

## EU Influence on the Cyprus Issue: From Association to Accession

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### RÉSUMÉ

Avec la signature du traité d'adhésion en avril 2003, l'Union européenne fait un pas historique en acceptant dix nouveaux membres, incluant Chypre, dès mai 2004. Bien que la décision d'inclure Chypre a été prise dans un climat d'euphorie générale, celle-ci a été minée par le fait que le processus d'adhésion n'a pas mené à une solution du problème chypriote. Il y a eu une controverse depuis 1993, date à laquelle la Commission européenne a émis son avis favorable à l'adhésion de Chypre sur l'influence que ce processus européen pourrait avoir sur une solution de la question chypriote. L'UE a toujours été optimiste, bien qu'il ait existé un gouffre entre les attentes et les véritables résultats. Le but de cette étude est de déterminer les intentions des décideurs politiques de l'UE sur le problème de Chypre et l'impact du processus de l'élargissement pour la création d'un climat plus conciliant, favorisant la coopération entre les parties concernées.

### ABSTRACT

With the signing of the Accession Treaty in April 2003, the European Union took a historic step to admit ten more countries by May 2004, including Cyprus. While the decision to include Cyprus was met with general euphoria, this was undermined by the fact that the accession process and the decision to enlarge had not led to a solution of the Cyprus issue. The degree to which the accession process can help trigger a solution has been a controversial issue since 1993, when the European Commission issued its Opinion (*AVIS*) on the application of Cyprus for membership. The EU has always been optimistic, although there has been a gap between expectation and outcome in reality. It is the purpose of this paper to assess the thinking of EU policymakers on the Cyprus issue and the impact of the enlargement process on promoting a more conciliatory climate for cooperation among the parties involved.

### Introduction

The EC-Cyprus relationship began in the form of an Association Agreement signed in 1972, and up until the 1990s the relationship was predominantly economic. It was only after the Commission's favourable

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Opinion (1993) on the application of the Republic of Cyprus to join the EU that the relationship effectively became ‘politicised’—and the EU’s relationship with Cyprus took on a new complexity—that of addressing the implications of enlargement to Cyprus if a solution to the island’s problem was not found. The Europeanization of the Cyprus issue in the 1990s forced the European Union to become involved once again as another international actor aiming to catalyze a solution to the Cyprus problem through the accession process. Indeed the EU consistently reiterated that the enlargement process could act as a ‘catalyst’ for the resolution of the Cyprus problem. It also consistently argued that both Greek Cypriots and Turkish Cypriots could benefit from the accession process if a solution was found before Cypriot entry to the EU family. The question this paper aims to address is that of ‘how’ EU policy makers believed that enlargement towards Cyprus (and Turkey) would act as a catalyst for a solution to the Cyprus issue.

When the European Commission delivered its favourable Opinion on the application of the government of Cyprus in 1993, it noted, “the adoption of the Community *acquis* would present no insurmountable problems, but that the division of Cyprus meant that the freedoms provided for under the EU Treaties could not be exercised fully throughout the island” (Andrews 1998: 17). Nevertheless, the Opinion also expressed the view that the process of accession would help to bring the communities in Cyprus closer together (Commission Opinion 1993).

Since 1993, the EU institutions have reiterated the view that the accession process could act as a catalyst for the solution of the Cyprus issue. At the Helsinki summit in December 1999, the EU confirmed Turkey’s eligibility to join, in the expectation being that this would aid the drive to finding a solution to the Cyprus issue. Turkey had been waiting for confirmation of its eligibility since the signing of its Association Agreement with the EEC in 1963, but had been denied such status in several Commission Opinions and Reports (1990, 1997) and European Council decisions (Luxembourg, December 1997), which had a detrimental effect on the Cyprus issue. The EU clearly believed that by linking Turkish accession with progress on the resolution of the Cyprus issue, it could bring pressure to bear on Ankara.

Following both the Helsinki (December 1999) and Copenhagen (December 2002) European Councils, regular statements and declarations have reflected EU optimism in the accession process and incentives that

accompany this as the 'best tool' for ensuring a peaceful coexistence of the two communities. The enlargement process and with it the tool of conditionality (carrot and stick) has clearly been at the forefront of the EU 'approach', and its belief that the accession process (for Cyprus and Turkey) would act as a 'catalyst' for the resolution of the Cyprus issue.

At the Copenhagen European summit in December 2002, EU member states agreed to review the Turkish application as early as December 2004. The EU clearly indicated that this decision and timing for reviewing Turkish progress was important in order to maintain the most powerful leverage on Turkey in moving towards a settlement. Since Copenhagen, the European Commission has also made certain concessions in order to encourage Turkey—one Commission official hinting that 'the criteria would be assessed at different levels and that if all political criteria are met then the economic criteria would not be an obstacle for opening negotiations' (<http://www.euoberver.com/index.phtml?aid=9087>).

Of course negotiation for a political settlement is not directly in the hands of the EU. Indeed, it has never been the primary responsibility of the EU—and it is important to recognize this at the outset. The EU is only one of many actors seeking a solution in Cyprus but the EU is the primary focus of this paper. This responsibility for negotiating a solution to the Cyprus issue has primarily been in the hands of the United Nations (UN) since 1974, and the high level agreements of the past were all agreed under the auspices of the UN (1977, 1979, 1992 'Set of Ideas').

On November 11, 2002, the UN Secretary General, Kofi Annan, in a renewed effort to resolve the Cyprus issue before the Copenhagen Summit, presented a comprehensive settlement plan (Annan Plan) to the leaders of the Greek and Turkish Cypriot communities, Glafkos Clerides and Rauf Denktash, and to the guarantor states of Greece, Britain and Turkey. Although this was not the first plan to be presented under UN auspices, it certainly represented one of the most ambitious attempts for a comprehensive settlement of the Cyprus issue<sup>1</sup>. The hope was that a settlement could be reached before the decision to enlarge the EU at Copenhagen in December 2002 – and there was no doubt that the timing of the summit was a key factor catalysing the renewed effort by the UN to find a solution through the Annan Plan.

The search for a solution to the Cyprus issue then, is diplomatically complex—the UN has been directly involved in negotiating a political settlement for many years. However, the EU has also directly and indirectly, through its process of *enlargement* and *inclusion*, contributed much to the climate of cooperation surrounding the current negotiations for a settlement. The assertion in this paper is that the EU has not necessarily had a clear strategy<sup>7</sup> on Cyprus vis-à-vis the political problem, due to the complexity of the issues involved internally and externally. A key question that this paper seeks to answer therefore is has the EU ever had an explicit strategy for addressing the Cyprus question or has it been based on the ‘strategy of hope’ underpinned by the enlargement process? It is suggested that the EU has had an implicit strategy based on a specific logic of ‘inclusion’ as a method of aiding the movement towards a settlement of the Cyprus problem —albeit *ad hoc* and uncoordinated at times.

In order to articulate this argument, the article will be broken down into three sections. The first section presents a brief history of EC-Cyprus relations. The second section will outline the developments in EU-Cyprus relations after the acceptance of Cyprus as an enlargement candidate in 1993. The final section will then analyse the actions and policies of the EU at the Helsinki and Copenhagen European Councils before drawing conclusions on the nature of the EU’s thinking and strategy on the Cyprus issue.

