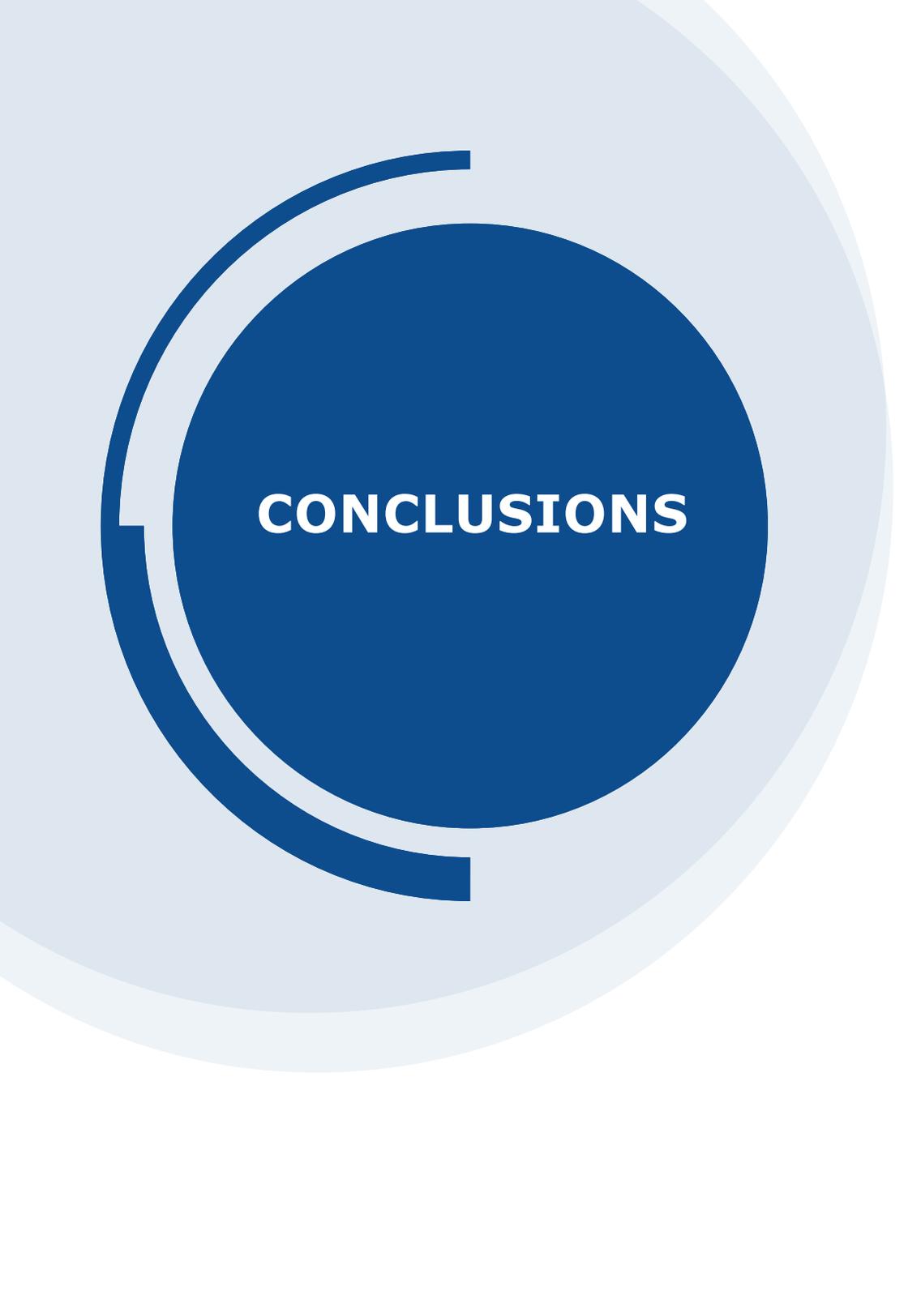


**ANALYSIS OF PUBLIC
OPINION ON MACEDONIA'S
ACCESSION TO
THE EUROPEAN UNION
2014-2016**

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CONCLUSIONS

- The trends regarding support for Macedonia's EU membership are stable and follow a predictable transition of frequencies.
- The tendencies of support for the accession process in Macedonia are clearly correlated with the credibility of the Macedonian perspectives for European Union membership.
- The multiyear decreasing trend of EU membership support in Macedonia continues in 2016 as well.
- This decrease corresponds with the fall of the credibility of the European Union's enlargement policy in Macedonia in the period after 2009.
- However, the value of 77% support for Macedonia's membership in the EU is still exceptionally high, especially if we consider the long stagnation of the accession process.
- There is a growing polarization of public perceptions on Macedonia's readiness for membership in the European Union.
- In the last two years there is a growing discontent with Macedonia's progress in the accession process, as well as a significant increase in the discontent with the domestic capacity and engagement on reforms.

