CHAPTER 3

The Enlargement Process and the “Dividing Lines of Europe”

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EU Integration and Enlargement

The European Union is a supranational institutional and procedural ensemble (inter-state and inter-governmental), which proposes to achieve certain common objectives, stated and argued through common acceptable standards and values. Certain stages of stagnation or even rebound in the evolution of European construction have been due to the incapacity of the negotiating parties (Member States) to stand on the platform of common European values (Pușcaș 2012:193–194). The same author believes that the present crisis of the European Union is more severe than the economic and financial crisis in other areas of the world because it has its origin in the abandonment of common European values: “Sometimes the values of the North and the South of the European Union were widened and even exalted, announcing the existence of distances and incompatibilities in values, renouncing efforts to manage diversity and search for common European ways and values, which are the essence and the strength of European construction.” (Ibid.: 194).

Europeans have to admit the necessity of deepening European integration as the solution for the present crisis and for post-crisis evolution. But this leads them to the thesis of differentiation within the European Union as the reason for increasing convergence, without a clear definition of the European identity nor the expression of an identity option. In this context, the European spirit does not lead to diversity as a support for unity, but to differentiation as dissociation and distinctness as a support for integration in gradual, concentric phases: “In the interior of the European Union, instead of the pronoun us, often you can hear the pronouns us and you, as there are several categories of European citizens” (Ibid.: 136).

In the context of globalisation, the European Union had to find a solution for the management of diversity, in order to erase the existing dividing lines from its interior. Enlargement policy was meant to increase the competitiveness of the European Union, but has it succeeded?

The common perception is that the great divisions of Europe appeared after continental wars: the cordon sanitaire (after the First World War) and the
Berlin Wall (after the division of Europe into two blocs). In reality, these conflicts started because of the perceptual, attitudinal and behavioural dividing lines which still existed at the level of European states, nations and leaders.

The enlargement of the European Union (the fifth wave) and the unification of Germany after the fall of the Berlin Wall did not mean the disappearance of attitudinal and psychological barriers. The dividing lines have not disappeared when major decisions are taken; they still persist in behaviour.

For this reason it is time to make a shift from the “old paradigm” to a “new paradigm” of cooperation and diversity management. On his visit to Mexico, from May 2013, President Barack Obama spoke about the new dividing lines of perception between the two countries: “Some Americans only see the Mexico depicted in sensational headlines of violence and border crossings. Some Mexicans may think America disrespects Mexico, that we seek to impose ourselves on Mexican sovereignty [...] I have come to Mexico because it is time to put old mindsets aside. It’s time to recognise new realities, including the impressive progress in today’s Mexico” (Goldfarb & Miroff 2013:1). Even though it was only a political statement of the American President, it could be taken into consideration as a tendency to change the policies in the region.

But when will the “old lines of division” in the European Union change? The construction of Europe started at the middle of the last century with the Schuman Declaration of 9th of May 1950, in which the French Minister of Foreign Affairs proposed joint management of the coal and steel resources of France and Germany by creating an organisation open to the participation of other European countries. In Paris, on 18th of April 1951, Belgium, France, Germany, Italy, Luxembourg and the Netherlands signed the Treaty establishing the European Coal and Steel Community (ECSC), which became functional from 1953, by removing the customs barriers and quantitative restrictions regarding the raw materials mentioned in the Treaty.

In Rome, on 25th of March 1957 the ECSC Member States signed the Treaty establishing the European Community of Atomic Energy (Euratom) and the Treaty establishing the European Economic Community (EEC). The three Communities (the ECSC, Euratom and the EEC) had a single Parliament and a single court of justice, called the Court of Justice of the European Communities.

In January 1973, three more states joined the European construction: Great Britain, Ireland and Denmark, followed by Greece (1981), Spain and Portugal (1986), Austria, Finland and Sweden (1995), Cyprus, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Malta, Poland, the Czech Republic, Slovakia, Slovenia and Hungary (2004), Romania and Bulgaria (2007) and Croatia (2013).

Important steps in the European construction were the treaties: the Treaty of Maastricht (1992, which describes the activities of European Union based on three pillars: the European Communities, Common Foreign and Security