## Historical Overview

The relationship between the EEC and Cyprus, in the form of an Association Agreement signed in 1972, was an economically motivated one with only implicit political connotations attached. From the EEC perspective it made sense to draw Cyprus into the European club and make it economically interdependent. The reason for this however, was more strategic than economic from a European point of view. It had little to gain economically from Cyprus at that time, but the importance of attaining political stability in the region and the strategic importance of Cyprus as a bridge to the Middle East overrode any economic argument (Gaudissart 1996: 11). The aims and interests of the EEC have been longstanding and have not changed substantially since then. The Commission has succinctly noted these interests:

*... The stability and prosperity of the Mediterranean region are essential to the stability and prosperity of the Community. In a wider sense, the security of the community is at stake (local or regional conflicts, political instability, and terrorism) (cited in Redmond 1993: 2)*

There was no uniform agreement in Cyprus between the political parties or between the two communities as to the benefits of EEC association. There was also internal argument over with whom the EEC should be negotiating, as the constitution by this time had effectively collapsed. The EEC however, following UN resolutions, chose to negotiate with the recognised Greek Cypriot government, although it did manage to avoid positioning itself on either side and EEC Commissioner Christopher Soames stated that the agreement would be to the benefit of the whole population on the island (Redmond 1993: 66). The policy of neutrality towards each community on the island was a stance that would become prominent in the EU's strategy and thinking towards Cyprus in the future.

The Association Agreement between the EEC and Cyprus provided for the establishment of a Customs Union in two stages. The first stage provided for the phased reduction of tariffs on industrial goods and agricultural products. This stage was interrupted by the 1974 invasion<sup>3</sup> and was extended to 1987 by which time all criteria were met and all aims achieved. The interruption that the invasion brought with it did, however, result in a cautious and neutral approach by the Member States, in continuing to the next stage of the agreement. This impediment took two forms, economic and political. The economic aspect culminated directly from the economic and social destruction that the invasion had brought ([http://hri.org/Cyprus\\_Problem/europeanunion.html](http://hri.org/Cyprus_Problem/europeanunion.html)), which led to the EEC and even Cyprus covertly admitting that proceeding to the next stage would not be a viable or sensible step (Tsardanidis 1980: 359). Not to ignore the fact that some member states did not want further association as they produced goods, which were in direct competition with Cypriot products. The political aspect stemmed from the fact that the member states wanted to remain neutral in the eyes of the parties involved in the dispute, namely Turkey, Greece and Cyprus.

What happened in effect was that the first stage was extended through Additional Protocol Agreements, a method that would be used repeatedly

until 1985<sup>4</sup>, when a mandate was issued to the Commission for negotiations with Cyprus on the second stage of the Agreement. The Protocols and the financial assistance that came with them were to be used in the period 1976 to 1988 in order to enhance training and technology, industry and the infrastructure and for other economic and social developments in the Cypriot economy, for the benefit of all Cypriots (Cyprus-EC Relations 1989:4). The third Financial Protocol, worth 62 million ECU was signed in 1989, to develop projects in the Cypriot industry and help the Cypriot economy adjust to the changing competitive structure brought about by the EEC-Cyprus Customs Union Agreement (Meale and Erotokritos 1998).

The role of Greece, which acceded to the Community in 1981, along with the euphoria of completing the Single European Act (with a revision of policy towards Mediterranean countries) was to be decisive in this phase of EC-Cyprus relations (Gaudissart 1996: 15). The consent and support of Greece within the EEC institutional structure for a Mediterranean policy which gave a mandate for negotiating a Customs Union agreement with Cyprus, coupled with the positive political climate, led on May 22<sup>nd</sup> 1987 to a Customs Union Agreement between Cyprus and the EEC (Iacovou 1986: 5).

The problems faced by the EEC in dealing with Cyprus in this period were both of an *external* and *internal* nature. The EEC had to tread a fine line, trying to accommodate Member States (and non-members such as Turkey) and their conflicting views and all parties already historically involved in the dispute in Cyprus, two of which became members in 1973 (Britain) and 1981 (Greece) respectively. This was made even more difficult by the fact that the EEC did not want to become directly embroiled in the political conflict and hinder its neutrality (Interview: Hannay 1999). The economics and the politics however, were not easily disentangled and Turkey had already voiced its disapproval of the acceptance of Greece as a potential member in the 1970s. When dealing with Cyprus, the EEC had to balance the demands and views of the Turks as well as those of the Greeks and Greek Cypriots.

Externally, the UN had been in Cyprus since 1964, and had been negotiating for a settlement since 1974 – adopting and passing many resolutions with regard to the political problem in Cyprus<sup>5</sup>. The UN had the perceived neutrality to break the deadlock on the island and had established positions on the legality and illegality of the Cyprus situation, a major reason the EEC Member States were reluctant to become involved directly in the

dispute after its failed attempts in 1974 through the European Political Cooperation mechanism, to formulate a coherent action and policy towards Cyprus. The EEC did however, have a vested interest to preserve and enhance the peace and stability of the region by drawing Turkey, Greece and Cyprus closer to the European home through economic interdependence and linkage.

It was clear that in this particular period the involvement of Member States in a situation that was 'historically constructed' served to sharpen rather than placate national interests. This was particularly true of Greece, which after joining in 1981 became the "voice" and sole defender of Greek-Cypriot rights in order to try and bring Cyprus closer to the EEC. This early period in EEC-Cyprus relations suggests that first, history, in the form of already established international positions and perceptions on Cyprus by the actors involved in the dispute and importantly by the UN, served as the constraints and set the parameters for the EEC in its action and attitude towards Cyprus. Second, strategic concerns relating to stability and peace in the Mediterranean region also influenced the positions taken by the EEC on Cyprus, in particular with regard to the implications for Turkey (and NATO). Finally, the internal processes and politics of the EEC, and in particular the steadfast positions formed and taken by Greece in the Council, determined by their own historical relationship with Cyprus, (as well as differing positions taken by other Member States and their perceptions of the Cyprus problem) had implications for the direction of European policy towards Cyprus.

### **The Commission Opinion (1993)**

When Cyprus formally submitted an application to join the EC on July 4, 1990, the government of Cyprus believed that membership was a natural progression from its association, and that involving the EC in the Cyprus problem provided another avenue and another form of pressure in seeking a solution. For the EC, given the nature of events that it had to deal with in that period, it was more a matter of procedure, reflected in the fact that it took almost three years for the Commission to produce an opinion on the application. In reality, the period of the application saw the EC tackling problems of immense proportions on its borders and internally. Until these

were resolved and the TEU signed, Mediterranean enlargement was a secondary thought (Gaudissart 1996: 21).

An indication of the EU thinking on the Cyprus was given however, following a declaration at the Dublin European Council in 1990 (June):

*The European Council, deeply concerned at the situation, fully reaffirms its previous declarations and its support for the unity, independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity of Cyprus in accordance with UN resolutions. Reiterating that the Cyprus problem affects EC-Turkey relations, and bearing in mind the importance of these relations, it stresses the need for the prompt elimination of the obstacles preventing the pursuit of effective inter-communal talks...on the basis of the mission of good offices of the Secretary-General, as it was recently re-affirmed by Resolution 649/190 of the Security Council (European Stand on the Cyprus Problem 1994: 64).*

This statement set a precedent and highlighted two key factors for future decisions on Cyprus, including the application made by the government of Cyprus on July 4, 1990:

- Firstly, it tied relations with Cyprus inexorably to the Community's relations with Turkey<sup>4</sup>.
- Second, it deflected responsibility for the political problem to the previously agreed UN initiatives.

The suggestion here was not that the Community did not recognize the implications of the political problem for Europe, but that the resolutions and principles for solving the problem in Cyprus had already been 'set in stone' by the two communities<sup>5</sup> on the island and other involved parties under the auspices of the UN. This meant that although the EU had, "clear responsibilities towards Cyprus" and were willing to throw their full weight behind UN efforts, no separate initiatives that deviated from this would be taken (Interview: Hannay 1999). Hans van den Broek, president of the EC Council of Ministers at the end of 1991, confirmed the view that the EC would not play a direct or active role in Cyprus but would only support UN efforts (Theophylactou 1995: 117).



