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THE EUROPEAN UNION'S SOFT POWER: THE ENLARGEMENT PROCESS AND THE REPUBLIC OF MACEDONIA

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Abstract

The primary motive to this research is the specific form of soft power the EU use in its policy, especially the enlargement policy. Thus, over comprehensive analyze of its policy, researching the previous experiences in this field, the ongoing process with the candidate members, and using the method of case study with the Republic of Macedonia in particular, we can see closer how the soft power works in this part of its policy and in which forms it is expressed. According to the research and the results, we could see the differences between the other power of the EU used in its policy, and the specific form of soft power used in the Enlargement policy. This type of power is collocated of various elements such as Copenhagen criteria, progress reports and for the very first in the case with the Republic of Macedonia is launched the High Level Accession Dialogue. Despite the complicated process and endless framework followed by the slow development in the state policy, the survey results with positive public opinion on the sole enlargement process and the EU membership.

Key words: soft power; European Union; Republic of Macedonia; Enlargement policy

INTRODUCTION

In this paper will be analyzed the process of the EU enlargement policy toward the Republic of Macedonia, from the soft power aspect and its instruments. The EU enlargement policy is based on specific criteria and that is:

- complying with all the EU's standards and rules
- having the consent of the EU institutions and
- EU member states having the consent of their citizens – as expressed through approval in their national parliament or by referendum (European Commission, 2014).

According to this order the process of the enlargement is implemented. At first, the state is asked for achieving of the Copenhagen criteria and the negotiations follow it. For all of the time, the process is being monitored by the European Commission that submits statements to the European Parliament and the European Council. What is in our interest here is not the process in its entirety but those parts only where the European Union enforces its power in the process.

THE LEGITIMACY OF THE SOFT POWER OF THE EUROPEAN UNION IN THE CASE OF THE REPUBLIC OF MACEDONIA

From all of the candidate states of the European Union, the Republic of Macedonia has the longest chronology in the relations with the EU. Stabilization and Association Agreement (further in the text as: SAA) was signed in April, 2001 and it is coming into force right after three years in 2004. When the SAA come into force, the Republic of Macedonia faced with the acceptance of the Copenhagen criteria. They are not clearly stated and noted in the agreement, but at the very beginning that presents a formal introduction to the Agreement, is written:

> Recalling the European Union's readiness to integrate to the fullest possible extent the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia into the political and economic mainstream of Europe and its status as a potential candidate for EU membership on the basis of the Treaty on European Union and fulfillment of the criteria defined by the European Council in June 1993 (bold added by us), subject to successful implementation of this Agreement, notably regarding regional cooperation (…) (SAA, 2001).

It means that since 2001 respectively 2004, Macedonia faces the Copenhagen criteria and with the signing of the SAA formally accept them. There is not any coercion or sanction in the case with Macedonia if the conditions would not be fulfilled, but the only sanction is the fact that without its fulfillment the state could not become a member. Though, the Agreement does not show up accidentally. As the European Commission listed on its website, the Republic of Macedonia and the European Union established international communication through diplomatic represents, Co-operation Agreement, Agreement on the Trade in Textile Products, Agreement in the field of the transport. On that way, the EU step by step is turning the political organizing of the state, especially when it comes for a state such the Republic of Macedonia is, when in that period is placed in an early phase of transition of the economic and the political system. Stating such a framework for co-operation gives a new dimension to the foreign policy of the state themselves. The guide of working stated as that, which trough the state detect the benefit of it, actually is the guide in whom the European Union gradually put itself as a friend and an “ally” in the struggle with the former and the gateway to the new system of organizing of the state. Since the European Union has put itself in that way toward Macedonia opens area in where the soft power over attraction and co-opt succeed to model the behaviour of the state. It goes easy in that way because is in phase where the friends of that kind (such the European Union) are necessary as a significant help for its progress.

