

More Secretary than General?

Enlargement of the European Union is a question of vision.

One can easily call up the case of the United Kingdom's 1963 and 1967 applications to become member of the then European Economic Community vetoed by French President Charles de Gaulle. Although his reasons were not only vision driven but also related to economic considerations, namely France's agricultural interest, it is nevertheless puzzling that such a difficult birth as the one of the United Kingdom's accession to the EU – finally having taken place in 1973 along with Denmark and Ireland – has resulted in its sadly notorious fate in the European Union as we know it with Brexit occurring on 1 February 2020.

Political vision was not absent in the Greek, Portuguese and Spanish adhesions, either. Democracy and stability of the EU's southern borders constituted indeed keywords to the 1981 and 1986 Mediterranean accession waves.

In the 1990s, the Copenhagen criteria were elaborated in order to canalise the process into a legally foreseeable bed. Although, political vision was still a driving force behind enlargements of 1995 (Austria, Finland and Sweden), 2004 (Cyprus, the Czech Republic, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Hungary, Malta, Poland, Slovakia and Slovenia), 2007 (Bulgaria and Romania) and 2013 (Croatia), the process also became *expressis verbis* merit based in order to rejoin an economic area with an undeniable wealth vector also characterised by legal values that define the very identity of the European Union as a common legal order.

What is the current vision behind the EU's enlargement policy? Is it still merit based? Who is in the driving seat? To these questions tends to provide answers the second Hungarian Presidency special edition of the *Európai Tükör/European Mirror* dedicated to the EU's enlargement policy.

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