It was clear that the Commission was willing to play a stalling game on the application of Cyprus to the EC, in the hope that something would give. For the EC this was justifiable however, given the size of the internal reforms and the EC's reasoning of trying to remain neutral whilst also facing up to the fact that the political division would provoke mixed emotions from the Member States. From the Commission's perspective, it had to deliver an opinion that was fair to all sides but did not anger the Greeks nor unduly punish the Greek Cypriots and their credibility for membership because of the division of the island. It also had to ensure that Turkey would be compensated for any positive decision given on Cyprus.

Given the sensitive issues surrounding the situation, the Council of Ministers was willing to continue supporting the Commission in its quest and to reiterate the fact that with reference to Malta and Cyprus, "The Union will consider each of these membership applications on its own merits" (European Stand on the Cyprus Problem, 1994). This was hardly the most pro-active stance that could be taken by the EU but one that suited the interests of the EU at the time. It meant that a positive message was given to both Cyprus and Malta, whilst at the same time, not alienating Turkey so soon after their application for membership had been rejected by the Commission.

The Commission's opinion in 1993 on the application of Cyprus to join the EU was favourable and re-affirmed Cyprus's European orientation and eligibility for membership (Commission Opinion, 1993). There were three important areas on which the Commission's opinion focussed:

- The eligibility of the Republic of Cyprus for membership
- The ability of Cyprus to adopt the *acquis communautaire*
- The political problem and the implications for accession

The Commission, having recognized that the Cyprus question had never left the agenda of the United Nations Security Council since 1960 and that, "diplomatic efforts conducted under United Nations auspices to bring about a mutually acceptable institutional solution had been blocked by the intransigence of both sides" (Commission Opinion, 1993) confirmed, "beyond all doubt, [Cyprus's] European identity and character" and was willing to validate "its vocation to belong to the Community" (Commission Opinion, 1993).

The opinion also recognized and rejected the Turkish Cypriot challenges to the legality of the application by the government of the Republic of Cyprus. The Union was following decisions made by the United Nations in the past on Cyprus and stated clearly that,

*The Community... following the logic of its established position, which is consistent with that of the United Nations where the legitimacy of the government of the Republic of Cyprus and non-recognition of the "Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus" are concerned, felt that the application was admissible (Commission Opinion 1993).*

There was also recognition, however, that when assessing the eligibility of Cyprus the greatest respect and regard would be paid to the links between the two communities and other countries, namely Greece and Turkey. With reference to Turkey specifically the opinion reflected its "major strategic, political and economic importance to the Community" (Commission Opinion 1993).

On the issue of the adoption of the *acquis communautaire*, the report stipulated that although the north and south would face several problems, (the former more than the latter) it appeared that none of these would prove insurmountable in the context of an overall settlement of the Cyprus problem. The Commission was very optimistic that the south had the instruments and the political will to adapt to the challenge of integration and that accession, if perceived in the right manner by the north, would help close the economic gap between the two communities.

On the issue of the Cyprus problem and accession, the Commission was somewhat more ambiguous. For the first time, however, there was recognition that inter-communal talks under the direction of the Secretary-General could fail and that the Commission would have to reassess the situation in light of the positions adopted by each party in the talks. Accession would then have to be reconsidered, it concluded, in January 1995. Other than this, however, a solution was still at this stage an implicit pre-requisite for accession. The Commission was convinced 'that the result of Cyprus's accession to the Community would be increased security and prosperity' but that the practical problems that would be encountered without a solution would make it very difficult to apply certain parts of the community legislation e.g. the fundamental freedoms. It noted in particular that,

*The fundamental freedoms laid down by the EEC Treaty, and in particular freedom of movement of goods, people, services and capital, right of establishment and the universally recognised political, economic, social and cultural rights could not today be exercised over the entirety of the island's territory. These freedoms and rights would have to be guaranteed as part of a comprehensive settlement restoring constitutional arrangements covering the whole of the Republic of Cyprus (Commission Opinion 1993).*

The Commission thus concluded that, “Cyprus’s integration with the Community implies a peaceful, balanced and lasting settlement of the Cyprus question” (Commission Opinion 1993). It was hoped that by sending out a positive signal to the people of Cyprus and attaching with it a time-frame for assessment, *this would act as a catalyst for finding a solution to the problem under UN direction and smoothing the road for accession by the whole of the island.*

### **Post-1993**

Many important decisions were made between 1993 and 1999 on Cyprus and Turkey, which had implications for the Cyprus issue. These included a decision in 1995 to proceed with the Turkey-EU Customs Union and an agreement to allow Cyprus to begin accession negotiations six months after the 1996 IGC; Agenda 2000, the acceptance of Cyprus as a candidate country at the Luxembourg European Council Summit in 1997; and the beginning of accession negotiations in 1998. The EU thinking on Cyprus, however, did not change radically – although one important detail became much clearer and unequivocal – that the settlement of the Cyprus problem could not be regarded as a pre-condition for Cyprus’s entry to the EU – despite unilateral assertions by certain Member States to the contrary e.g. France (Interview, CFSP official, anonymous 1998).

The EU upheld its position of ‘neutrality’. Dick Spring, President of the EU in the latter part of 1996, stated that, ‘accession is in the interest of both parts of the island and we want to work in that direction’ (Spring 1996)<sup>8</sup>. Commissioner van den Broek also adopted this line and the insistence that, ‘Cyprus’ accession to the EU could also act as a catalyst for the efforts under

UN auspices to finding a solution to the Cyprus question' (van den Broek 1997:3). From the European perspective, the optimal scenario would almost certainly have been accession talks with a unified Cyprus, but on many occasions Commissioner van den Broek had gone to great lengths to emphasise that this was 'not a condition which you can put on the table' (Cyprus News (b), 1998). He had also made it clear however that, 'both communities of Cyprus [would] derive considerable political, economic and social benefits from EU membership' although he said he could not envisage this scenario 'without any movement on the political side' (van den Broek 1997: 5).

Predictably this view is one that both the Greeks and the Greek-Cypriots had always maintained and, in the case of Greece, promoted within the EU'. Turkey, however, did not see it in this light, despite Commissioner van den Broek's message that, 'the opening of the accession negotiations with Cyprus is not directed against the Turkish Cypriot Community or Turkey' (van den Broek 1997: 4). Indeed, in a speech to Turkish Cypriot businessmen and politicians in February of 1997, he gave a clear message that "Cyprus is being offered the considerable prize of EU membership" going on to say to the Turkish Cypriot audience, "Whether you accept it and all it has to offer is for you to decide" (Cyprus News (b) 1998).

Despite many EU assurances about the guaranteed security of the Turkish Cypriots within a EU umbrella if a federal solution was agreed upon, for Turkey, the position was resolute and clear as far as EU accession was concerned. There could be no entry of Cyprus to the EU without the permission of Turkey being granted first and without the consent of the Turkish Cypriots. In addition, any entry of Cyprus into the EU would have to be accompanied by a parallel move for Turkish entry. Turkey also threatened to annex the northern two fifths of the island if the Union admitted the government of Cyprus represented only by the Greek-Cypriots (Mortimer 1997). So although the EU attitude reflected the view that the issues of enlargement/accession should be kept separate from finding a political solution in Cyprus, informal links between the two issues were unavoidable and reflected the weakness in the EU's approach.

Additional to these threats, warnings were also given by Tansu Ciller, Turkey's Foreign Minister at the time. She threatened that if Turkey's re-application for membership of the EU in January of 1997 was not seen in a positive light then there would be serious consequences. In particular

Turkey threatened that if they were not admitted into the EU structures, the planned enlargement of NATO would be vetoed (Mather 1997: 5). The source of these threats was Turkey's frustration with the West's acknowledgement and use of Ankara during the Cold-War era in defending Western values, only to be rejected by the EU in the 1990s because they were not good enough (Mather 1997: 5).