The agreements are just one way to obtain legitimacy to the power that the European Union execute toward the Republic of Macedonia. The benefit is mutual because the aim of the European Union is a successful enlargement policy toward as much as more states, with an intention for spreading its influence on all of the Continent of Europe, while, for the Republic of Macedonia that means a free and open market, faster progress and removing of the barriers with which is faced with, but the security and stability too. If we look into the chronology of the relations between the Republic of Macedonia and the European Union, we can note a constantly presence of the European Union with its programmes and activities. Starting from 1996 when the Republic of Macedonia becomes eligible for funding under the EC’s PHARE programme, than the trade agreements, the Stabilisation and Association Process, the EU’s special representatives, the application for membership, the candidate status, the visa facilitation agreement, the High Level Accession Dialogue etc. is a period of about twenty years cooperation and conjugation to

the European Union. It that way, it is not formed the foreign policy of the state only but the public opinion too. Because of the fact that within the recent years, every government works on the relations between the Republic of Macedonia and the EU, a picture for the significance of that relations is formed a front of the public opinion. That is one of the ways how the European Union is building its *European Perspective* to this states, working on the perception of the citizens for the necessity of the membership.

The Copenhagen criteria

The fulfilment of the Copenhagen criteria in the process with the Republic of Macedonia, as a state with the candidate status is monitored over the evaluation and objections noted in the Progress Reports by the European Commission submitted to the state. The problem we found is that the Reports are vaguely and the evaluation itself is still an open question because:

- There are not clearly presented parameters according by the fulfilment of the conditions is evaluated (i.e. in the Progress Report from 2014 is noted: *Progress is measured on the basis of decisions taken, legislation adopted and measures implemented. As a rule, legislation or measures which are under preparation or awaiting parliamentary approval have not been taken into account*.)
- The fact that there is no exist an objective criterion for evaluation, enable subjectivity in the evaluation by the people that evaluates (i.e. in the Progress Report from 2014 is noted: *This approach [the approach mentioned above in this paragraph] ensures equal treatment across all reports and enables an objective assessment*).

In all of the Reports are noted the areas where the state has made a progress in the fulfillment of the criteria but as a more important – what should be done further. We can say that this process is weak because it allows to the process to last many years, and that is on account of the objections and its declarative dimension i.e. it does not cause any consequences if the state does not fulfill the parts that are noted as unfulfilled and where the state should dedicate more attention. Over the stand criteria the EU focus the policy, economy and the legal system of one country toward a unified globally accepted (as normal) a way of behaving. Actually in this case the EU achieves all of this using attraction and co-opt. The criteria are expression of a value-normative framework of the EU that has been offered to the states. That value-normative pattern, with well-founded reasons the states accept it and decide to implement it to the political systems. The difference here is in the expressed intention of the European Union in order to exercise its soft power. Thus, the negative aspect in this case is founded in the vagueness of the stated criteria and the possibility for a subjective element in the evaluation, not giving the clear picture for successfulness/unsuccessfulness of the implemented politics i.e. the criteria. In that manner we are going to do short analyses to the Progress Report (to the political criteria, in particular) of Macedonia, after the parliamentary elections in 2011 that is the Reports of 2012, 2013 and 2014.

The soft power and the public opinion

Besides the *intentional* (indirect) influence over creating of the public opinion throughout the official documents and the other programs of the European Union spreading the influence over the candidate states such as the Republic of Macedonia, it succeeded to give deceivableness

to the process itself including not just an abstract picture about the European perspective but a direct involvement of the citizens in the process too. One of the programs is ERAZMUS+, where in the official introduction to the program is noted:

> The Erasmus+ programme aims to boost skills and employability, as well as modernizing Education, Training, and Youth work. The seven year programme will have a budget of €14.7 billion; a 40% increase compared to current spending levels, reflecting the EU's commitment to investing in these areas. Erasmus+ will provide opportunities for over 4 million Europeans to study, train, gain work experience and volunteer abroad (Erasmus, 2014).