- The general trends of support for EU membership to a certain extent correlate with the stagnation of the accession process, the negative effects of the political crisis on the country's governance, but also with the critical reports from the European Commission in the last two years.
- Material and economical factors are the most important incentives for attitude formation in regards to EU membership.
- The principal motivation for the high support of the accession process are the expectations of material and economic benefits from EU membership.
- Expectations of improvement of the living standard as a consequence of EU membership are a dominant factor for the support for EU membership.
- The support for Macedonia's EU membership is of a sociotropic nature. It is not based on expectations for personal material benefits from the accession process, but rather on the anticipation of the future societal economic benefits from EU membership.
- Although identity, ideological and value based factors are not decisive in the attitude formation on the support for EU membership, they explain the reasons for its long term decrease.
- The decrease of the support for EU membership is not a manifestation of growing euro skepticism deriving from the sense of cultural threat or a threats to national identity.

- The identity implications stemming from the name dispute with Greece is a key factor for the gradual decrease of the support for EU membership.
- If the name dispute as an obstacle in the accession process is left out, the support for EU membership reaches nearly 90%.
- There is a significant disparity in the support for EU membership between the ethnic Macedonians and Albanians when the support is conditioned with a change of the country's name.
- This gap is narrowing in the last two years due to increasing numbers of ethnic Albanians who don't support a compromise on the name as a precondition for membership in the EU.
- The political crisis in the country and the attitude of certain political elites towards the European Union's mediation role in its resolution does not have a serious negative effect on the support for the European integration process.



INTRODUCTION

During the last 15 years, the support for Macedonia's EU membership and its accession process appears as a subject of numerous public opinion researches. However, most of these researches are ad-hoc and they have rarely been effectuated in a longitudinal and consistent methodological framework. There is an obvious lack of unified data bases that would offer repetitive public opinion researches which would measure public attitudes through a generalized and coherent methodological frame across multi-year time periods. In order to fill this gap, the Institute for Democracy "Societas Civilis" – Skopje and the Konrad Adenauer Foundation in 2014 started to establish a long term data base on the public support of the accession process and Macedonia's membership in the EU, which would be effectuated through annual public opinion researches, based on a coherent methodology and measurement of identical variables. This data base is focusing on two dimensions of public opinion on Macedonia's EU accession process which are addressed in every annual research, and whose measurement is effectuated through utilization of identical batteries of survey questions. The first dimension seeks to determine the general trends of public support for Macedonia's membership in the EU. The second dimension's goal is to establish the determinants of such support through a long term analysis of influence of three factors: rationalist-utilitarian, identity based and cues from political elites and political parties. This accumulation of comparable data opens the way for establishment of more serious longitudinal analyses of the support for Macedonia's membership in the EU

and its determinants. Furthermore, as an addition to this unified design, every annual research will further inspect public opinion on the EU integration process, by examining current topics, specific for concrete time periods.

The starting point of this approach are the findings of the monograph "Public opinion and Macedonia`s accession to the European union (2004-2014)"¹, published in 2014, which also includes the data from the public opinion research conducted in 2014, and represents a methodological reference point for subsequent researches. This study has fulfilled two goals. First, it determined general trends of support for Macedonia`s membership in the European Union, that point out a correlation between the dynamics of the support for membership in the European Union and the development of the Macedonian process of accession in the European Union, manifested in two time periods: 2004 - 2009 as a period of consistent and especially high support and 2010 - 2014 as a period of incremental decrease of the support. Second, the study established an analytical model of the determinants of the support for EU membership through the interaction of three factors of public attitude formation: rationalist-utilitarian, identity based and cues from political elites.² The rationalist utilitarian frame assumes the importance of calculations of material benefits, as the main factor for the formation of individuals` attitudes for support of