Once again it seemed the Cyprus issue within the EU could not be detached from the question of Turkey and Greece. EU involvement in the Cyprus issue was hardening the stances of all sides concerned and raising the question of how far the line between accession and the solving of the political problem was becoming increasingly blurred. It was clear that disagreement within the EU on how to tackle the triangular question of Turkey, Greece and Cyprus was also a major hindrance to future thinking on the situation with regard to action and strategy – it would require diplomatic coherence and a consistent and common stance. This was something that the EU possessed in principle on the issue of enlargement to Cyprus. However, given the international constraints, the diversity of opinion institutionally and between Member States in the Council of Ministers, added to the incremental nature of EU foreign/external policy, it seemed that the EU was incapable of any form of long-term strategy to deal with the ramifications that this brought with it concerning the political problem in Cyprus. In particular, there was no alternate 'real' strategy to deal with the scenario of Cyprus's accession negotiations being completed before any political solution was found. One CFSP diplomat dealing with the Cyprus issue captured the problems in formulating policy towards Cyprus in the EU in the following statement:

*In terms of the enlargement process and what happens if there is no political solution to the Cyprus problem once and if negotiations have been concluded – this has not been adequately or sufficiently discussed in the Council and its various official fora. This poses a very difficult question for the Council ... The Council prefers to play a waiting game and hold to the position and principle that the accession process may act as a catalyst and contribute to a solution – this is in the hope that something or somebody (Turkey) will eventually give. The attitude is – why discuss it now because anything could happen that could contribute positively in finding a solution (Interview: Official - CFSP official, anonymous 1998).*

In other words the EU's implicit strategy was one of enlargement and inclusion—plus the hope that the involved parties, in particular those seen as intransigent (Turkey, Turkish-Cypriots) would realize the benefits of such a process, and move towards a more conciliatory stance on the Cyprus issue. However, although the EU was aware of the link between the Cyprus issue and progress in EU-Turkey relations, EU thinking on Turkey was more than just about Cyprus. In this sense the EU had to proceed with caution and, as a result, attitudes towards the Cyprus issue hardened until the Helsinki European Council in 1999.

### EU Positions and Reactions

After the deal struck at the 1995 General Affairs Council allowing progress on the Turkey-EU Customs Union and Cyprus-EU relations, *Agenda 2000* was to be perceived in very different ways. It resulted in both positive and negative repercussions with regard to accession, and a potential solution to the Cyprus problem. The issue of enlargement was again to prove controversial because enlargement and the political solution, despite the obvious link, were treated as separate processes. Although the Commission was aware of the implications of enlargement for a political solution in Cyprus, they chose to disassociate themselves from it and concentrate on the economic, social and legal issues that confronted them. There was a consensus that the political question, which raised difficult and unresolved questions in the Council, would be left in the capable hands of the UN. The EU was neither willing nor able to discuss future scenarios in relation to Cyprus—the thinking remained very much in the short term and a concentration on completing accession negotiations. What would happen after this the EU and its Member States had not and could not decide (Interview: CFSP official, anonymous 1998; Interview: Senior Commission official, anonymous 1998; Interview, Maurer, 1998; Interview Hannay, 1999).

For Cyprus, there was a positive message welcomed by both Greece and the Greek Cypriots. Following the Opinion issued in 1993 by the Commission, *Agenda 2000* confirmed and reiterated the view that for the south there would be no major obstacles or problems in the adoption of the *acquis communautaire*, although changes would still have to be made in the financial sector and in the area of Justice and Home Affairs. It also noted that the

Turkish Cypriots were much less well off per head than the Greek Cypriots in the south and that there had been signs of an increasing dependence on financial transfers from Turkey. In addition there was a reiteration of the fact that the EU fully supported all UN efforts to secure a settlement on the island and the belief that opening accession negotiations and including the Turkish-Cypriots in the enlargement negotiations would promote a political settlement (Andrews, 1998: 17). The Commission stated that:

*If progress towards settlement is not made before the negotiations are due to begin, they should be opened with the government of the Republic of Cyprus, as the only authority recognised by international law (cited in Andrews 1998:17).*

For Turkey this development was neither desirable nor acceptable, in particular since they were still seething about a European Commission Report in July 1997 that recommended excluding it from the first wave of applicant countries for ‘technical’ reasons. This was particularly annoying for the Turks, as it had come after re-affirmation from the EU-Turkey Association Council in April 1997 that Turkey was eligible for EU membership and would be judged by the same objective criteria as the other applicants<sup>10</sup>. In Agenda 2000 the Commission, after reviewing the economic, social and political climate in Turkey concluded “that the EU should continue to support Turkey’s efforts to resolve its problems, using the Association Agreement and the customs union as the foundations for developing closer political and economic relations” (cited in Andrews 1998: 25). The Report also highlighted the importance the EU attached to the resolution of ‘Regional problems’, although it strangely neglected any direct responsibility in helping to achieve this. It was stated that:

*Tensions in the Aegean can be overcome only through the settlement of the issues between Greece and Turkey in accordance with international law...and...the UN Charter. Moreover Turkey should contribute actively to a just and lasting settlement of the Cyprus question in accordance with the relevant United Nations resolutions (cited in Andrews 1998: 25).*

Again the developments concerning enlargement and increasing interdependence of Turkey with the EU were on the one hand being set out as independent processes while at the same time ‘the politics’ of the situation,

although fully acknowledged and made a condition of closer relations with the EU, was deflected to other established international institutions with regard to resolution. The EU was once again sending out contradictory messages to Turkey, condemning it for its behaviour and violations whilst also making sure not to 'exclude' it from the European club. At the same time, however, the EU showed no desire (or indeed capability) to become embroiled in the resolution of these problems other than through the politics of 'inclusion'. Immediately after Agenda 2000, a Commission communication on the further development of EU-Turkey relations reaffirmed the eligibility of Turkey for membership whilst also making other suggestions for further consolidating relations in certain policy areas and the CU<sup>11</sup>.

In the midst of the developments in EU-Cyprus and EU-Turkey relations, August 1997 also witnessed another failed attempt by the UN, in meetings in Troutbeck and Glion, to persuade the two leaders of the communities to agree on a package deal to resolve the long-standing dispute in Cyprus<sup>12</sup>. The Turkish Cypriot leader, Rauf Denktaş, citing the EU accession process as one of the major stumbling blocks to progression, attached extra conditions to the potential success of the UN. These pre-conditions included:

- The recognition of the illegal "TRNC" as a separate and independent state
- A confederal solution to the Cyprus issue
- The halting of the accession process until a political solution was found and the Turkish Cypriots could contribute to their future

For the Greek Cypriots, the international community and the UN in particular, this was unacceptable. For the Greek Cypriots, EU accession provided another excuse for the intransigence of the Turkish Cypriot leader. Turkey and the Turkish Cypriot leadership were not interested in a solution previous to these developments, so the argument that the EU was now a stumbling block, for them, was erroneous (Interview, Greek Cypriot diplomat, anonymous 1998). This was the view adopted by the EU and one that subsequently became a source of contention at the Luxembourg summit in December 1997.



## Luxembourg, December 1997

The Luxembourg European Council proved a significant and controversial affair in the relations between the EU and Cyprus, and the EU and Turkey. The assumption that the EU could act as a catalyst for a solution to the Cyprus problem would be dismissed by the perception and reaction of the Turks to the conclusions reached at the Council. On the other hand, the perception of the EU, Cyprus and Greece was altogether more positive and consistent as they saw it as a 'historic' decision that would benefit all parties.

