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**Analysis of Public Opinion
on Macedonia's Accession
to the European Union
(2014-2017)**

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ANALYSIS OF PUBLIC OPINION ON MACEDONIA`S ACCESSION TO THE EUROPEAN UNION (2014-2017)

Author: Ivan Damjanovski

CONCLUSIONS

- » The multi-annual trend of declining support for Macedonia's European Union (EU) membership continues well into 2017
- » Support for membership is still high and relatively resistant to the negative effects of the long-standing crisis in the country
- » Positive signals in the second half of 2017 presented by way of political stabilisation of the country and the growing interest to intensify the region's accession process by the EU didn't prevent the decline in support
- » The trend of growing gaps in support for EU membership among ethnic Macedonians and ethnic Albanians is present in 2017 as well
- » Public opinion is polarised as to the assessment of Macedonia's readiness for EU membership
- » The resolution of the political crisis and the declared prioritization of EU integration in the 2017 government policy have had minimal positive impact over the perceptions about progress in the accession process
- » Enthusiasm as regards Macedonia's progress in the accession process is slightly increasing compared to the previous year

- » Majority of the population consider that Macedonia marked a minimum or no progress at all in the accession process throughout the last year
- » Non-accomplishment of domestic reforms and obstacles posed by neighbouring EU member states are perceived as the main reasons why Macedonia is still not a part of the EU
- » The majority of citizens in Macedonia associate the failure to enter the EU more with the negative influence of foreign political factors than with the lack of reforms on the domestic political scene
- » 20% of population consider that Macedonia will never enter the EU
- » Economic and material parameters strengthen even more their role of key determinants of public support for Macedonia's EU membership
- » Half of the population in Macedonia support EU membership because of expectations for improvement of the standard of living as a benefit from the European integration process
- » Support for EU membership is primarily based on attitudes based on the expectations for future positive implications for the economic welfare of the country
- » The importance of identity and value-based factors in shaping the Eurosceptic energy in Macedonia is growing
- » The name dispute is still the most notable generator of Eurosceptic energy in the country
- » Nevertheless, the influence of the name dispute as a decisive factor for the support for Macedonia's EU membership is weakening
- » One third of the population in Macedonia would support EU membership even if it was conditioned by changing the country's name
- » The number of Eurosceptic respondents who unconditionally oppose the entry of Macedonia in the EU is on the rise
- » The division of support for EU membership among ethnic Macedonians and

- ethnic Albanians is on the rise when it is conditioned by a change in the country's name
- » The majority of supporters of the largest political parties in Macedonia support EU membership
 - » Support for EU membership among VMRO DPMNE supporters has suffered a significant drop over the past 4 years
 - » The share of EU membership support among SDSM and DUI supporters is considerably higher than the average

INTRODUCTION

Support for Macedonia's European Union (EU) membership and its process of accession has been a subject of numerous public opinion surveys. However, most of these surveys have been conducted ad hoc and they have rarely been framed 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. With a view to filling this gap, the Institute for Democracy "Societas Civilis" - Skopje and the Konrad Adenauer Foundation in 2014 initiated the establishment of a long-term database about the public support for the accession process and Macedonia's EU membership which would be effectuated through annual public opinion surveys based on a coherent methodology and measurement of identical questions. This database focuses on two dimensions of public opinion on the Macedonian EU accession process which are addressed in every annual survey, and whose measurement is obtained by utilization

of identical batteries of survey questions. The first dimension seeks to determine the general trends of public support for Macedonia's EU membership. The second goal is to establish the determinants of such support through a long-term impact analysis of three factors: rationalist-utilitarian, identity based and cues from political elites and political parties. Such accumulation of comparable data opens the path for establishment of more serious longitudinal analyses of the support for Macedonia's EU membership. 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 at the same time includes the data from the public opinion research conducted in 2014, and represents a methodological reference point for subsequent researches. This comprehensive study accomplished two objectives. First, it determined general trends of support for Macedonia's EU membership pointing out a correlation between the dynamics of the support for European Union membership and the development of the Macedonian EU accession process manifested in two time intervals: 2004-2009 as a period of consistent and exceedingly high support and 2010-2014 as a period of gradual decline in 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:

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

rationalist-utilitarian, identity based and cues from political elites.² The rationalist-utilitarian framework presumes the importance of calculation of material benefits as the main factor for the formation of individuals' attitudes for support of the European integration process. In this context, support can be based on current or future perceptions on the personal or societal benefit from the accession in the European Union. On the other hand, support for the European integration process may also be the result of the influence of identity and value based factors shaping the individual's world view, which consequently is the basis of the individual's attitude formation. Thereby, the degree of national self-identification and the sense of cultural threat are manifested as the primary factors for variation in 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 own attitudes regarding important social issues on their supporters. Thus, it is presumed that the variation of support for the European integration process depends on the homogeneity of attitudes of political parties about this question.

