development of unfavorable determinants on the part of the EU and the member states whose part skeptical about the Turkish accession uses also the democratization problems of Turkey in 2013–2014 period to slow down the process. This is not changed by the fact that it is often difficult to assign a factor to a group of elements favorable or unfavorable to the progress on the Turkish way to the EU.

Forecast

The crucial questions are then what can be said about the pre-accession process of Turkey in the future and what will decide about its course and pace.

Decisive Factors

The course and pace at which the EU pre-accession process of Turkey will progress will depend on some particular factors from "the list" presented in the previous part. The solution of the individual problems of Turkey will be crucial for its EU bid. The complicated character of those challenges – particularly the problems connected with the authoritarian tendencies – will slow down the pre-accession process or even put its positive outcome at risk. Resolving the Kurdish issue would enable the democratization of the state to be accelerated through the creation of a pluralistic society. However, owing to its multidimensionality (political, economic and security as well as Turkish, regional and European dimensions), it cannot be resolved in a short time. This was reflected in 2013–2014 when the "peace process", though promising at the beginning, lost its dynam-

ics later, and became complicated due to the events in Syria and later also in Iraq. The Cyprus issue is similar which is not a good situation taking into account that the issue translates directly into a stalemate in the accession negotiations. The talks between the leaders of two communities have been to no avail so far. Although both Turkey and Greece seemed to be more involved in them (indirectly) in 2013 and at the beginning of 2014 the Cypriot leaders accepted the Joint Declaration as the foundation for the resumption of frozen negotiations, the path of lasting division and the functioning of two states is still conceivable, which may complicate Turkey's pre-accession process even more (European Commission, 2014).

However, some determinants in the EU and the member states may be equally important, if in some cases not decisive. Relations between a few factors on the part of the EU and its members will be decisive. The resolution of problems by Turkey will be an asset appreciated by the Commission or the EP and used in the political debate by supporters of EU membership of Turkey. However, it will not yield positive results within a timeframe expected by those countries if this is not accompanied by some kind of consensus on Turkey and the associated favorable vision of the Union, developed through negotiations between the member states, which will, in turn, take further important determinants into account in decision-making – the attitude of their societies to the process and the economic as well as political situation in the EU determining that attitude.

The next few years are expected to see an increase in importance of the political factor in the EU enlargement policy generally. The greater role is played by the political factor with regard to the technical character of the pre-accession process, the more weight will be attached to the position of several key EU member states, i.e. the United Kingdom, France and Germany, which have the greatest influence on decision-making in the Union. Opposition from any of the three states will considerably complicate accession prospects of Turkey.

The United Kingdom will still support the “open door” policy in the Union, but it will favor the present enlargement strategy, i.e. a slow process – mainly because it is not willing to bear excessive costs involved in the accession of new states. The current UK government must also take into account the growing group of Eurosceptics among Conservatives, who bring pressure to bear on the government to focus its activity on domestic matters and the growing significance of the UK Independence Party (UKIP) of Nigel Farage. This last factor can radicalize the position of the Conservative Party, with negative consequences with reference to the EU membership of Turkey. The activity of Cameron's government and the next one established after 2015 elections – assuming that the UKIP will be not a part of the new government – may be noticed, however, with regard to the Turkish membership bid, which the UK considers to be of strategic significance to the EU and its external relations. What the United Kingdom has regard to is the support provided to Turkish aspirations by the United States. This activity, going beyond gestures, will depend, however, on the attitude of France and Germany to Turkey and on the perception of EU's future.

The situation in the next few years may be conducive to improving their position on the EU membership of Turkey. In the post-election reality the French position was modified to some extent. Hollande does not strike a harsh note when addressing Turkey and does not resort to anti-immigration rhetoric in the context of its aspirations. After 2014

France may also lift its veto on more than one negotiation chapters as part of its policy of small steps aimed to improve French-Turkish relations (it began to be effective already in 2013) (Pierini, 2012, p. 75–76). The French position would be of special significance to the Turkish bid if rapprochement were established with the United Kingdom over the expansion of the CFSP and the Common Security and Defense Policy. This is not impossible in the medium term, given the French announcements and the specific features of European policy pursued by the UK, which, while playing the “brakeman” role in one EU policy area (currently, the monetary as well as fiscal union), become active in another. In such a case, both states would become an important part of the coalition supporting the Turkish bid for accession, having also regard to the situation in the Middle East – the region where Turkey may provide an especially valuable support to EU efforts. Of course, everything will depend on the situation concerning the UK membership in the EU in a few years (the results of a possible referendum) as well as the results of next parliamentary elections in the UK in 2015.