The perceptions and reactions of Cyprus/Greece and Turkey to the conclusions of the Luxembourg Council were to prove as polarised as could be possible. The Greeks and Greek Cypriots maintained that accession would 'benefit the people of Cyprus as a whole' and contribute positively to the peace process, acting as a catalyst for a political settlement (Cyprus News 1997). The Turks saw it as another rejection by the European Union with negative consequences stating that, 'from now on the responsibility for all the negative developments to do with Cyprus ...will belong to the European Union' (Yilmaz 1997 cited in Tucker and Burnham 1997). This was also a period which saw greater American involvement and criticism in the EU's handling of relations with Turkey – something the EU was not willing to accept gracefully (Interview: Senior Commission Diplomat, anonymous 1998).

For the EU the European Council conclusions reflected a consistent and fair policy for all the actors concerned. On Cyprus, the summit's Presidency conclusions stated that Cyprus's accession,

*...should benefit all communities and help to bring about civil peace and reconciliation [adding that] the accession negotiations will contribute positively to the search for a political solution of the Cyprus problem under the aegis of the United Nations [which it stressed] must continue with a view to creating a bi-communal, bizonal, federation'<sup>3</sup>.*

The Council also reflected on a positive gesture by the Greek-Cypriot Prime Minister to include Turkish-Cypriots in the negotiation team and requested that this should be acted upon, as it was an important development in helping international efforts to find a solution to the Cyprus problem.

Although under the Luxembourg Agreement a single framework for the negotiations for the countries selected for accession was outlined, Turkey's hopes that it would be included in this were disappointed. Turkey's eligibility for accession to the EU was confirmed once again by the Member States, but they also reiterated that Turkey would be judged by the same objective criteria as those candidates selected. In this sense they also made it clear that Turkey neither economically nor politically met the criteria for entering the accession process. The Member States did, however, view the relationship with Turkey as significant and important and thus the European Council considered that it would be, "...important for a strategy to be drawn up to prepare Turkey for accession by bringing it closer to the EU in every field" (Andrews 1998: 26). In this context it was also made explicit in the Presidency conclusions that Turkey was invited to the European Conference that was to take place on 12 March 1998 in London, in advance of the launching of the accession process for new applicants.

The Luxembourg Council also made it clear that if Turkey wished to develop further and strengthen its relationship with the EU it had to vigorously pursue political and economic reforms,

*including the alignment of human rights standards and practices on those in force in the EU; respect for and protection of minorities; the establishment of satisfactory and stable relations between Greece and Turkey; the settlement of disputes, in particular by legal process, including the International Court of Justice; and support for negotiations under the aegis of the UN on a political settlement in Cyprus on the basis of the relevant UN Security Council resolutions (Andrews 1998: 26).*

The EU's strategy sent out two clear messages for Turkey:

- The first was that Turkey and its relations with the EU were valuable and important – the development of a 'European Strategy' for Turkey and a reconfirmation of its eligibility demonstrated that it was important for the EU to keep Turkey close to Europe and the door open.
- The second message, however, was that relations with the EU were conditional on certain values and principles being upheld. In particular with regard to the accession of Cyprus, the EU was not going to be blackmailed or threatened by Turkey.

British Foreign Secretary Robin Cook<sup>14</sup> reflected this in a statement when he stated that no party was ‘going to concede any kind of veto to Turkey over the application for Cyprus which should be judged on its own merits...’ (quoted in Andrews 1998: 26). Jean-Claude Juncker, the President of the European Council, also made it clear on 12 December 1997 that Turkey ‘must cease impeding Cyprus accession to the European Union. Turkey must make it clear that Cyprus can become a member’ going on to add that requests to stop Turkish threats to use military force in Cyprus from the international community and the EU had been ignored and that this was not acceptable (Andrews 1998: 26).

The post-Luxembourg reaction from Turkey was of anger and disillusionment with the EU stance. A government statement expressed the view that, ‘The EU’s attitude is far from constituting a solid and credible base to develop relations with Turkey’ (Tucker and Barnham 1997). After breaking off all political dialogue the Turkish Prime Minister, Mesut Yilmaz, announced immediately that Turkey would not attend the European Conference saying that, ‘Turkey’s attendance at the EU Conference had been made dependent on the fulfilment of conditions’. He rejected both the conditions and the significance of the Conference for Turkey whilst also warning the EU that after this decision his government would not discuss either the issue of Cyprus or its relations with Greece, with the EU (Ibid).

There were also threats to further integrate northern Cyprus with Turkey. In 1997 for example, there was a “TRNC”-Turkey Joint Declaration; both parties agreed to establish an Association Council between Turkey and the “TRNC”, with the aim of drawing up measures relating to economic and fiscal integration of the two countries, as well as partial integration in foreign policy, defence and security<sup>15</sup>. This clearly undermined any efforts at negotiation for peace under the UN framework of a bi-zonal, bi-communal federation. For Greece this reaction was unacceptable, stating that such a move would benefit none of the involved protagonists and would bring Turkey into direct confrontation with the EU. For the Greek Cypriots, Cyprus Foreign Minister, Ioannis Casoulides, emphasised that ‘Turkish threats would not be acceptable to the international community’ but he also added, that ‘if Turkey accepts what today are considered European values and principles, these can form the framework in which the Cyprus problem can be solved’<sup>16</sup>. The conditions stipulated for Turkey, embodying European principles, could hardly have justified the harsh Turkish reaction, given that

the UN had already formulated the declarations concerning territorial disputes and Cyprus at bilateral meetings between Greece and Turkey. The EU view was that Turkey could have seen the decisions made at Luxembourg in a more positive light and exploited the potential for Turkey to move closer to Europe (Interview: Van de Pas 1998).

The EU's strategy was clearly a balancing act, and the thinking behind it lay in the different Member States' perceptions of Turkey's relationship with the EU. Although all agreed on a process of rapprochement rather than a full pre-accession strategy for Turkey, countries such as Britain, Spain, Italy, Austria and France were all anxious to placate Turkey as far as possible, even if it was not necessarily because they wanted to see Turkey as an immediate member. The main motive behind this was strategic and the fear that if Turkey was left behind this would lead to resentment of the EU and a turn away from the west and towards more 'fundamental' forces in Turkey. There were also of course individual Member State interests concerning trade and access to markets in the Middle East.

Germany and Greece, although having no objection in principle to Turkish membership had many other reasons, based on national interest, for denying Turkey any part in the EU structure. Specifically, Greece had consistently used the EU as a forum and lever for trying to solve its own disputes with Turkey, in particular involving territory in the Aegean and the illegal occupation of Cyprus (Parikiaki 1999: 14). Germany's Chancellor Kohl had been unusually frank about Germany's objection when he stated after the summit 'a dramatic change in the number of Turks in Germany would not be tolerable to German public opinion nor to those in the rest of the EU' (Mortimer 1997). Both Greece and Germany wanted Turkey to be excluded from enlargement of the EU unless certain concessions were made in advance (Tucker 1997; Mortimer 1997).

### **The Helsinki European Council (1999)**

Up until the Helsinki European Council it could be argued that enlargement was the only policy that the EU possessed with regard to resolution of the Cyprus problem – and that this approach was not exactly proving a catalyst for a solution to the political decision in Cyprus. On the contrary Cyprus' application for membership could be characterized as a

'serious headache for the EU' (Yiangou 2002: 4). EU thinking and policy had hardened the attitudes of all sides in the dispute, with no signs of compromise from either Turkey or the Turkish Cypriots. There was a clear recognition by the EU that Turkey-EU relations had a direct impact on the Cyprus issue, but up until this time, the EU had not done enough to secure any leverage in terms of ensuring 'good behaviour' on the part of Turkey or the Turkish Cypriots.