¹ Damjanovski, Ivan. "Public opinion and Macedonia`s accession to the European Union (2004-2014)", Konrad Adenauer Foundation / Institute for Democracy "Societas Civilis" – Skopje, 2014

² For wider theoretical explication of the model, see: Ibid, p. 13-24

the European integration process. In this context, the support can be based on present or future perceptions on the personal (egoistic level) or societal (sociotropic level) benefit from the accession in the European Union. On the other hand, the support of the European integration process can also be influenced by identity and value based factors, which shape the individual's point of view, which consequently is the basis of his/hers attitude formation. The degree of national self-identification and the sense of cultural threat are manifested as primary factors for the variation of attitudes. Finally, the formation of public attitudes towards European Union membership can also be a result of the influence of cues from political parties which are capable to impose their attitudes on certain important social issues to their supporters. Thus, it is presumed that the variation of support for the European integration process depends proportionally on the homogeneity of political parties' attitudes on this question.

ABOUT THE SURVEY

This public opinion analysis for Macedonia's accession process in the European Union in 2016 is a continuation of the research done in 2014. Thus, it employs the same theoretical and analytical model of the determinants of support of Macedonia's membership in the European Union, and at the same time, converges its' empirical findings with the findings of the research from 2014.

The primary data used in this analysis come from a public opinion telephone survey conducted by IDSCS during

November 2016 on a sample of 1100 respondents. The sample is nationally representative by gender, age (above 18 years), ethnicity, and it also has a representative coverage of respondents from all six electoral units in the country. The results are presented in percentages and are subject to error of $\pm 3\%$.

This research uses identical methodology and questionnaire as the survey research conducted in 2014. This approach creates conditions for mini longitudinal analysis of the support of Macedonia's accession in the European Union in the last two years. Thus, according to the previously established analytical model, this study focuses on analyzing the general trends and the basic determinants of support of Macedonia's membership in the European Union in the period from 2014 – 2016.





GENERAL TRENDS

The support for Macedonia's membership in the European Union in the last decade is based on a consistent and predictable distribution of attitudes, which follows the dynamics of progress in Macedonia's accession process. The trends of this support are in a clear correlation with the credibility of the Macedonian perspectives for membership in the European Union. Thus, the constantly high support for membership in the European Union reaches its maximum in the time period from 2004 to 2009 when the credibility of the enlargement policy of the European Union is the highest, i.e. when the country was awarded with the candidate status and received the recommendation to start accession negotiations. Consequently, the fall of the credibility of EU's enlargement policy in Macedonia in the period after 2009, induced by the de facto blockade of the commitments to start the membership negotiations, proportionally corresponds with the gradual and stable fall of the support for membership in the period from 2009 to 2016.

This tendency also continues in 2016. The results from the survey conducted in November 2016 show a 77% support of Macedonia's membership in the European Union. From a comparative European perspective, this percent of support is still extremely high, especially if we consider the prolonged stagnation of the accession process. However, compared with 2014, there is a slight decrease of 3 % in the support for EU membership (table 1).

Table 1

If next week there is a referendum for membership of the Republic of Macedonia in the EU, how would you vote?		2014 ³	2016	Trend ⁴
		%	%	
	For	80	77	-3
	Against	14	17	+4
	I don't know	6	4	-2
	I won't vote	1	2	+1

On one hand, these results confirm the decreasing trends of support for Macedonia's membership in the European Union. However, if we consider the euro-skeptic dimension of the turbulent events on the European political scene in the last two years, as well as the deep political crisis in Macedonia, it seems that these factors don't have a big distortive influence on the public opinion on Macedonia's membership in the European Union.

Seen through a demographic prism, the distribution of attitudes is consistent across all categories. The even distribution of attitudes is visible in the gender, age, professional, regional and education category, whereby the highest enthusiasm is noted with the elderly population (support of over 85%). There is only one deviation, within the ethnicity category, where 19% of ethnic Macedonians are opposing the membership in the

³ Due to rounding decimals, the total sum may not amount to 100% (this remark applies to all the tables).

⁴ Every variation of the trend between the results from 2014 and 2016 which is in the interval of $\pm 3\%$ is not statistically significant and should be interpreted as absence of variation (this remark applies to all the tables).

