

Abstract

This thesis studies the positions EU member states take towards the Western Balkan Enlargement. We examine what forms these positions. We examine what influence does the net contribution to the European budget have, net contributors are less likely to support further Enlargement. The levels of migration and the feeling that migration is a concerning issue do not have relevant influence on the popularity of the Enlargement. We found no relevant correlation between the feeling of European citizenship and the support for the EU membership for the Balkan countries. We can, however, see that the New Member States are much more likely to support the EU enlargement than are those who became EU members before 2004. We have chosen four cases for case studies. In the case study of France, we can observe the influence of the French president on the Enlargement process and the resulting reform of its method. In the German case, the position of the political elites is a strong support of the Enlargement, even if the public are not that enthusiastic and have a lot of influence, since the German parliament has to also approve beginning of any accession talks. In the case of Greece, we can see how Greece was able to use its position as an EU member and gain leverage in their dispute with Macedonia over the name of the country. In the case of Slovenia and Croatia, we can see the danger of bilateral disputes slowing down the accession process of the Western Balkan Countries.