Although Turkey aspired to become a member of the EC/EU for many years, Turkish applications to join the European club were consistently rejected by the EP, the Commission and the Member States of the EU because Turkey did not meet the conditions set by the Copenhagen criteria (and perhaps for other veiled reasons). This sent out negative signals to Turkey about its European orientation, but more fundamentally it had a detrimental effect in terms of changing Turkish minds on moving towards a Cyprus settlement. However, there is no doubt that a major factor in the improvement of relations between the EU and Ankara (and thus Cyprus) was the EU's decision to accord Turkey candidate status at the 1999 Helsinki European Council summit<sup>18</sup>. Indeed, according to Gordon, it "was a historic turning point that will have long-term benefits for the entire eastern Mediterranean region" (Gordon 2000).

There was a clear realisation on the part of the EU that in order to achieve a settlement in Cyprus, incentives had to be offered to Turkey if the promise of accession was to change minds in Ankara. The EU saw Ankara as a fundamental supporter of the illegal northern regime in Cyprus, and the policies of its leader, Rauf Denktash. Indeed, many view Ankara as key protagonist in the formulation of Turkish Cypriot positions and policies on the Cyprus issue. For the EU then, encouraging Ankara to change its mind and adopt a more compromising stance on Cyprus, in their minds, would help to create a more accommodating climate in which to resolve the Cyprus issue. The hope was that the benefits of accession to the EU for Turkey, which has been a long-standing ambition, would far outweigh the importance of its occupation of Cyprus for mainly strategic reasons<sup>19</sup>. As is pointed out by Bahcheli "western officials believe that – since EU membership is so highly prized by Turkish leaders – Ankara would agree to a negotiated Cyprus settlement along federal lines if it were given a clear timetable for accession" (2001: 218). Indeed the Turkish Ambassador to the EU in December 1999 suggested that "all the problems with Greece, the

Cypriot question...could be resolved rapidly...and easily if the EU agreed...to admit Turkey in to the European family” (Akyal 1999).

Alongside the EU thinking on Cyprus and Turkey, external events also provided a more positive climate for cooperation between Greece and Turkey (the earthquake diplomacy of 1999; see Avci 2002: 97). These combined changes in climate were subsequently reflected at Helsinki when Turkey was, after many years of trying, accepted as a candidate for membership of the EU. In the words of one commentator, ‘The Helsinki summit finally broke the Luxembourg deadlock, marking the end of one of the darkest periods in EU-Turkey relations’ (Tocci 2001). The Helsinki European Council concluded that:

*Turkey is a candidate State destined to join the Union on the basis of the same criteria as applied to the other candidate States. Building on the existing European strategy, Turkey, like other candidate States, will benefit from a pre-accession strategy to stimulate and support its reforms. This will include enhanced political dialogue, with emphasis on progressing towards fulfilling the political criteria for accession with particular reference to the issue of human rights, as well as on the issues referred to in paragraphs 4 and 9(a).*

In addition to recognizing Turkey as a candidate state, the European Union also confirmed that there would be no requirement for a solution to the Cyprus problem for Cyprus to be admitted to the EU:

*The European Council underlines that a political settlement will facilitate the accession of Cyprus to the European Union. If no settlement has been reached by the completion of accession negotiations, the Council’s decision on accession will be made without the above being a precondition. In this the Council will take account of all relevant factors.*

This statement did not explicitly exclude solution as a precondition – the fact that the Council could take into account ‘all relevant factors’ left room for manoeuvre in the final decision, and indicated a cautious approach from the EU. However, the fact that it was implicitly stated served the purpose of satisfying the demands of Greece (and the Greek Cypriots of course) – who were clearly opposed to any such preconditions. This decision by the EU

then, as well as appeasing Greece, served to ensure that the enlargement process as a whole continued on a progressive path.

In terms of EU-Turkey relations the Helsinki European Council was important in several ways. From a EU perspective it officially confirmed the candidate status of Turkey and reinforced its European orientation and confirmed its European credentials – a subject of bitter dispute up until then. In turn this provided a greater incentive for Turkey to pursue the reforms required by EU conditions. Not only this but confirmation of candidate status also meant that Turkey would receive and benefit from pre-accession instruments (e.g. financial aid, participation of Turkish delegates in EU organs) – which in the minds of EU officials, would help to facilitate the painful short and medium term reforms that Turkey needed to undertake (Interview, Commission: 2002).

At Helsinki the EU clearly acted upon a recognition that they had made years before, that for there to be any progress in moving towards a resolution on the Cyprus issue it had to be more forthcoming in providing the necessary climate for cooperation and reconciliation. Although the linkage between a Cyprus settlement, Cyprus' EU membership and Turkey's EU membership had been explicitly rejected whilst at the same time implicitly acknowledged, such linkage was 'explicitly' accepted at the Helsinki European Council in the hope that it could be used to encourage a win-win agreement (Tocci 2002: 3). As Turkey was a key actor in the dispute the EU hoped that 'enlargement' and the incentives that came with that - would change Turkish minds on Cyprus. Not only this, but Helsinki also sought to encourage the more positive climate of cooperation between Greece and Turkey (again with the hope that this would have a spillover effect on the Cyprus issue) that had begun with the earthquake diplomacy of April 1999.

However, although a brief period of euphoria pervaded EU-Turkey relations after Helsinki, the EU did adopt a more (traditionally) cautious approach thereafter, which in the words of Tocci, "...led to the proposal...of a 'special relationship' between Turkey and the EU as an alternative to full membership as an ultimate end-point of Turkey-EU ties". (Tocci 2001: 2). There were also, as in the past, criticisms from the EP on the failure of Turkey to fulfil conditions on human rights and the Kurdish issue. The nascent ESDP was also a cause of controversy; Turkey was not satisfied with its assigned role within its structures, and threatened to veto the use of

NATO assets unless it could be more actively involved in the decision-making process. The EU's cautious approach was justified through a reiteration of the fact that Turkey had not fulfilled the Copenhagen criteria or the condition with regard to resolution of the Cyprus problem, in particular the political aspects. However, such justifications did not work to placate those in Turkey who already had a deep-seated suspicion of European motives, and who believed that the insistence on fulfilling the Copenhagen criteria simply veiled the real reasons for the EU's reserved approach; that of religious and cultural prejudice.

Despite such problems however, and the internal disputes regarding Turkish membership, there were positive developments after Helsinki. The EU continued with its approach in developing and enhancing the relationship with Turkey in the belief that this would in turn, lead to greater Turkish pressure on the Turkish Cypriot leadership to move towards a settlement of the Cyprus problem. The EU approach was clearly embedded in the belief that EU membership for Turkey, in the long term, would clearly be more valuable than its 'strategic' interests in Cyprus. Perhaps the most important reason why the EU believed Turkey would want to work towards a Cyprus settlement was because the day of accession for Cyprus loomed ever closer – and that the ramifications of a divided Cyprus joining the EU would be potentially disastrous for Turkey and its interest vis-à-vis the EU. First, what is effectively an intercommunal or Greco-Turkish dispute would become a EU-Turkey dispute – presenting grave political, security and military implications in the context of the development of an ESDP. Second, if Cyprus acceded as a divided island, this would effectively, alongside Greece, give the Greeks greater scope to block Turkish accession to the EU without a resolution of the Cyprus issue (Tocci 2001: 4; Bahcheli 2001: 215-6). The EU's hope was that because such high costs were attached to intransigence vis-à-vis movement towards the resolution of the Cyprus issue – Turkey would become more pro-active in the search for a solution. Added to this were the positives for Turkey of a unified island joining the EU. As Barkey and Gordon have noted "the inclusion of Turkish Cypriots in the EU would have the added benefits of making Turkish an official EU language, and perhaps help to lower the psychological barrier to Turkey's eventual accession" (2001: 7).

