

THE IMPACT OF ENLARGEMENT ON EUROPEAN CITIZENSHIP

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The member states of the European Union are engaged in a momentous project whose destination is extremely unclear. Is the aim to build a United States of Europe, a kind of supra-national state with its own political institutions, a united economy, a single currency and a single citizenship? Or is it to create a loose confederation of sovereign states committed to some common goals such as free trade, encouraging democracy and human rights, and co-operation in combating crime and terrorism, but not willing to pool sovereignty completely? The recent enlargement of the European Union whereby ten new states were admitted in 2004 has made enlargement the major issue confronting the European Union. Moreover, the rejection of the proposed new constitution by the electorates of France and the Netherlands show that the move to create an 'ever more perfect union' is fraught with difficulty.

The supporters of the European Union project would like the Union and its institutions to have popular support and legitimacy among all the peoples of the Union but as Martiniello argues, the European Union project has been largely promoted by the European elites with relatively little involvement by European electorates. There has been little attempt to mobilise popular support (Martiniello, 1995). Popular support has been taken for granted and where it has been consulted in referendums over the Maastricht Treaty, for example, every effort has been made to manage the referendums to achieve positive results. Recently growing scepticism with European initiatives, the Commission and enlargement have resulted in the rejection of the proposed new constitution by the electorates of France and the Netherlands, two of the founding countries of the European Union. This has highlighted concerns about the future of the European Union and in particular whether the process of enlargement has proceeded at too rapid a pace.

The inclusion of the idea of a European citizenship in the Maastricht Treaty (TEU, Article 8), must thus be seen as an attempt to combat Euro scepticism and increase the legitimacy of the European Union and its institutions. It did this by consolidating

some rights that European nationals had already achieved such as the right to move and to reside freely within the territory of the Union and by adding to these new rights such as the right to stand for election and vote in local and European elections anywhere in the Union. There was also added the right to consular representation in the non-member states, the right to send petitions to the European parliament and to make applications to a European ombudsman. Some important rights such as the right to take cases to the European Court of Justice were not included in Article 8.

Martiniello gives five reasons for the creation of a European citizenship at Maastricht, namely:

1. to aid the freedom of movement of executives
2. to reduce the democratic deficit
3. to move towards a nation state
4. to create a European identity
5. to clarify who belongs to the European Union and who is to be excluded from it (Martiniello, 1995).

The most important reason, it has already been argued, was to reduce the democratic deficit and thereby to increase the legitimacy of the European Union and its institutions. The suggestion that the creation of a European citizenship was a move towards a European nation-state was highly controversial and was not supported by all EU leaders. In 1990, Felipe Gonzales, Prime Minister of Spain, said that 'Citizenship of the European Union should develop without weakening, in any manner, the national citizenship to which it should be a complement and not a substitute.' The Amsterdam Treaty amended the Maastricht Treaty to include this formula that citizenship of the Union would complement and not replace national citizenship (Treaty of Amsterdam, Part 1, 9).

Despite the modest array of rights included in the definition of European citizenship and absence of specific duties imposed or expected of European citizens, the idea of European citizenship has captured the imagination of many European scholars. It has stimulated a series of debates about the meaning and content of European citizenship and about its scope and value. In particular, scholars have debated whether it is a new post-national form of citizenship heralding the erosion, perhaps even the demise, of

national citizenship (Soysal, 1994) or whether it merely strengthens and reaffirms national citizenship (Martiniello, 1995; Vink, 2005). Is it best described as a form of supra-national citizenship? Some scholars would like to see European citizenship develop into a more expansive and liberal form of membership which would include almost everyone resident on the territory of the Union and even be welcoming to outsiders, so rejecting the narrow exclusiveness of state-citizenship (Kostakopoulou, 2001). Such a move, of course, would be fiercely resisted by most member states who do not wish to lose control of their populations.

In contrast to academic scholars, European citizens have not been so excited about becoming European Union citizens. They have accepted it but maintain their strongest loyalties to their localities and in particular to their existing nation states (Eurobarometer Poll, Spring 2006)

One thing that European Union citizenship has done is to clarify who is to enjoy full rights within the European Union, that is, who is a European citizen and who is not. European citizens are defined as nationals of the member states. Nationals of non-member states, that is, third country nationals, are not European Union citizens and so only enjoy the rights granted to them by the state in which they are legally resident. The European Union thus has on its territory large numbers of people with different rights. Firstly EU citizens living within their own states have full rights including both European and National rights. Secondly, EU citizens living in another member state of the Union enjoy European citizenship rights but may be excluded from some rights reserved for nationals such as voting rights to the national parliament and the right to work in the public service. Thus the EU is not a political community like a state where in principle all citizens enjoy equal rights and obligations. The supporters of European integration may wish to have an equal citizenship for European citizens but this is some way away. Third country nationals with residence and employment rights, denizens in Hammar's term (Hammar, 1990) enjoy most social and civil rights in their country of residence but lack most political rights. They are excluded from European citizenship. Other groups such as asylum seekers, visitors and illegal immigrants enjoy limited rights and are also excluded from EU citizenship unless they become settlers, and naturalise.