European Union (against 74% of the same demographic population that supports EU membership).

A similar distribution is also visible in the attitudes towards personal affiliation with the membership in the European Union (table 2). Hence, the cumulative percent of those respondents that give significance to membership in the European Union, i.e. those who answered "very important" and "somewhat important" is 77%. In contrast, the cumulative percent of respondents that don't give importance to the European integration process reaches 21%. The comparative analysis with the results from 2014 indicates a corresponding decrease of 7% of the degree of personal affiliation with the idea of EU membership in the cumulative sum of those respondents who consider the EU membership as important and an inversely proportional increase of 6% of those respondents who consider that EU membership is not important.

Table 2

How important is to you personally for Macedonia to become a member of the European Union?		2014	2016	Trend
		%	%	
	Very important	48	48	0
	Somewhat important	36	29	-6
	Somewhat not important	5	5	+1
	Not important at all	10	16	+6
	Don't know	1	1	0
	No answer / Refuses to answer	0	0	0

The last two years have produced another variation in the distribution of attitudes on Macedonia's readiness for membership as well as the perceptions on Macedonia's progress in the European integration process. The survey results from November 2016 indicate a growing public polarization regarding the perception of whether Macedonia is ready to be a member of the European Union. Half of the population considers that Macedonia is not ready for membership in the European Union, against 45% that are convinced in the opposite. In comparison to 2014, we have an imposition of a negative trend in the respondent perception manifested with a decline of 6% of the positive attitudes and an increase of 7% of the population which considers that Macedonia is not ready for membership in the European Union (table 3).

Table 3

Is Macedonia ready to become a member of the EU?		2014	2016	Trend
		%	%	
	Yes	51	45	-6
	No	42	49	+8
	Don't know (not readable)	7	6	-1
	No answer / Refuses to answer	1	0	-1

Similar tendencies are generated by the distribution of attitudes regarding Macedonia's progress in the process of European integration in the past year (table 4). In 2016, only 11% of the interviewees believe that Macedonia has achieved significant progress in the European

integration process, and additional 28% consider that there is some kind of progress. The cumulative percent of positive attitudes toward progress is 39% which represents a fall of a relatively high 8% in this two year period. Consequently, the percentage of respondents detecting a limited or no progress in the accession process is growing exponentially. The cumulative percent of respondents with negative attitudes about the country's progress in the European-integration agenda in 2016 is 37%, which is by 6% more than in 2014. In addition, one third of the population considers that in 2016 there was no progress at all in Macedonia's accession process, and 20% detect minimal progress.

Table 4

How much do you think Macedonia has progressed in the EU integration process in comparison to last year?		2014	2016	Trend
		%	%	
	Progressed a lot	14	11	-3
	Somewhat progressed	33	28	-5
	Progressed a little	20	20	0
	Didn't progressed at all	26	30	+5
	There is a fall down	5	7	+2
	Don't know	2	3	+1
	No answer / Refuses to answer	0	1	0

The analysis of the perceptions on the reasons for the stagnation of the process of European integration indicates a significant growth of discontent of the

domestic reform capacity and engagement (table 5). Thus, almost 40% of the respondents in 2016 consider the lack of implementation of domestic reforms as the main reason why Macedonia is still not a member of the European Union. This value is by 10% higher than in 2014. At the same time, the number of respondents that consider the policies of neighboring countries towards Macedonia as the main factor for the stagnation in the accession process has decreased by 12% (46% in 2016). Only 10% point out the European Union as a detractor of the Macedonian European integration process.

Table 5

What do you think is the main reason why Macedonia is still not a member of the EU?		2014	2016	Trend
		%	%	
	Lack of realization of domestic reforms	29	39	+10
	EU is not ready to accept Macedonia as a member country	7	10	+3
	Neighboring countries obstruct Macedonia's membership in the EU	59	47	-12
	Don't know	4	4	0
	No answer / Refuses to answer	1	1	0

Finally, such views generate divergent perceptions about respondent expectations of a possible date of entry in the EU for Macedonia. In the past two years there is a mild growth of enthusiasm about the expectations

of Macedonia entering the EU in the next 3 to 5 years (table 6). If we consider the dynamics of the accession process in the previous EU enlargement cycles with post-communist candidate countries, this distribution of attitudes in 2016 indicates unrealistic expectations and lack of information about the functioning of EU's enlargement policy. On the other side, 18% of the respondents consider that Macedonia would become an EU member in the next 10 years. The percentage of those respondents who consider that Macedonia will never become an EU member is also high (25%).