The rapprochement of positions of the UK and France on the of EU membership of Turkey and on the strengthening of the external position of the European Union must, however, be accompanied by Germany’s positive or at least neutral stance. The parliamentary elections in 2013 did not make the situation more favourable to Turkey’s EU bid. The Grand coalition agreement signed in November 2013 repeats the previous position on the Turkey’s membership, underlining the open-ended process. The favourable factor is a lack in the document of the clear negative approach to the Turkish EU accession, noticeable during the election campaign (*Deutschlands*, 2013). It will at least not worsen the atmosphere over the Turkish question in the EU.

Nevertheless, the emergence of a favorable political configuration should be accompanied by an improvement in the economic situation in the Union and in the member states’ attitude towards the EU membership of Turkey – only then could progress in the pre-accession process be hoped for. If the crisis still has the influence on the European economies in the coming years, one can hardly count on interest from EU states (whatever the composition of their governments) in relatively prompt EU enlargement and the Turkish pre-accession process. This also concerns the supporters of Turkey who are in a difficult economic situation, such as Spain. It seems that the situation may be more favourable first in the medium-term perspective, but only if the forecast presented by the EU Commissioner Rehn that “all 28 of the EU’s member states would achieve economic growth by 2015” will be confirmed in reality (Fox, 2013).

Besides, the EU states will not be willing to actively support the accession of Turkey to the EU if they face strong resistance from the public. This, in turn, is determined by the economic situation in the Union, affecting consent to admit any new members, which clearly shows the interdependence of determining factors on the part of the EU and its members. Of course, effective involvement of all stakeholders in keeping the public informed about the enlargement and the candidates, including Turkey, will be an advantage (such efforts being announced both by the EU and by Turkey, developing public diplomacy activities), but they will not change sufficiently the negative attitude to the whole process if individual EU states remain in poor economic condition. What may favorably affect the European public opinion in the future is the relatively free movement of people between Turkey and the EU as a result of the successive talks on the visa-free regime (the

medium-term perspective) as well as certain demographic trends – e.g. the increase in the percentage of Muslim population in the EU states, who support the European aspirations of Turkey (over a longer-term horizon). However, the enhancement of Euro-sceptic feelings can have the negative influence on the public attitude towards the Turkish accession. This will be particularly unfavorable for the Turkey's bid because of the aforementioned indirect impact on the decision-makers, not to mention the direct impact through possible referendum. In this context it will limit e.g. the possible concessions from the French side – Hollande and the socialists will have to take into consideration the negative attitude of a large part of the electorate if they do not want to lose the next elections.

It should be added that the issue of the economic and political crisis in the EU is also a very good example showing how the candidates' specific dilemmas depend on the situation in the EU itself. Problems with support to EU accession from the Turkish society will be the greater the worse the condition of the EU. It seems that this will be a more important factor than the progress of the pre-accession process itself (if the authoritarian tendencies are not developed and some new reforms are conducted in Turkey) and possible negative signals sent to the candidate from the EU states. In the latter aspect, intensified measures has been already taken mainly by the Commission and the EP to sell the positive message that the Union is still interested in admitting Turkey. The first harbinger of this was a quite positive content of the European Parliament's resolutions from March 2012 on this state (European Parliament, 2012). This policy was continued in 2013 with the mentioned opening (though with delay) of the negotiation chapter 22 and the Commission's efforts on the visa issue and its support for Turkey in the form of financial and technical help in many areas. However, it was difficult to send this kind of messages in 2014 due to the corruption allegations and the government anti-democratic actions afterwards, including the banning of some social media (Karapınar, 2014). Nevertheless, the EU membership of Turkey will become more and more a function of general developments in the Union.