The efficacy of the EU's approach however, was not vindicated by events immediately after Helsinki. Indeed, although Turkey-EU relations had



improved – attempts to launch UN proximity talks in order to negotiate a settlement (August 2000) failed due to a demand from the Turkish Cypriot leader that he be recognised as the legitimate head of government – a demand fully supported by Ankara. However, in November 2001, progress was made due to two factors: first, the pressures of the accession timetable and Cyprus' near completion of accession negotiations (as hoped by the EU); second, because of pressure from Turkey. In this context, there was an agreement to resume talks between the leaders of the two communities in Cyprus under UN auspices. The talks in themselves were a positive development given the stalemate that had existed before, even though no solution was agreed by the agreed deadline date of June 2002. According to one senior Commission official, these movements were directly attributable to the 'prospect of accession for Cyprus' and were 'delivered by the EU accession timetable'. (Interview, anonymous 2002).

### **The Copenhagen European Council 2002 and beyond**

Events preceding the Copenhagen European Council were characterized by internal disputes on the issue of when accession negotiations should begin with Turkey, and by inflammatory and controversial remarks by the former French President, Valéry Giscard d'Estaing (president of the convention), stating that Turkey must never be allowed to join the EU because it had 'a different culture, a different approach, a different way of life' (Black 2002: 16). In addition to this there was also great pressure from the US for a positive decision on early Turkish membership to the EU – pressure that was not appreciated by many inside the EU. Given the irrevocable link made by Turkey (and the EU) between progress on its own accession and positive movement on the Cyprus problem, this did not provide for the most agreeable climate for discussion and negotiation at Copenhagen.

The EU attempted to assuage Turkish misgivings and disappointment in the final conclusions of the Copenhagen Council. In terms of the eligibility criteria the EU welcomed 'the important steps taken by Turkey towards meeting the criteria' and acknowledged 'the determination of the new Turkish government to take further steps on the path of reform' (Presidency Conclusions 2002: 5). Moreover, through persuasion by Britain the final text was more positive. It made clear that:

*[i]f the European Council in December 2004, on the basis of a report and recommendation from the Commission, decides that Turkey fulfils the Copenhagen political criteria, the European Union will open accession negotiations with Turkey without delay (Presidency Conclusions 2002: 5).*

The conclusions also indicated that, “In order to assist Turkey towards EU membership, the accession strategy for Turkey shall be strengthened” (Presidency Conclusions 2002: 6). This would involve a revision of the Accession Partnership, an extension and deepening of the Customs Union, and greater pre-accession financial assistance for Turkey” in order to help Turkey to meet the political and economic criteria for membership. Turkey viewed the overall outcome of the Council as generally positive, despite what they perceived as the ‘double standards’ being applied by the EU. From a EU perspective Turkey had been given a firm date for opening negotiations: the only condition was the fulfilment of the ‘eligibility criteria’ for membership.

One senior EU official stated of the Copenhagen European Council that the ideal outcome would have been to ‘bag a Cyprus settlement, the accession of a united Cyprus, significant forward movement in EU-Turkish relations and a deal on EU defence policy’ (cited by Black 2002: 17). The only concrete achievement was in the latter of these objectives, where Ankara agreed to lift a long-standing veto on plans for the EU’s embryonic rapid reaction force to have guaranteed access to NATO’s planning capabilities. Marginal progress was made on Turkey-EU relations, and no tangible progress was made on a Cyprus settlement and the accession of a united Cyprus, despite renewed UN efforts and pressure, under Secretary General, Kofi Annan, to resolve the dispute - with the full support of the EU as in the past.

In terms of the EU’s approach to Cyprus the European Council confirmed its strong preference for a united Cyprus to join the EU, but as in the past it was reliant on the UN process in order to negotiate a settlement. In this context the EU welcomed ‘the commitment of the Greek Cypriots and the Turkish Cypriots to continue to negotiate with the objective of concluding a comprehensive settlement of the Cyprus problem...on the basis of the [United Nations Secretary General’s] UNSG’s proposals’.

In addition to this the EU also reconfirmed ‘its willingness to accommodate the terms of a settlement in the Treaty of Accession in line with the principles on which the EU is founded’ (Presidency Conclusions 2002: 3). The primary

tool available to the EU was once again enlargement – in helping to promote the correct climate for a positive outcome in any UN-led negotiations. More specifically the EU hoped that by promoting development across the island, in particular in the north, that this would facilitate political negotiations for a solution under the new UN plan ('Annan Plan'). Indeed the European Council decided that '...in the absence of a settlement...the Council invites the Commission, in consultation with the Government of Cyprus, to consider ways of promoting economic development of the northern part of Cyprus and bringing it closer to the Union'.

The EU approach on Cyprus at Copenhagen and since Copenhagen has followed a familiar pattern in terms of its two separate but intimately linked strands. First, it is clear that any EU strategy on Cyprus is inexorably linked to the EU's relationship with Turkey – and its progressive development. Thus the EU approach has been to promote and encourage Turkey to reform in order to meet the criteria for membership - although the EU has been constrained in this sense by internal disputes and the reservations of member states and prominent individuals in the EU, who are clearly sceptical about Turkish membership of the EU, some on legitimate grounds (in the sense that Turkey has not yet fulfilled the Copenhagen criteria), but others on grounds beyond that of the eligibility criteria. In terms of Cyprus itself, the prominent EU approach has been to emphasise the benefits the EU can offer to both communities on the island (in particular the north) and to attempt to encourage a greater climate for cooperation and agreement between the communities through economic and financial assistance.

## **Conclusions**

Overall it would be too strong to conclude that the EU has had clear strategy on Cyprus vis-à-vis the political problem, due to the complexity of the issues involved of internally and externally. The EU however, has had an implicit strategy based on a specific logic of 'inclusion' as a method of aiding the movement towards a settlement of the Cyprus problem.

There has been no attempt to develop a clear and separate EU strategy for the 'solution' of the Cyprus problem – the primary reason (or constraint) for this being the established UN frameworks and resolutions for resolving the dispute. The EU strategy for resolving the Cyprus issue has always been

through inclusion and enlargement – where it has an established and embedded frame of reference. The EU thinking on Cyprus has reflected the primacy of the UN process and framework for resolving the dispute on the island, while promoting the process of accession (in parallel) in the belief that this would act as a catalyst for a solution to the Cyprus problem.

Although the EU has never actually spelt out an explicit rationale for this stance, since 1993 there have been regular statements and reports alluding to the very idea that the result of “Cyprus’ accession to the Community would help to bring the communities on the island together” (Commission Opinion 1993) or that “progress towards accession and towards a just and viable solution of the Cyprus problem will naturally reinforce each other” (European Commission-Regular Report on Cyprus Progress towards Accession 1999). Such a belief has been grounded in the view that accession to the EU for Greek Cypriots, Turkish Cypriots and Turkey, is much more desirable than that of conflict and division – and in particular the strategic interests Turkey has had in Cyprus historically.

Through accession and enlargement, the EU strategy has had to balance the interests of the three key actors in the dispute: the Greek Cypriots, the Turkish Cypriots and Turkey, not forgetting Greece (and other Member States) inside the EU. Moreover having adopted UN positions on Cyprus, the EU recognized the legitimacy of the Greek Cypriot government of Cyprus, and believed that the central cause for the deadlock on the island was Turkish Cypriot intransigence, with the support and backing of Turkey. Therefore, the EU’s strategy and implicit reasoning was that it could offer appetizing incentives through accession to the involved parties, on the condition that movement was forthcoming on the settlement of the Cyprus problem. In this sense the EU hoped that through the logic of inclusion, a climate for cooperation and compromise would be constructed, which would in turn trigger a settlement.

Of course the enlargement strategy of the EU has not always been straightforward or consistent. The prospect of Turkish membership raised wider issues than that of its involvement in Cyprus. Indeed, despite the synergy between progression in Turkish EU relations and the resolution of the Cyprus problem EU policy towards Turkey was cautious and pragmatic, based on legitimate concerns about the fulfilment of economic and political criteria, but also unofficial concerns about the religious and cultural

implications of Turkey acceding to the European club. The future of the Cyprus issue will depend very much on how the EU reconciles the polarised views on Turkish accession to the EU in the near future.