Table 6

When do you think Macedonia will become an EU member?		2014	2016	Trend
		%	%	
	In the next 3 years	14	18	+4
	In the next 5 years	18	22	+4
	In the next 10 years	21	18	-4
	In the next 20 years	12	7	-5
	Never	23	25	+2
	Don't know/ No answer	11	10	-1

The above mentioned trends correlate in a certain measure with the stagnation of the accession process in Macedonia, the political crisis's negative effects on state governance, but also with the critical reports from the European Commission in the last two years. Therefore, this kind of dynamic doesn't deviate from the basic assumptions on the decreasing enthusiasm towards the progress and the perspectives of the accession process.



**DETERMINANTS
OF SUPPORT FOR
THE EUROPEAN
INTEGRATION
PROCESS**

RATIONALIST-UTILITARIAN FACTORS

The findings of public opinion research on the support for Macedonia's membership in the European Union in the last decade indicate a combined influence of the established determinants (material, identity-based and cues from political elites) on the dynamics of support for the accession process. Thereto, rationalist-utilitarian preferences are inserted as a primary factor of the support for EU membership. In other words, the principal reason for the high support of the accession process are the expectations for material and economic benefits from EU membership. However, this support is not based on the current economic situation in the country, but on the expectations of future growth of society's material wellbeing, induced by European Union membership.

This argumentation is also confirmed by the results from the survey conducted in November 2016. Consequently, the primary parameters explaining the approval of Macedonia's membership in the European Union, but also the parameters that explain the opposition to membership are economic in their nature. Thus, out of 77% of respondents that support Macedonian membership in the European Union, 46% state that the principal reason for their support are the expectations of improvement of the living standard. In addition, 16,5% of the respondents justify their support through expectations of decreases of the unemployment rate, while additional 10% favors

EU membership due to anticipation of easier access to employment abroad. The cumulative sum of the economic factors indicates a significant majority of respondents supporting the accession process based on material utilitarian views. There is a notable contrast with the other nonmaterial alternatives. Thus, 16% of the respondents supporting Macedonia's membership in the EU, state the increased safety and stability of the country that would be provided by EU membership as the main reason for their consent. The ideological and political factors concerned with improvement of democracy and affiliation to the "European family" touch a very small part of the population (5%) (table 7).

Table 7

What is your reason for deciding to vote FOR membership in the EU?		2014	2016	Trend
		%	%	
	Improvement of the standard of living	29	46	+17
	Decrease of unemployment	26	17	-9
	Improvement of democracy	10	5	-6
	Workers' mobility/ easier access to jobs abroad	3	10	+7
	Belonging to the "European family of countries"	2	5	+3
	Improved security and stability of the country	27	16	-11
	Don't know/no answer	2	1	-1

At the same time, the economical interests are also the main factor that influences attitude formation among the respondents who oppose Macedonia's membership in the EU. Namely, 36% of the respondents that would vote negatively at an eventual referendum for Macedonia's entrance in the EU, base their position on the expectations that the entrance in the EU would worsen the standard of living. Additional 15,7% consider that EU membership would threaten the Macedonian economy. On the other hand, the nonmaterial reasons for the manifestation of euro skeptic attitudes have a lower input. In this context, more notable is the distribution of attitudes which see the European integration process as a threat to national identity (10%) or resentment by the European Union (12%) (table 8).

Table 8

What is your reason for deciding to vote AGAINST membership in the EU?		2014	2016	Trend
		%	%	
	Worsening standard of living	33	37	+4
	Threats to the Macedonian economy	13	16	+2
	Attempts to change the constitutional name of the country	11	7	-4
	Loss of national identity	13	10	-2
	We will become dependent on Brussels	11	6	-6
	Loss of sovereignty and independence of the country	7	5	-2
	EU doesn't want us	6	12	5
	Don't know/no answer	6	8	2