As a conclusion we will draw out two elements that are imposed by this programme: *attraction* and *financial aid*. In this way it shapes the public opinion throughout the programme, perceiving the *European Perspective*:

- *An opportunity for upgrade*: the students and the youth are awarded with an opportunity to study in the EU countries and have a chance to meet the culture, language and tradition.
- *A feeling for belongingness*: calling them Europeans, it creates them a feeling for belongingness of the youth to the culture and values of the Europe (the European Union, in particular);
- *Existence and experience*: seven years, the NGOs, universities, research centers etc. have a chance to work on EU projects where the youth will have an opportunity to be employed or to volunteer on those projects while the rest of the population will be informed through the media about these projects.

According to it, the European Union encloses its pattern of work closer to the citizens more than the official international legal acts. The citizens are directly involved in this process, aware of the benefits of these programs. It gives a positive impression that leads to a favorably public opinion on the EU. What is different of the Nay's definition is that the *inducement* (where he classify it among the elements of the hard power), is not expressed over bribes or payments. Those, here we can note inducement throughout facilitation of means for existence and building experience in that volume where they can work on a projects acceptable to the EU. Under "acceptable to the EU" is open another segment of the power - directing activities. To be financed one project it should be in the areas that the European Union considers as a priority and significant. In this case we consider the two-dimensional aspect to the power that is about crating the agenda, where from the soft power aspect it means "A uses attraction and institutions to impose on B to take the agenda as legitimate". Here we have creating a framework in which will be covered those areas where the EU decided about as important to be set on "the agenda" and the institutions that have projects funded by the EU, must behave according to. Because of these reasons we could not say that the EU makes payments to achieve its goals over bribes and payments and that is why this financial type of help we could not classified under that category as an element of the hard power. We could look at these relations as a relation compatible to the employer and employee, where the EU funds projects that considers as a priority to its development, but on the other hand the states accept it aims emolument and co-operation with the EU and aware or unaware acceptance to the EU's framework of values and culture.

Adaptation to the soft power through the EU's Progress reports

With the Progress reports of the European Commission is expressed the progress or regress of the Republic of Macedonia, related to the fulfillment of the criteria required for membership in the EU. These reports make retrospective to the recent year and the areas where the state made progress as well as where the situation became worse than before. It says where should improve too. Significant to be noted is that the Reports set the guidelines the state should follow during creation of its policy.

From the aspect of the soft power it means the giving guidelines and the support by the European Union as well over the reports, without sanction to any undesirable (for the EU) behavior by the state (the Republic of Macedonia) is the way of shaping behavior of the state. The state voluntarily accept the supervision by the European Union considered as wishful for implementation of its aim – development of the state and membership in the EU. Because the reports mostly have descriptive character, the fulfillment of the criteria depends on the "good will" of the state without any timeframes or deadlines where the state would have been determined to achieve it. In the reports as a guidelines and explanations are mostly used the phrases: "the National Council for EU Integration (NCEI) should play a greater role in assembling a broad national consensus on European integration […] Continued efforts are needed (bold added) to develop the capacity of the parliament and political dialogue needs to be strengthened" (Progress Report, 2012). From this point of view we see the "non obligatory" nature of the Report, on the other hand according to the title ("report") says that it has more informative character rather than obligatory document. The terms such as "*should play a greater role"* and "*continued efforts are needed*" produce only directions for the state to be followed. On that way the soft power is exercised over the reports. The state builds its policy according to the directions given by the European Union; shaping its behavior in a way desired by the EU and all of that on a voluntary base, with aim creating a developed system that would mean a readiness for membership in the European Union. That could be note as a definition for the soft power exercised over the reports in this way. If the positive aspect of the soft power means *intention* for advancement and progress of the political, economic and legal system in the state and later, accession to the EU, we have another aspect through we can look at the this situation. As we said above, the reports means announcement on the situation but most often that announcement on the situation is not appropriate to the real condition of the state. The problem is that the evaluation has been made basically according to the fact – how many changes has been made in the legislation in particular area, where the European Union pointed on the needed changes, but not on how that changes the reality:

> [the] parliament adopted 10 new laws and revised over 80 others, including some relating to *acquis* reforms, raising concerns about the inclusivity of the process […] There have been no amendments to the Constitution since 2011, and it is broadly in line with European standards (Progress report, 2013).

