

REPORT ON THE MASTER THESIS

IEPS – International Economic and Political Studies, Faculty of Social Sciences, Charles University

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|--------------------------------|---|
| Title of the thesis: | The European Union and expansion – potential borders of the European Union |
| Author of the thesis: | Denisa Dočkalová |
| Referee (incl. titles): | Mgr. Martin Riegl, Ph.D. |

Remark: It is a standard at the FSV UK that the Referee's Report is at least 500 words long. In case you will assess the thesis as "non-defendable", please explain the concrete reasons for that in detail.

SUMMARY OF POINTS AWARDED (for details, see below):

| CATEGORY | POINTS |
|---|---------------|
| <i>Theoretical background (max. 20)</i> | 15 |
| <i>Contribution (max. 20)</i> | 14 |
| <i>Methods (max. 20)</i> | 15 |
| <i>Literature (max. 20)</i> | 18 |
| <i>Manuscript form (max. 20)</i> | 18 |
| TOTAL POINTS (max. 100) | 80 |
| The proposed grade (1-2-3-4) | 1 - 2 |

You can even use a decimal point (e.g. giving the grade of 2.5 for 60 points).

Comments of the referee on the thesis highlights and shortcomings (following the 5 numbered aspects of your assessment indicated below).

1) Theoretical background: Author's research is based on core – periphery theory which enables author to identify peripheral countries of the EU which are generally less economically developed or advanced than countries of the core. Besides, the theory of multi-speed Europe or so called differentiated integration theory is also applied in the thesis. The author has also utilized influential works of international relations' experts (S.Cohen's multilateral geopolitical approach) and geopoliticians (G.Friedman's geopolitical analysis) which are particularly important in order to understand the geopolitical importance/ratio and broader impact of the EU enlargement.

2) Contribution: The main goal of the submitted thesis is to identify the future potential borders (member states) of the EU, which is a highly topical theme not only due to recent crisis in Ukraine or Greece. The EU not knowing its borders is a matter of the fact. Furthermore the author provides the conclusions which countries could be integrated in the EU framework in the future.

To sum up my review Mrs. Dočkalová presents an analysis of how potential members/candidates perform, and what would be the geopolitical impact of EU enlargement. The author has managed to collect extensive data set related to prospective EU members. The empirical analysis is the most value added part of the thesis. While I am sympathetic to analysis of the limits of EU expansion, but in order to have a valuable contribution the thesis should also provide original research or a transformative synthesis which would make the thesis innovative.

3) Methods: The hypotheses of the thesis are following: 1) "The European Union is able to incorporate additional new members and the expansion or the reduction of the European Union is a dynamic process, 2) most suitable future members are economically stable and homogeneous, 3) both current and potential member countries can be grouped into categories." The analytical part of the thesis uses combined methodological approach involving the qualitative and quantitative assessment of the economic, political, geographical, and civilization factors of the EU member countries and its potential members.

To meet the above mentioned goal of the thesis, both qualitative and quantitative methods are applied in the thesis. Furthermore empirical and comparative method is used throughout the thesis. The author has chosen a whole bunch of countries which represent specific group of non-European countries: Switzerland (part of the core), Turkey (as an exceptional countries bridging the EU and the Middle East), Ukraine (one of remaining Eastern European outsiders), Bosnia and Hercegovina (torn apart by a civil war in 1990's) and Georgia (facing Russia's backed separatist regions). Except of Switzerland representing a group of (ex)EFTA countries still reluctant to join the EU, all analyzed states are trapped in the periphery of the EU.

4) Literature: The author quotes very extensive, relevant and recent literature which shows that the author has a profound knowledge of the literature concerning the topic. The author further analyzes relevant documents such EU documents, statistical data etc.

5) Manuscript form: The thesis is clear and well structured into five chapters (including introduction and conclusion), the author uses appropriate language and the thesis has proper academic format.

DATE OF EVALUATION: 10.6. 2015

Referee Signature

The referee should give comments to the following requirements:

1) THEORETICAL BACKGROUND: Can you recognize that the thesis was guided by some **theoretical fundamentals** relevant for this thesis topic? Were some important theoretical concepts omitted? Was the theory used in the thesis consistently incorporated with the topic and hypotheses tested?

Strong Average Weak
20 10 0 points

2) CONTRIBUTION: Evaluate if the author presents **original ideas** on the topic and aims at demonstrating **critical thinking** and ability to draw conclusions based on the knowledge of relevant theory and relevant empirical material. Is there a distinct **value added** of the thesis (relative to knowledge of a university-educated person interested in given topic)? Did the author explain **why** the observed phenomena occurred? Were the policy implications well founded?

Strong Average Weak
20 10 0 points

3) METHODS: Are the **hypotheses** for this study clearly stated, allowing their further verification and testing? Are the theoretical explanations, empirical material and **analytical tools** used in the thesis relevant to the research question being investigated, and adequate to the aspiration level of the study? Is the thesis **topic comprehensively analyzed** and does the thesis not make trivial or irrelevant detours off the main body stated in the thesis proposal? More than 10 points signal an exceptional work, **which requires your explanation "why" it is so**.

Strong Average Weak
20 10 0 points

4) LITERATURE REVIEW: The thesis demonstrates author's full understanding and **command of recent literature**. The author quotes relevant literature in a proper way and disposes with a representative bibliography. (Remark: references to Wikipedia, websites and newspaper articles are a sign of **poor research**). If they dominate you cannot give more than 8 points. References to books published by prestigious publishers and articles in renowned journals give much better impression.

Strong Average Weak
20 10 0 points

5) MANUSCRIPT FORM: The thesis is **clear and well structured**. The author uses appropriate language and style, including academic **format** for quotations, graphs and tables. The text effectively refers to graphs and tables, is easily readable and **stimulates thinking**.

Strong Average Weak
20 10 0 points

Overall grading scheme at FSV UK:

| TOTAL POINTS | GRADE | Czech grading | US grading |
|--------------|----------|----------------|-------------------------------|
| 81 – 100 | 1 | = excellent | = A |
| 61 – 80 | 2 | = good | = B |
| 51 – 60 | 3 | = satisfactory | = C |
| 41 – 50 | 3 | = satisfactory | = D |
| 0 – 40 | 4 | = fail | = not recommended for defence |