Enlargement and the European Union

Enlargement has become a critical issue on the agenda of the European Union. Until 2004 enlargement had been gradual and incremental. Britain, Denmark and Ireland joined with the founding six countries in 1973¹ and Greece joined in 1981. Portugal and Spain joined in 1986 and Austria, Finland and Sweden in 1995. However, in 2004 ten new states were admitted², completely transforming the composition of the Union and moving its centre of gravity from western Europe to central Europe. Moreover, the process of enlargement is continuing at a fast pace, with Bulgaria and Romania due to be admitted in 2007 and negotiations under way with Croatia and Turkey. Many other states in the western Balkans, Eastern Europe and even around the Mediterranean are aspiring members of the EU.

Enlargement and European citizenship are closely linked as European citizenship is only granted to citizens of member-states. New European citizens are thus created either by the process of becoming a naturalised citizen in a member state or by the accession of a new state to the European Union. Decisions about which countries can be allowed to join are thus also decisions about who can be accepted as new European citizens.

European elites seem very positive about the benefits of further enlargement. This view is supported by the decisions to admit Bulgaria and Romania next year and to negotiate entry with Croatia and Turkey. However, can European leaders count on the support of their electorates? In order to assess the support for enlargement in the EU, the Director General for Enlargement commissioned a major survey on *Attitudes Towards European Enlargement*.³ This special Eurobarometer Poll found that European citizens were deeply divided, with 45% in favour of further enlargement and 42% opposed. The Austrians, Finns, French and Germans were most sceptical about the benefits of enlargement and a significant majority of EU citizens (57%) considered that enlargement would reduce EU budget resources available for their own country (Special Eurobarometer, 255, pp.3, 29, 46).

These concerns help to explain the referendum results in France and the Netherlands, which rejected the new EU constitution. This constitution was specifically drawn up to facilitate the workings of the enlarged EU. European electorates see some positive benefits in enlargement such as maintaining the peace in Europe, extending human

rights, increasing cultural diversity and facilitating political unification, but they fear it will have negative economic consequences and that it will lead to a reduction in living standards for people in existing member states. Other concerns related to increases in crime and immigration (Special Eurobarometer, 255, Spring 2006).

The Eurobarometer Poll found that, in spite of these anxieties about enlargement, a majority of European citizens (56%) were in favour of the admission of Croatia and pluralities were in favour of the admission of some Western Balkan states such as the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia (49%), Bosnia and Herzegovina (48%) and Serbia and Montenegro (47%), but more (44%) opposed the admission of Albania than supported it (41%) and many more opposed the accession of Turkey (48%) than supported it (39%) (Special Eurobarometer, 255, pp.67-71).

Citizenship is not only about the enjoyment of rights as a full member of a political community (Marshall, 1950) and the performance of obligations; it also confers an identity and feelings of solidarity with other citizens. Citizenship defines who belongs to this political community and who is excluded, who is welcome as a fellow citizen and who remains an outsider. the process of EU enlargement does this for European citizenship. It determines which countries are to be accepted as members and therefore whose nationals are to become European citizens. In a way the process of enlargement determines where the boundaries of Europe are to be drawn, at least as far as European citizens are concerned.

The process of enlargement goes against another dimension of national citizenship, that is, unity. States are most comfortable when their populations are relatively homogeneous. Where people share a common culture, language and history, they are more likely to have solidarity and share a common identity. A common national identity makes it easier for citizens to share the obligations of citizenship such as military service, redistributive taxation and obedience to the laws.

European citizenship unites diverse populations with different cultures, languages, religions and historical experiences. Indeed, a major *raison d'être* for the European Union was to end conflicts and wars on the continent. The process of enlargement brings into the European Union people with different languages, different cultures and different historical experiences. How can a common European citizenship and identity be created in such a diverse continent? The commitment to invest in the new

member states, to increase their prosperity and allow them to share the resources of the EU has great appeal to the potential new members and to the European commission which will become more influential in a globalising world, but existing European citizens are concerned about the economic costs they will have to bear. The admittance of Turkey could prove to have major economic consequences and also to increase internal EU migration massively. It appears from the Eurobarometer Poll that existing EU citizens are more comfortable with admitting Christian Balkan countries than Muslim, and that the reluctance to admit Albania and Turkey are partly because they are not considered to be as European as Croatia and Serbia.

The concepts of citizenship and European enlargement have a common element that of defining membership of a political community. This involves the creation of boundaries and the limitation of membership. It is inconceivable that the EU's policy of enlargement can continue indefinitely. No matter how many countries are allowed to join, there must be limits to membership otherwise the costs will outweigh the benefits and the legitimacy of the process will be undermined. The electorates of France and the Netherlands have indicated that the process of enlargement may have gone far enough for the present and that a period of consolidation is required otherwise resistance to the process may grow.

Notes

1. The founding members were Belgium, France, Germany, Italy, Luxembourg and the Netherlands.
2. These were Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Slovakia, Slovenia, Poland, Hungary, the Czech Republic, Malta and Cyprus.
3. This survey was carried out between 27 March and 1 May 2006. Interviews were conducted face-to-face in people's homes in their national language. The survey included all 25 EU countries and in addition Bulgaria, Romania, Croatia, Turkey and the Turkish Cypriot community.

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