There is only difference in the latest Report (2014) where has been sent a more rigorous critic that is different from the usual way for evaluation of the situation so far. In the part addressed to the *Judiciary and fundamental rights,* is said:

> One of the main challenges is the growing concern voiced about the selectivity of, and influence over, law enforcement and the judiciary. The basic rule of law principle, that justice must not only be done but must also *be seen to be done*, is not fully understood or

respected by the authorities in terms of law enforcement actions targeted at specific persons or sectors (Progress report, 2014).

Besides the enhanced "rigorous critic", the non obligatory effect of the Report itself, stays unchanged and there are no any further fines in that manner. Again it leads us to the mechanism of the soft power. If we try to drawn a conclusion by this cite than it will be dedicated to the soft power of the European Union and the problem in it, because even the noted suggestions in the reports (speaking for the Republic of Macedonia, in particular), the same problems even spread, remains. If the EU's work till today was to maintain the directions to the state about how to achieve the results needed for accession, with special emphasis that despite the *de iure* are important the de facto results as well – "that justice must not only be done but must also *be seen to be done*. The European Union, usually, recognize that in an area are enforced around ten new laws and that could result with a positive statement by the EC: the state makes an effort. That means, in this part the problems are solving and with implementation of the laws – the problems would be completely solved. But if after a few years in one of the next reports would be note the same problem again, that was previously been considered as solved, there must be a problem the relation between the executor of the power (EU) on one side and the subject on the other side (Republic of Macedonia). Because of this "reaction" of the state on the "action" by the EU – over the exercising of the soft power of the enlargement policy, could be located the further problems:

- The state has a political interest (that is different of their citizens) to delay the process of accession;
- A deficit on legal and political instruments during the implementation of the soft power by the European Union.

About the first problem, it could be diverse. As a candidate country, the state enjoy specific privileges and help of the European Union but the state sovereignty is still not shared with the EU, and it means more freedom in enforcing its "own" politics without any special control from the EU about it. On that way, the state can practice "double policy" – the one with the EU where it can be shown the picture about the reforms and its enforcement and the efforts for accession. On the other hand, a front of the citizens is showed another picture where they just see that we work but the EU is not enough satisfied and does not appreciate our effort. While, in the other hand a front of the population is presented that the EU does not like the Republic Macedonia as its member. The name issue between the Republic of Macedonia and Greece along with the unanimity of the EU, just confirm that situation where the Republic of Macedonia is a "martyr" with clear will for accession otherwise the will of the EU is very vague. Unfortunately the "formal" policy that state relate with the EU produces just "formal" results i.e. *summum ius - summa iniuria.* On the other hand, the second problem is in the lack of political instruments, the EU is trying to maintain through the new process called as High Level Accession Dialogue – HLAD. As the commissioner S. Fule says: "We are now in a second, more challenging phase where we need to focus on concrete measures and indicators of progress. Much work will need to be done between now and our next meeting", it means work practiced up to now need more engagement, enhanced intensity and concreteness.

The High Level Accession Dialogue

The High Level Accession Dialogue (HLAD) for a first time is launched to case with the Republic of Macedonia. Because of the lasting long candidate status of the country, the EU aims to continue the further co-operation besides the absence of negotiations. The aim of the HLAD is addressing the key areas that are problems for the state:

- Freedom of expression and professional standards;
- Rule of law;
- Public administration reforms;
- Electoral reforms;
- Strengthening the market economy.