The comparative analysis with the research from 2014 indicates an even bigger strengthening of the influence of material utilitarian factors for support of EU membership (tables 7 and 8). Within the category "improvement of the living standard" as a primary factor for support of EU membership, there is a visible increase of 17% at the expense of "decrease of unemployment" which marks a decreasing intensity in the distribution of attitudes. An increasing trend of attitudes that indicate workers' mobility and easier access to employment abroad as the main reason for their support for EU membership is also indicative. These findings correspond with some recent researches of public opinion that point towards strengthening of the preferences to move out of the country. On the other hand, the nonmaterial factors regarding the strengthening of the country's security and stability and democratic improvement record notable decreases of frequencies in the last two years. Similar tendencies are also notable with the dynamics of the euro skeptic attitudes. Thus, in regards to the economic variables, there is a mild increase of attitudes which detect the worsening of the living standard and the threats to the Macedonian economy as primary factors of their opposition to EU membership. Inversely, across most nonmaterial explications (attempts to change the constitutional name, loss of national identity, dependency on Brussels and loss of sovereignty), a decreasing transition of public attitudes occurs.

The argument for the dominant position of the rationalist-utilitarian factors in the formation of attitudes on EU membership is further strengthened

by the frequency of perceptions on the areas on which EU membership would have the most positive effect (table 9). The percentage sum of attitudes that are related to indicators of economic nature, i.e. economic development (25%), unemployment decrease (18%), infrastructure improvement (5%) and quality of life (18%), significantly surpasses the political [stability (15%) and human rights and freedoms (9%)] and identity-based factors (4%). In this sense, also the longitudinal aspect of the distribution of attitudes regarding this question in the time period from 2014 – 2016 features a balanced transition, as more significant deviations cannot be detected.

Table 9

Which areas will be most positively affected by Macedonia's EU membership?		2014	2016	Trend
		%	%	
	Economic development	23	25	+2
	Stability	13	15	+2
	Decrease of unemployment	23	18	-5
	Human rights and freedoms	12	9	-3
	Improvement of infrastructure	6	5	-1
	Quality of life as a whole	16	18	+2
	Strengthening of national identity	3	4	+1
	Other	1	3	+2
	Don't know	3	3	0

Finally, the material utilitarian determinacy of the support for Macedonia's EU membership continues to be based on a clear sociotropic calculation. The support for Macedonia's EU membership is not based on calculations of the personal material benefits from the accession process and content with the current economic situation on micro level. On the contrary, the high support is firstly materialized through the positive perceptions on the future anticipated social economic benefits from EU membership. The socio-tropic nature of the support for membership is also manifested through the consistency of the distribution of attitudes across the demographic categories of social capital (education and profession), where there are no significant disparities between the respondents with high and low social capital. Consequently, the accession process in this stadium obviously doesn't produce groups of winners and losers from the accession to the EU, to the extent that the high support for EU membership is shaped by a stable and equitable division of frequencies across all profession categories and levels of education. Thus, for example, the span of fluctuations in the support for membership between the respondents with secondary, higher and postgraduate education is less than $\pm 3\%$ of the average of 77%.

IDENTITY AND VALUE BASED FACTORS

Analyses of public opinion on the European integration process in Macedonia confirm the assumption that the formation of attitudes about the support for Macedonia's EU membership is predominantly based

on material, rationalist-utilitarian motivations. On the other hand, although identity, ideological and value based factors are not quintessential for the formation of attitudes for support of EU membership, they explain the reasons for the long term declination of this support.

If we analyze the findings of the database used in this analysis, it becomes obvious that the fall of the support for EU membership is not a manifestation of growing euro skepticism deriving from the sense of cultural threat or threats to national identity. In this aspect, the Macedonian case differs from the general trends in Europe, in the sense that the exclusivity of national self-identification doesn't play an important role in the variation of the support for EU membership. The sense for belonging to an exclusive national identity in Macedonia is dominant and it is not a subject of significant fluctuations. Almost 70% of the population identifies exclusively with one national identity, and close to 20% manifest a double identity, i.e. primary ethnical identification and secondary identification with a European identity. The percentage of respondents that favor European identity over their ethnic identity or declare exclusive European identity is minimal (table 10). In addition, the comparative data from 2014 and 2016 show that this distribution of attitudes is extremely consistent inasmuch as we cannot notice any frequency fluctuations.

