

Freedom of movement: Where does it stand now?

The fall of the Iron Curtain in 1989 meant a completely new political environment in Europe. The Central and Eastern European countries were now eager to join the European Community, for a series of political, economic and security reasons. For many of them 'EU membership also meant Europeaness'³³ and their rejoining of the democratic club from which they had been separated for such a long time.

³³ D.Dinan, *The Road to Enlargement*, in M.G.Cowles and D.Dinan (eds.), *Developments in the European Union 2*, (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004), p.9

The road however, has not been smooth and many difficulties still exist. Although ten of them have joined the European Union, they are not full members as transitional arrangements on the free movement of their citizens are in place. It is the aim of this chapter to discuss the motives that conducted the EU15 to impose such transitional arrangements as well as the Union's inability to adopt a common stance on the matter. The analysis of the extent to which these arrangements have been successful will form the ultimate part of the section.

2.1. Background of the 2004/2007 enlargements

The European Union took note of the CEECs interest to join the Community and clarified membership terms at the Copenhagen Summit in 1993 when it decided that only 'European countries, with liberal democratic free-market systems, would be considered as long as this was not likely to disrupt the process of European integration'³⁴. EU's willingness to enlarge came on the grounds of its desire to 'promote stability, democracy and economic reform in the region'³⁵ and accelerate the process of integration.

These were the basis on which the accession talks which led to the

³⁴ *Ibid.*, p.11

³⁵ D.Dinan, *Ever Closer Union: an introduction to European integration.*, p.145

2004 and 2007 enlargements were conducted. The 2004 round was the largest enlargement in the history of the EU and comprised eight CEECs (Hungary, Poland, The Czech Republic, Slovenia, Slovakia, Latvia, Lithuania and Estonia) and two smaller Mediterranean countries (Cyprus and Malta). There were only two countries to join in 2007 - Bulgaria and Romania. The impact was considerable from a variety of points of view and shall be analysed in the paragraphs to come.

We should first mention that apart from the two Mediterranean States, all the other entrants used to belong to the ex-communist bloc³⁶.

³⁶ G.M. Fontes Chammartin, F. Cantu-Bazaldua, Migration prospects after the 2004 enlargement of the European Union, *International Migration Papers* 73, *International Labour Office Geneva*, available at: <http://www.ilo.int/public/english/protection/migrant/download/imp/imp73.pdf>, accessed 20th December 2007, p.iii

Their accession added a total of 120 million people to a Community already comprising 380 million, thus a 31,5% increase of the population³⁷. At the same time this also meant the introduction of ten additional economies into the Single Market and offering their citizens the same rights that were enjoyed by those of the old Member States. In practice, it translated into granting them the European citizenship with everything that it entailed as was described in the previous chapter, including the right of free movement.

In other words, 120 million people were now theoretically able to change their country of residence and seek employment in any one of the other Member States, be they the new or the old ones. This perspective, corroborated with the income gap existing between the EU15 and the new accession countries led to many fears that ‘if

³⁷ *Ibid.*, p.1

the citizens of the New Member States were given freedom to work throughout the EU, they would migrate en masse'³⁸, which would have a number of 'undesirable effects on labor markets and income distribution'³⁹, conducting mainly to 'a deterioration of living standards of the unskilled workers, associated with job displacement and wage losses'⁴⁰. These fears were also coupled with the prospect of Turkey, an even bigger, yet poorer country joining the European Union in the future.

It was particularly this last point, the granting of the right of free movement which started the heated debates that were conducted prior to

³⁸ *Ibid.*, p.1

³⁹ T. Boeri, H. Bruckner, *Eastern Enlargement and EU Labour Markets: Perceptions, Challenges and Opportunities*, available at http://www.eabcn.org/research/documents/boeri_brucker.pdf, accessed 11th November 2007, p.1

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, p.1