The HLAD has been established in 2012 and was expected to be a new phase in the enlargement process of the European Union toward the Republic of Macedonia. In its Enlargement strategy and Main Challenges 2013-2014, the Commission in the relation to the enlargement process and the new Dialog stressed: "the HLAD has contributed to progress in most priority areas. The progress being made under HLAD will stand the country in good stead when negotiations begin. However it is not, and cannot be, a substitute for moving to the opening of accession negotiations". (ESMC, 2013) Although have been given a lot of significance to the HLAD, it was not applied in the reality as it was seen at the beginning. There are no new moments with its launching but only a few segments of the process are drawn. As it has been stressed into the Enlargement strategy, the Dialog has more political than legal significance and thus, it is more instrument of the soft power than a legal act of help to the enlargement policy. The Dialog refers to a period when the state faces the problems and veto by its neighbor on the euro-integration way and the European Union understand the need of the changes aims to proof its intention for accepting the state as a member. The Dialog along with the Roadmap (it is the government obligation and is made by), are two implemented over two mechanisms: strategy and operative (technical) mechanism. The strategy mechanism is compound by the priority tasks of the pre-accession process, drawn as main areas of the Dialog. While, in the operative or the technical mechanisms are the instruments and the institutions to the activities the government planed according to the Dialog. In this way, the government prepares the *Roadmap for the implementation of the Priority activities of the High Level Accession Dialogue* where the further plans are set i.e. the aims that should be achieved presented in the HLAD.

If we take the Progress report 2014 as an indicator on the progress of the state and we see the segments that are drawn of it and set as a main areas in the HLAD, the expected progress is not just unachieved but the that areas in particular became worst than before and being additionally criticized by the Commission. That means the HLAD does not bring any changes in better way to the European integration. The HLAD is just an instrument for *attraction* and point to the presence of the EU in the state policy potentiates to significance of the integration itself through establishing a new mechanism although they do not make any elementary move in a positive way of the process. If we thought on the fact that the EU enlargement policy is founded to the soft power principles, than we could put the HLAD in that category, judging by the intention of the European Union.

The civil society and the public opinion

Next method not only of creating a policy of the state but a method of directing of the civil society activities (and the public opinion) is over the projects funded by the EU mentioned in the programs above. Funding the projects should not be seen as *bribe* to the state but it can be seen as an obvious and legitimate mutual benefit (between the EU and the Republic of Macedonia) for both of the sides. We potentiate "an obvious and legitimate mutual benefit" to draw a clear line between the payment and bribe that Joseph Nye said on the hard power and the soft power elements we talk about in this case. Noting the importance of the civil society and the public opinion as well, in the Commission communication from 2012 is stated:

> An empowered civil society is a crucial component of any democratic system and is an asset in itself. It represents and fosters pluralism and can contribute to more effective policies, equitable and sustainable development and inclusive growth. It is an important player in fostering peace and in conflict resolution. (…) CSOs therefore contribute to building more accountable and legitimate states, leading to enhanced social cohesion and more open and deeper democracies (Commission Communication, 2012).

That benefit for the state is in the funding of the projects of the civil society, and the EU is bring its benefit according its priorities and if the project is not according the needs of the EU toward evaluation it will be denied. In the Progress report 2013 are set the follow areas

> (…) dialogue and cooperation between government and civil society needs to improve in practice, notably with those organizations dealing with social reform, gender equality, Roma, and lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex (LGBTI) rights. The government needs to show greater openness to involving civil society.

On that way the EU is modeling the behavior of the state institutions but the civic sector too, appeals on their mutual co-operation, setting patterns and areas of acting. Mostly there are areas of significant meaning as value pillars of the EU policy, but they are not so much promoted in these parts of Europe. On this way the EU make a promotion of them aims acceptance by the subject/state. The soft power could use the public opinion in two ways: indirect way, where the public opinion is used as a tool for achieving particular political goal, and direct where the public opinion is an aim itself. At the first, the indirect way means "communication to the public of the other states in manner of influencing the opinion of the other states over the indirect model" (Nye, 2012). In this case the public opinion is a tool which modified the public opinion in matter to impact the behavior of the government. At the second, the direct way means modeling to the public opinion not to impact the opinion of the government but for other goals. It could be trade, new values, new way of living etc. The European Union in the relation to the Republic of Macedonia practices the both of the models. Through the direct model the public opinion the EU make an area for acceptance of the EU's values, the way of working, through informal model of education, a lot of programs and present of the standard and the lifestyle of the EU. So, the EU attracts the public, creating a base for further political changes. If the population would be "pro-European" oriented the further political changes would be welcome and accepted. Otherwise, if the government would act in an unacceptable way for the public, the public opinion is a main reviewer to the policy, forming the government behavior according to the accepted worldview. Although the process last with years the public is directly involved in the whole process of the case of the Republic of Macedonia, the EU obviously pays a lot of attention toward the public