2 For wider theoretical explication of the model see: *ibid*, pages 13-24

ABOUT THE SURVEY

This public opinion analysis on the Macedonian process of accession in the European Union conducted in 2017 is a continuation of the research done in 2014 and 2016. It applies the same theoretical and analytical model of the determinants of support for Macedonia's EU membership, and at the same time it compares its empirical findings with the 2014 and 2016 survey findings.

Primary data used in this analysis come from a public opinion survey research conducted in November 2017 on a sample of 1100 respondents. The sample is nationally representative according to gender, age (over 18 years of age), ethnicity, and it also covers respondents from all six electoral districts in the country. Results are presented in percentage and are subject to error of $\pm 3\%$.

This research uses the same methodology and questionnaire as the surveys conducted in the years of 2014 and 2016. This approach creates conditions for a mini longitudinal analysis of the support for Macedonia's accession to the European Union over the past 4 years. Thus, in line with the previously established analytical model, this study focuses on analysing general trends and basic determinants of support for Macedonia's membership in the European Union in the period 2014-2017.

GENERAL TRENDS

Multi-annual public opinion analyses on the support for Macedonia's EU membership over the last 15 years show a strong association between the level of support and the credibility of membership perspectives. Credibility of the accession process in certain time intervals appears to be a trustworthy predictor of public support for EU membership. As a result, the strongest support for EU membership appears in the period from 2004 to 2009 when Macedonia strengthened its position in the accession process by acquiring the candidate status and the recommendation to start membership negotiations. The long-standing stagnation in the accession process corresponds to the gradual fall in membership support after 2009. This downward trend continues in 2017 as well (Table 1). Thus, support for EU membership in November 2017 amounts to 73%, which is by 4 percentage points lower than the previous year and by 7 percentage points lower than 2014. Taking into consideration that the number of opponents of EU membership has not changed in the period between the last two surveys, the fall is due to the increase in the number of respondents who are indecisive.

In a broader context, support for membership is still high and relatively resistant to the negative effects of the long-standing crisis in the country. On the other hand, positive signals in the second half of 2017 presented by way of political stabilisation of the country and the growing interest to intensify the region's accession process by the EU obviously do not have a preventative effect upon public opinion in Macedonia and fail to prevent the decline in support.

Table 1³

If next week there is a referendum for membership of the Republic of Macedonia in the EU, how would you vote?		2014	2016	2017
		%	%	%
	For	80	77	73
	Against	14	17	17
	I don't know	6	4	8
	I won't vote	1	2	1

In a demographic context, the trend of growing cleavages in support among ethnic Macedonians and ethnic Albanians in past surveys is also present in 2017. So, compared to 2016, there is an obvious drop in the support among ethnic Macedonians in the amount of 6 percentage points, as in 2017 68% of this population supported Macedonia's membership in the EU. Among ethnic Albanians, the percentage of support remains enormously high and draws near to the threshold of 90%.

The personal perspective as to the importance of Macedonia entering the European Union, continues to generate a firmly positive determination (Table 2). The percentage of respondents who add great value to EU membership has increased by 6 percentage points compared to the trend over the previous 4 years. The aggregate percentage of positive perceptions of respondents who believe that entering the EU is "very important" and "somewhat important" amounts

3 As a result of rounding decimals, the total sum may not amount to 100% (this remark refers to all tables).

to 74% and is fully consistent with the general support for membership. However, compared to previous years, the aggregate percentage of positive responses regarding the importance of EU membership has dropped by 10 percentage points.