Table 10

Above all, do you feel as?		2014	2016	Trend
		%	%	
	Only Macedonian/ Albanian/ other	69	70	+1
	Macedonian/ Albanian/ other and European	20	20	-1
	European and Macedonian	6	7	+1
	Only European	3	3	0
	Don't know	2	1	-1

However, this self-identification doesn't have a negative effect on the support for EU membership. 72,5% of the respondents that declare an exclusive national identity also support Macedonia's EU membership. That support is increased up to almost 90% among the respondents that also have an affiliation towards European identity. These trends of high support for EU membership across all categories of identity affiliation are also consistent in temporal terms. The distribution of attitudes in both researches from 2014 and 2016 is complementary and features minimal deviations within all demographic categories. These characteristics of the public opinion on EU membership deviate from the basic assumptions on the influence of identity affiliation on the degree of support for EU membership. In the Macedonian case, the high degree of exclusive identification with national identity doesn't generate significant euro skeptic energy. At the same time, the accession in

the EU is also not viewed as a cultural threat, since only 10% of the euro-skeptic respondents see the process of European integration as a threat to national identity (table 3). The key variable which explains the gradual fall of the support for EU membership are the implications coming from the dispute between Macedonia and Greece about the use of the name Macedonia, which is effectively imposing itself as the main obstruction of Macedonia's progress in the accession process.

The conflict over the name opens serious questions related to national identity and statehood that leave little space for compromise with the external incentives for membership in the Euro-Atlantic organizations. Thus, only 22% of the respondents support Macedonia's membership if it would be conditioned with changing of the country's name, which represents a fall of 4% in comparison to 2014 (table 11). However, if the name dispute as an obstacle in the accession process is left out, then additional 65,5% of the respondents would support Macedonia's EU membership under the constitutional name. In that case, the cumulative percent of the supporters for EU membership reaches the 90% threshold of support. In this constellation of attitudes, the population which opposes EU membership declines to 10%. Additionally, the comparative overview of results from the 2014 and 2016 surveys indicates harmonized trends of support in the last two years.

Table 11

Would you like/ support Macedonia to become a member of the European Union?	2014			2016		
	General results	Ethnic Macedonians	Ethnic Albanians	General results	Ethnic Macedonians	Ethnic Albanians
Yes, even if the name is changed	26	15	61	22	13	55
Yes, with keeping the name	63	74	28	66	74	36
No	6	7	2	9	10	5
Don't know	4	3	8	3	2	4
No answer	1	1		1	1	

The second negative implication coming from the name dispute is manifested through the significant disparity in the support for EU membership between the two dominant ethnic groups in Macedonia, the Macedonians and the Albanians. Nominally, the stable consensus among all ethnic communities about Macedonia's EU integration perspectives is faced with serious distortions when it is confronted with the possibility of changing the name as an intervening variable. Thus, only 13% of the ethnic Macedonians would support EU membership even if it would induce the changing of the country's name, while with the ethnic Albanians the support is at 55% (table 10). On the other hand, membership in the EU without changing the constitutional name is an acceptable

position for 74% of the ethnic Macedonians and 36% of the ethnic Albanians. Besides the fact that in the last two years there are noticeable tendencies towards narrowing of this gap as there is an increase of 8% of ethnic Albanians who are opposing a compromise on the name issue as a condition for EU membership, still there is a significant disparity with a potential for additional disruption of the inter-ethnic cohesion in the country.

CUES FROM POLITICAL PARTIES

The trends of high support of the accession process in Macedonia confirm to an extent the validity of the assumptions on the influence of cues from the political elites on attitude formation about the European integration process. In the Macedonian party system there is a clear consensus on the support for Macedonia's Euro-Atlantic perspectives. Thereby, the lack of serious euro skeptic political parties and social movements additionally decreases the potential for fragmentation of public opinion. Hence, even in conditions of prolonged low credibility of the accession process, the public support is still high.

On the other hand, the incremental decrease of the support for EU membership is somewhat in a convergent relation with the growth of the intensity of misunderstandings between the two biggest political parties in Macedonia about the approach and the commitment of the governing elites to the accession process, as well as their relations with the

representatives of the European Union. However, the comparative analysis of the support for membership in the last two years indicates that the long term political crisis in the country and the attitude towards the European Union's mediating role in its resolution, which in certain cases resulted with disputes between VMRO DPMNE and the EU representatives, doesn't have a serious negative effect on the support for the European integration process, as the 3% decrease of the support is minimal.