i.e. public opinion, using it as a tool and as a goal, also. According to the survey made by the Institute for Democracy "Societas Civilis" supported by Konrad Adenauer Foundation, shows the Macedonian public opinion is in direction to the EU integration and beside the long last process and the uncertainty of the membership.

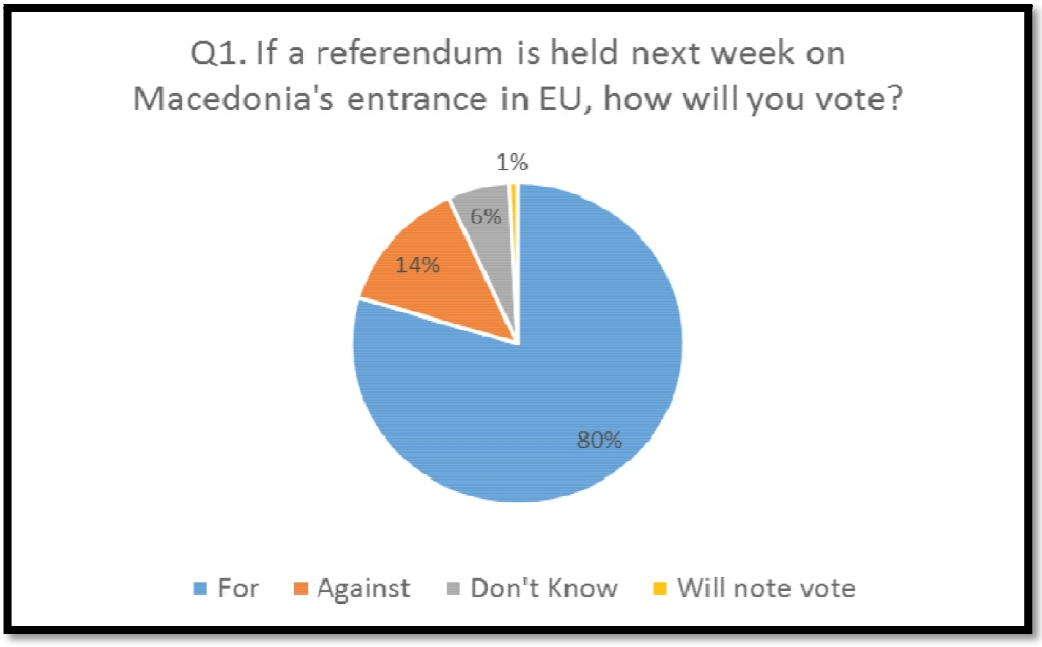

Figure 1: If a referendum is held next week on Macedonia's entrance in EU, how will you vote? (Source: IDSCS, 2014)

> *Support for the European integration of Macedonia is high. A large majority of the respondents (80%) said that if there is a referendum for Macedonia's entry in the EU, they will vote in favor, while a small minority of 14% will be against (IDSCS, 2014).*

The survey shows the successfulness of the European Union in aspect of modeling with the public opinion in a way desired by the EU. That should means the direct factor of the public opinion is the EU only not the government of the Republic of Macedonia. That could be seen by the answer of the question, that concerning the fulfillment of the criteria and the progress of the state.