Table 2

How personally important it is for you for Macedonia to become a member of the European Union?		2014	2016	2017
		%	%	%
	Very important	48	48	54
	Somewhat important	36	29	20
	Somewhat not important	5	5	6
	Not important at all	10	16	18
	I don't know	1	1	1.5
	No answer / Refuses to answer	0	0	

Perceptions regarding Macedonia's readiness for EU membership indicate clear polarisation of public opinion on this question. The results of the survey conducted in 2017 establish a similar dynamics in the distribution of perceptions as in 2016 (Table 3). Thus, as opposed to the half of the respondents who believe that Macedonia is not ready for EU membership, 46% believe that Macedonia is ready to enter the EU. Thereby, such distribution of responses is present among all demographic categories.

Table 3

Do you think that Macedonia is ready for EU membership?		2014	2016	2017
		%	%	%
	Yes	51	45	46
	No	42	49	43
	I don't know	7	6	9
	No answer/ Refuses to answer	1	0	1

The resolution of the political crisis and the prioritization of the EU integration process in the government policy for 2017 has had minimal positive impact on the perceptions on the progress in the accession process. Thus, across all variables there is a slight increase in the enthusiasm as regards Macedonia's progress in the European integration process compared to the previous year (Table 4).

The cumulative percentage of perceptions detecting progress amounts to 44% in 2017 which, compared to 2016, is higher by 5 percentage points. On the other hand, majority of the population believes that Macedonia has achieved minimal or no progress at all.

Table 4

Compared to last year, how much has Macedonia progressed in the EU integration process from your perspective?		2014	2016	2017
		%	%	%
	Has progressed a lot	14	11	13
	Somewhat progressed	33	28	31
	Has progressed a little	20	20	20
	There was no progress at all	26	30	27
	It has regressed	5	7	2
	I don't know	2	3	7
	No answer/ Refuses to answer	0	1	1

More notable variations in the distribution of attitudes with regard to the two previous surveys are detected in the perceptions about the main reasons why Macedonia is still not an EU member. The results from 2017 show a serious change in the perception of the role of foreign political factors in the European integration perspectives of Macedonia (Table 5). If bilateral issues with neighbours and their role as veto players in the accession process were perceived as the most important reason in the past surveys, in 2017 those perceptions are matched by the perceptions on non-accomplishment of domestic reforms. Despite the high percentage of support for this factor, still in the period between 2014 and 2017 it marks a decline of 22 percentage points. On the other hand, the number of respondents accusing the unpreparedness of the EU as a whole to accept Macedonia as its member grows from 7% in 2014 to 16% in 2017. This implies that the majority of citizens in Macedonia associate the failure to enter the EU more with the negative influence of external factors than with the lack of reforms on the domestic front.

In the demographic data analysis, one deviation from the standard distribution of responses is detected, in the category of ethnicity. Half of ethnic Albanians in Macedonia believe that the non-accomplishment of domestic reforms is the most important factor for non-membership in the EU.

Table 5

In your opinion, what is the most important reason why Macedonia is still not a member of the EU?		2014	2016	2017
		%	%	%
	Non-accomplishment of domestic reforms	29	39	37
	The EU is not ready to accept Macedonia as its member	7	10	16
	The neighbouring countries obstruct Macedonia's membership in the EU	59	47	37
	I don't know	4	4	7
	No answer/ Refuses to answer	1	1	2

Changes are evident in regard to the perceptions about the expectations for the time frame for Macedonia's entry into the EU as well (Table 6). Thus, the number of respondents who expect Macedonia to become a member of the EU over the next three years has increased by 13 percentage points compared to 2014. The percentage of respondents who believe that Macedonia will enter the EU over the next 10 years is declining, whereas the percentage of respondents who believe that Macedonia would enter the EU over the next 5 years has not changed in the last year. On the other hand, a relatively large number of the population (20%) remains pessimistic and believe that Macedonia will never enter the EU.

Finally, these attitudes confirm the argument about the high level of non-awareness among the public regarding the specifics of the accession process and EU enlargement policy. If we take into account the past experiences with the duration of the accession process leading to membership in the EU, the messages coming from the EU itself, as well as the dynamics of accession of the candidate countries from the Western Balkans, the frame of 3 to 5 years perceived by the majority of respondents is practically impossible to be achieved.

