

EPIC Second Cohort
1st Advanced Research Workshop
Project Proposal Structure
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**Thesis Provisional Title: The Road to Damascus? From Copenhagen to Helsinki:
National Preferences and Enlargement**

The question of EU enlargement has been in the foreground of the academic and political interest ever since the collapse of the relatively stable bipolar world. The fact that the EU has reacted to the challenge of enlargement by adopting a “policy without strategy” approach indicates the lack of unanimity among member-states as regards the most appropriate way to handle the issue. That means that each member-state has reacted differently to the enlargement perspective according to national interests and preferences. Thus, the cornerstone of understanding EU policies in the field is to track down the decisive parameters that shape national preferences and attitudes.

Although EU policies on enlargement have been exhaustively analysed, the main focus of most analytical work is on the EU decision-making mechanisms and member-states’ interaction within it. There is no denying the fact that such interaction is crucial for the final policy outcome. However, going one step backwards, there is an equal need to look at the domestic polity and in parallel examine the institutional set-up and the policy making at this level as well. The theoretical approach I have adopted has the advantage of looking simultaneously at both levels of analysis - national and international, i.e. EU- without ignoring significant complementary explanatory parameters, such as the role of the individual and the systemic constraints. In that respect, the “two-level game” theoretical framework (Putnam, 1988) provides the researcher a good starting point to fully grasp the modalities of enlargement related policy-making. This does not imply that this analytical framework is of limited use to the remaining aspects of EU policy-making. However, it fits better the case of enlargement, because of the intergovernmental nature of decision-making in this field, whereas in other EU policies the role of supranational institutions and actors is more significant and intergovernmental paradigms are in defence. In a nutshell, this analytical framework seems better equipped to deal with the complexity of enlargement.

There is no space to present in great length the framework. The basic concept is that of continuous interaction between the domestic and the international level of decision-making, with the executive playing the role of “hinge”. In the original version, transnational actors have not been accounted for a serious role in this process. In the specific EU context, however, such presumption is questioned and transnational activities deserve some additional attention. Thus, the main analytical axes are the specification of domestic politics (role of interest/pressure groups, domestic institutional set-up, political culture etc) and the specification of the international environment in which member-states are interacting (decision-making process in the EU). In between, the executive is participating in both chessboards and can, thus, influence the final policy outcome. Elaborating shortly on the domestic political game, explanatory parameters can be largely grouped in two categories, namely economic and foreign policy considerations. In the first place, economic considerations imply utility shifts of economic actors as a result of enlargement and possible intervention -depending on polity structures and the access points to power- to national policy making. Foreign policy considerations are mainly related to the overall strategy of member-states in the course of European political integration, their long-term objectives and goals that are possibly affected by the prospects of enlargement.

Along these analytical lines my research project is structured. Theoretically speaking all member-states should be analysed in order to have the full picture of EU policy in the field. This, however, is unrealistic given the time and resources constraints. Instead, I have selected focusing on a case-study, namely Greece, to test the usefulness and the utility of the selected theoretical framework and then proceed on a small comparative analysis with a couple of other countries (UK, France?) to see the different leverage of the identified number of explanatory parameters in different cases. There has been a long period of contemplation on which countries to chose together with my supervisory board and I have to admit that the final selection is subject to constant reconsideration. The same time period will be chosen for all countries examined, focusing on the pivotal European Councils on enlargement over the last decade (Copenhagen, Luxembourg, Helsinki and for the economic dimension, mainly Berlin).

The literature overview so far has shown that there is a gap in bibliography looking enlargement from a national point of view. Nonetheless, segments of useful

information are scattered all around, but need evaluation and compilation. The experience from the Greek case, so far, shows that interviews are more useful and provide more substantial information.