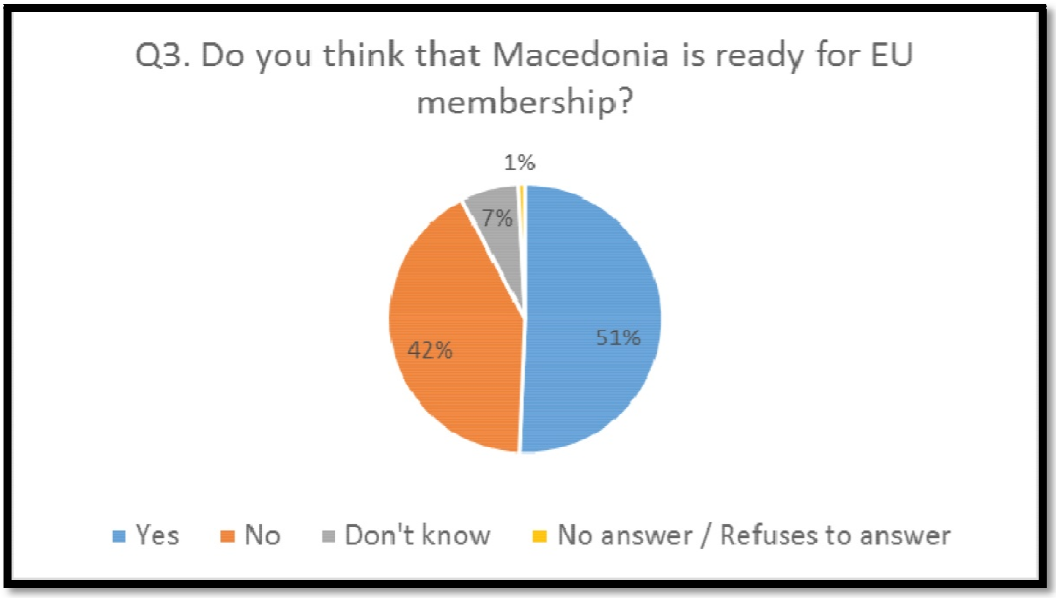

Figure 2: Do you think that Macedonia is ready for EU membership? (Source: IDSCS, 2014)

Half of the population thinks that Macedonia is ready for EU membership. Fifty one percent think that Macedonia is ready for EU membership, while 42% think it is not. The citizens are divided in their evaluation of the progress in the EU integration process over the last year. Almost half of the respondents (47%) have an opinion that Macedonia advanced in the process, while 20% think that the advancements are small. Almost one third (31%) of the respondents consider that progress is lacking or there was a regress (IDSCS, 2014).

If we sum that 47 % of the responders think that the state have advanced versus the sum of the responders that think the progress is small (20%) i.e. it stagnates and regresses, than we get 51 % of the responders think the Republic of Macedonia is not ready for the EU, but 80 % of the responders believe the membership is necessary, though. Thus despite the negative opinion on the advance of the Republic of Macedonia in relation to the EU membership, the result is positive. It additionally confirms the result where "almost every second respondent (48%) says the Report will be the same as last year, while 28% think that it will show progress…" that means the Progress reports not always match to the reality and the perception of the public. The public opinion on accession of the state in the EU is not a result of the state reforms in the political system by the government, but as a result of the value – cultural framework and the other elements the EU uses in forming of the public opinion. That attitude toward public opinion (according to the responders) is a result on the intention of implementation the EU soft power.

CONCLUSION

From the case study with the Republic of Macedonia, can be noted that the fulfillment of the Copenhagen criteria is not always in proportion to the Progress reports, partially it is because of the inability to be followed its fulfillment because of its generality, and partially because of the ability for manipulation with the facts by the government. Any additional news is not introduced with the High Level Accession Dialogue nor anything is changed in favor of the enlargement process, but the attention and the hope for membership in the EU are kept. From the survey used to measure the public opinion and the attitude toward the EU, additionally confirms the previously exposed conclusions by the research, the Progress reports and the measures accepted by the government, for the enlargement process.

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