Table 6

When do you think Macedonia will become an EU member?		2014	2016	2017
		%	%	%
	In the next 3 years	14	18	27
	In the next 5 years	18	22	22
	In the next 10 years	21	18	12
	In the next 20 years	12	7	7
	Never	23	25	20
	No answer/ Refuses to answer	11	10	11

DETERMINANTS OF SUPPORT FOR THE EUROPEAN INTEGRATION PROCESS

Rational-utilitarian factors

The dominant position of rationalist-utilitarian factors in the formation of attitudes about support for Macedonia's membership in the EU is also confirmed by the latest public opinion survey from 2017. The economic expectations of respondents further solidify their role of key predictors of public support for Macedonia's EU membership. The primary factor behind this support is the expectations for improvement of the standard of living as a benefit from the European integration process (Table 7). This question has marked an upward trend over the last 4 years, as in 2017 half of the supporters of EU membership based their attitude on the expectations that EU membership will bring improvement of the standard of living. Compared to 2014, there is a substantial growth of over 20 percentage points. The economic dimension of public opinion about the accession process is also confirmed by the second most important reason for EU membership support, i.e. reduction of unemployment, which is the primary stimulus for the expressed support for 23% of the population. Finally, the most important argument which confirms the assumption on the influence of economic parameters on positive public opinion about EU membership arises from the cumulative percentage of the economic variables. If we add the variable "mobility of workers/ easier access to jobs abroad" to the variables "improvement of the standard of living" and "reduction of unemployment", then the cumulative

percentage draws near the threshold of 80%. In contrast to this parameter, the political/identity-related (improvement of democracy/belonging to a “European family of states”) and security arguments (improved security and stability of the country) have far weaker influence.

Table 7

What is your reason for deciding to vote FOR membership in the EU?		2014	2016	2017
		%	%	%
	Improvement of the standard of living	29	46	51
	Reduction of unemployment	26	17	23
	Improvement of democracy	10	5	7
	Mobility of workers/ easier access to jobs abroad	3	10	5
	Belonging to a “European family of states”	2	5	2
	Improved security and stability of the country	27	16	12
	I don't know/ no answer	2	1	1

Similar arguments may also be deduced from the analysis of perceptions on the areas of societal life where EU membership would have the most positive influence (Table 8). The temporal analysis of distribution of attitudes indicates a minimal change in the trends across all measured variables. Economic development (25%) and reduction of unemployment (21%) remain to be perceived as the two most distinguished areas where positive long-term effects are expected from EU membership. When these values are also complemented by the responses “improvement of infrastructure” and “quality of

life as a whole”, one comes to the conclusion once again about the importance of material (as opposed to ideological and security) factors in the process of attitude formation on the societal influence of the potential membership of Macedonia in the EU.

Table 8

Which area will be the most positively affected by the membership of Macedonia in the EU?		2014	2016	2017
		%	%	%
	Economic development	23	25	25
	Stability	13	15	15
	Reduction of unemployment	23	18	21
	Human rights and freedoms	12	9	12
	Improvement of infrastructure	6	5	5
	Quality of life as a whole	16	18	11
	Strengthening of national identity	3	4	4
	Other	1	3	2
	I don't know	3	3	6

More significant shifts in the structure of public opinion about EU membership are detected among Eurosceptic attitudes. The analysis of the factors that shape attitudes against EU membership points towards an increased influence of identity based factors on the expense of material factors (Table 9). In spite of the fact that rationalist-utilitarian factors still have a major role in respondents' determination, they mark a significant decline compared to 2016. Thus, the cumulative percentage of the two economic variables “deterioration of the standard of living” and “threats to the Macedonian economy” in 2017 amounts to 37%, which is by 16 percentage points less

than in 2016. In addition, this analysis indicates a potential reaction of public opinion to the dynamics of the name dispute process, as the identity-related values about the pressure to change the constitutional name and loss of national identity as the main reasons for the expressed Euroscepticism are associated with increasing trends compared to the previous two surveys in 2014 and 2016.

Table 9

What is your reason for deciding to vote AGAINST membership in the EU?		2014	2016	2017
		%	%	%
	Deterioration of the standard of living	33	37	26
	Threats to the Macedonian economy	13	16	11
	Attempts to change the constitutional name of the country	11	7	16
	Loss of national identity	13	10	17
	We will become dependent on Brussels	11	6	7
	Loss of sovereignty and independence of the country	7	5	8
	The EU doesn't want us	6	12	10
	I don't know/ no answer	6	8	4

Finally, the demographic analysis of EU membership support shows that the position of respondents in society (level of education, wealth) does not play a significant role in the distribution of attitudes, since it is relatively constant across all demographic categories. The accession process still has not entered a stage where it would generate winners and

losers from the accession process. Consequently, support for EU membership is primarily based on attitudes based on the expectations for future positive implications for the economic welfare of the country, and is not presented as a result of personal experiences with the material effects from the accession process.