The EU's strategy has been to convince the Turkish Cypriot community of the political, economic and social benefits open to them upon membership of the EU if a solution were found while consistently reiterating that the accession negotiations with Cyprus were not directed against the Turkish Cypriots or Turkey. The EU has allocated not only post-accession funds for the reconstruction of northern Cyprus, but substantial sums of money at the pre-accession stage to create the necessary political will for a solution on the island. Once again however, the key will probably lay in changing minds in Ankara as the Turkish Cypriot leadership has not yet been persuaded by EU incentives (even though the Turkish Cypriot population has) thus making the future of Turkey–EU relations even more important if a unified Cyprus is ever going to join the EU.

The process of accession and the EU's strategy of conditionality and incentives have not worked to 'catalyse' a settlement to the Cyprus issue as yet —*but it has not catalyzed catastrophe either*, as suggested by more pessimistic analyses (Olgun 2002). Such a strategy has been based on the hope that 'something would give' and that the enlargement process in parallel with the UN process would eventually persuade the involved parties to resolve their differences. The EU has always had a clear idea on their end destination (enlargement) – but the 'road map' for reaching this destination in relation to the Cyprus problem has been characterised by complexity, in particular the inexorable link between Turkey-EU relations and the Cyprus issue. The EU's rejection of the Turkish application up until Helsinki certainly exposed the EU's approach to the Cyprus issue as it only served to harden attitudes on all sides of the dispute. Since the Helsinki European Council in 1999, however, the accession process has worked to create a more positive climate for the negotiation of a solution to the Cyprus issue thus leading to the opening of the borders in Cyprus to allow Greek Cypriots and Turkish Cypriots to travel freely around the Island after Accession Treaties were signed in Athens on 16<sup>th</sup> April 2003. In this sense, it could be argued that the accession process is beginning to 'change minds' on Cyprus – and that the EU's implicit strategy is beginning to make a difference. It has not however, led to a solution of the Cyprus issue, and although the EU is only one actor among many that can make a difference the EU can certainly 'oil

the wheels' of compromise further, in particular with regard to Turkey: first, by being clear and consistent in its application of conditionality; second, by confirming and reiterating Turkey's European credentials; and third, by drawing Turkey further into the EU structures. A solution to the long-standing Cyprus issue would certainly be a very welcome initial application by-product of the EU's 'strategy of hope', underpinned and reinforced by the incentives offered through the enlargement process – although time is quickly running out if a unified Cyprus is to join the EU by May 2004.

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## INTERVIEWS

Conducted between 1998 and 2002 at EU level: Commission, Council of Ministers, and European Parliament.

## NOTES

1. See <http://www.can.org.cy/data/var/sxedioen.htm> for a copy of the plan. The original plan has since then been modified twice following intense negotiations between the Greek Cypriots and Turkish Cypriots on points of concern (A second plan was submitted on the 10th December 2002 and a third on the 24<sup>th</sup> February 2003). See <http://www.pio.gov.cy> for revised plans.

2. If we take strategy to mean purposive, goal directed behaviour to pursue more or less specified objectives, themselves as a result of the identification, prioritisation and articulation of interests. See Allen 1998

3. The European Commission did however present proposals for enhancement of the Association Agreement in 1976 although Member States were reluctant to adopt these proposals given the fragility of the situation in Cyprus at the time (Redmond 1993: 68).

4. Within the period 1976-1985 the following protocols were signed: On the 15<sup>th</sup> September 1977 an Additional Protocol Agreement was signed in Brussels which provided for the extension of the first stage until 31 December 1979. At about the same time Cyprus signed the First Financial Protocol worth ECU 30 million. On the 11<sup>th</sup> May 1978, Cyprus and the EEC, also entered into two new protocols: a special supplementary protocol which settled some additional agricultural issues in line with Mediterranean policy of the Community and another laying down certain provisions relating to the trade in agricultural products. A new transitional protocol was again signed on 7th February 1980 extending this Agreement and in July 1983 yet another special Protocol was signed which made additional concessions on customs duties and quotas on a number of agricultural products and lifted quotas on certain industrial categories. In addition, in December 1983, Cyprus and the EEC signed the Second Financial Protocol, which totalled ECU 44 million. See Cyprus-EEC Customs Union (1986);

Cyprus-EC Relations (1989); The Cyprus Problem: Cyprus Towards the European Union, [http://hri.org/Cyprus\\_Problem/europeanunion.html](http://hri.org/Cyprus_Problem/europeanunion.html). For a more detailed analysis of the economic measures see Tsardanidis (1984).

5. All UN resolutions on Cyprus can be found on: [http://www.hri.org/Cyprus/Cyprus\\_Problem/Undocs.html](http://www.hri.org/Cyprus/Cyprus_Problem/Undocs.html)

6. In reality this precedent had been set much earlier in as far back as Greece's application to the EEC in the 1970s. Turkey had previously submitted its application for membership to the EC in 1987 and the Commission in December 1989 issued an opinion. The opinion gave as one of its reasons for not granting Turkey early EC membership the various disputes with Greece, in particular over Cyprus, as obstacles.

7. The Greek Cypriot side was particularly effective at promoting and gaining legitimacy for its position at UN level (see Joseph 1997: 113).

8. See for details:

[http://www.pio.gov.cy/update/english/news/1996/96\\_09/960926](http://www.pio.gov.cy/update/english/news/1996/96_09/960926)

9. See for instance <http://www.MFA.GR/foreign/>

10. A reference was also made to Cyprus in the meeting through a joint position, which also acknowledged that lack of progress in solving the Cyprus problem would be to the detriment of Turkey, the EU and EU-Turkish relations. See: <http://www.kypros.org/PIO/english/update/news/1997/9705/970502.html>

11. <http://www.kypros.org/PIO/english/update/news/1997/9707/070716.html>).

12. For the reactions of both the Greek Cypriot President and the Turkish Cypriot leadership see *Cyprus Weekly*, August 22-28, 1997: 1.

13. <http://www.kypros.org/Embassy/Jan98/text.htm>.

14. Britain's special envoy for Cyprus, Sir David Hannay however, voiced the following opinion with regard to the EU's handling of the Turkish relationship, 'I think that the handling of the Turkish candidacy has been a bit clumsy frankly and I feel it has not been ...the EU has shown a tendency to try to answer questions that weren't being posed...nobody is asking the question at the moment ...can Turkey join the European Union now...The

Turks aren't asking it...no-one is asking it ...and yet we seem half the time try to answer that question when it is not being posed...its not being posed because the Turks accept that they do not fulfil the criteria..' (Interview: Hannay 1999)

15. On the basis of the 1997 joint declaration, there was agreement in 1998 to move towards a Turkey-“TRNC” ‘joint economic zone’ – thus formalizing the virtual *de facto* position. Annexation threats were also consistently made by the Turkish Cypriot leadership and importantly by Turkish elites.

16. <http://www.kypros.org/Embassy/Jan98/text.htm>

17. As was the more positive relations between Greece and Turkey after the earthquakes of 1999.

18. Even more so given the fact that certain quarters in Turkey do not believe Cyprus is of great strategic relevance for Turkey any longer (Atilla Kiyat, 30<sup>th</sup> Dec 2002, Translated interview)

19. The Council adopted on 17 December 2001 a regulation concerning pre-accession financial assistance for Turkey. The regulation reiterated the Commission's objective to establish pre-accession financial assistance, on average, at an annual level of 177 million. See <http://www.deltur.cec.eu.int/english/e-mali-view-new.html>