Future of Pre-accession Process of Turkey

What can be expected then in 2015 and the subsequent few years with the reference to the pre-accession process of Turkey? It will be continued – its interruption will not be allowed by the EU (led by the Commission and the “friends of Turkey” among the member states), being aware that it is in its interest to keep the process on track. Turkey's ruling Justice and Development Party (AKP, *Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi*) will continue to support the integration (also after the parliamentary elections in 2015 which the AKP will probably win again). The critical rhetoric of the AKP politicians towards the EU, noticeable in recent years, can be continued, particularly within the election time (the presidential elections in August 2014 and aforementioned parliamentary elections in June 2015), to satisfy the electorate skeptical about the accession. However, the Turkish government will not decide to leave the negotiation table, recognizing the benefits of further integration for Turkey and having in mind that there are still the Turkish supporters of the EU membership as well as because of the concern about the opposition immediately taking advantage of this, accusing the ruling group of enforcing a “hidden agenda”.

Turkey will make active efforts in open negotiation chapters, providing an opportunity to intensify talks at technical level. It will be really a tough task to open more negotiation chapters. However, it is possible that the difficult chapters as 23 and 24 (Judiciary and fundamental rights as well as Justice, freedom and security) will be opened quite soon which is in accordance with the Commission's policy to start the talks in difficult chapters at the early stage of the membership talks (although the negotiations within these chapters can last for many months or even years). Turkey will also seek to meet the Copenhagen criteria, introducing further partial democratic reforms. The adoption of the completely new constitution is impossible because of the lack of the consensus between the main political forces. The election time limits generally the possibility to conduct the more substantial reforms or taking more flexible attitude towards such issues as the Cyprus problem. They may be more probable after 2015, depending on the results of elections.

The years to come will see some favorable conditions for the reinvigoration of the pre-accession process. The improvement of the atmosphere of talks is possible not only because of the modified French position but also as a result of the effective implementation of the "positive agenda". Apart from the visa issue it is about the tightening of Turkey-EU relations in such areas as e.g. CFSP, the Area of Freedom, Security and Justice or energy policy outside the main track of membership negotiations. However, this is not sealed at all. Some important areas are to a large extent a matter of "high politics" (visa issue), some other cannot help much because they depend themselves on the end of the accession negotiations' deadlock – e.g. the cooperation within the CFSP. What can help to implement after few years the "positive agenda" is the increasing awareness in the EU that maintaining the *status quo* is also shooting itself in the foot. Some progress in the talks about the visa issue seems to reflect this awareness.

However, these positive aspects (if they appear) will not mean a qualitative change unless accompanied by other favorable factors. For the 2023 deadline that the Turkish government has set for itself as the date of accession to the Union to be realistic, a favorable combination of all four determinants mentioned above must arise on the part of the EU and the member states, in addition to progress in democratization. This analysis proves, it will not be an easy task at all, particularly due to the enhancement of the negative general attitude to the EU in the member states and the rising problems with the democratization of Turkey.

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Proces przedakcesyjny Turcji – uwarunkowania i perspektywy akcesji do UE

Streszczenie

Artykuł dotyczy obecnego procesu przedakcesyjnego Turcji oraz pytania o jego perspektywę. W celu odpowiedzi na to pytanie autor przeprowadza szczegółową analizę czynników, które mogą wpłynąć na proces w trzech głównych wymiarach: UE (tj. ogólna sytuacja polityczna i gospodarcza, polityka rozszerzania UE, unijne instytucje), państwa członkowskie oraz Turcja. Chce potwierdzić hipotezę, że chociaż sytuacja w kraju kandydującym jest kluczowa dla przyszłości stosunków Turcja-UE, to jednak decydujące czynniki znajdują się po stronie UE i państw członkowskich. Proces przedakcesyjny Turcji będzie kontynuowany, jednak jego tempo oraz przebieg będzie w dużym stopniu zależał od stanowiska głównych graczy w UE, klarownej wizji Unii, jak również sytuacji gospodarczej i politycznej w Europie oraz nastawienia opinii publicznej.

Słowa kluczowe: Unia Europejska, państwo członkowskie, Turcja, rozszerzenie