IDENTITY AND VALUE BASED FACTORS

The analysis of public opinion on the accession process and Macedonia's EU membership indicates a combined influence of material and identity based factors on the dynamics of EU membership support. It confirms the dominant position of material factors in the formation of attitudes for Macedonia's EU membership support, but at the same time it also emphasises the role of identity and value based factors in determining the Eurosceptic energy in the country and the respective long-standing decline in membership support. This line of argumentation is also confirmed by the data from the public opinion survey from 2017, but at the same time they also point toward several indicative deviations from the previously established trends of support.

The Macedonian case is a clear example of an exclusive national self-identification. A dominant part of the population in Macedonia declares only one line of self-identification which is based on ethno-national affiliation (Table 10). This characteristic is even more emphasised if we take into consideration the data from the latest public opinion survey. Thus, 77% of respondents prefer only one line of ethno-national identification. This sentiment was strengthened during last

year which is reflected by the increase of 7 percentage points within this category of respondents compared to 2016.

This change is also reflected in the percentage of respondents who have double identity, but who give preference to the ethno-national over the European identity affiliation which is treated as secondary. In 2017 15% of the population identified themselves as members of one of the ethnic groups in the country, but also as Europeans, which at the same time presents a decline of 5 percentage points compared to the attitudes over the last three years. There is also a drop in one of the two categories of Eurocentric responses, i.e. the identification with the European identity as primary, and the ethnic as secondary. Self-identification with the European identity remains statistically insignificant.

Such distribution of attitudes has no big influence on the structure of public opinion about the Macedonian process of EU accession. The analysis of cross-tabulated data from the survey shows that over 70% of the support for membership comes from respondents who declare an exclusive ethno-national identity. As expected, such support grows in cases where we have respondents with double identity. Such distribution of attitudes is consistent over the 4-year time period of observation. Finally, these data confirm the findings from previous surveys which show that the dominant position of exclusive identity affiliation does not appear as an important generator of Eurosceptic energy in the country, since (despite the growth of such beliefs) a relatively small part of the population (17%) perceives the process of European integration as a threat to national identity (see Table 9).

Table 10

Above all, do you feel as?		2014	2016	Trend
		%	%	%
	Only Macedonian / Albanian / Other	69	70	77
	Macedonian / Albanian / Other and European	20	20	15
	European and Macedonian / Albanian / Other	6	7	3
	Only European	3	3	3
	I don't know	2	1	2

On the other hand, identity-related implications arising from the dispute with Greece regarding the use of the name Macedonia appear to be the main reason for the drop in support for EU membership over the last 10 years. This gradual decline coincides with the imposing of the name issue as the main precondition for progress in the Macedonian EU accession process. This blockage of the integration processes in Macedonia has caused serious change in the social cohesion and continues to deepen ethnic cleavages in the country. The public opinion analysis as regards this issue indicates that the name issue continues to cause notable divisions in the support for EU membership (Table 11). Thus, only one third of the population in Macedonia would support EU membership even if it was conditioned with changing of the country's name. On the other hand, additional 45% of the population support EU membership, but only under the constitutional name of Macedonia. Consequently, if hypothetically speaking the name issue is eliminated, then the cumulative percentage of the population that supports Macedonia's EU membership draws near the threshold of 80%. 15% of the population is comprised of Eurosceptic respondents who unconditionally oppose EU membership.

Nevertheless, the comparative public opinion analysis in the period 2014-2017 shows uneven trends in membership support across these variables. They implicitly show a potential weakening of the name dispute as a factor with decisive influence over the support for Macedonia's EU membership. So, the number of respondents supporting EU membership even if it is conditioned by changing of the country's name has significantly increased in 2017 compared to 2016 (by 11 percentage points). In the same direction, the comparative analysis detects a drop of 21 percentage points among those respondents who support EU membership only if it is achieved under the country's constitutional name. On the other hand, the number of Eurosceptic respondents who unconditionally oppose the entry of Macedonia in the EU is on the rise.

In this context, notable change in the distribution of attitudes is also detected among the two largest ethnic communities in Macedonia. The percentage of ethnic Macedonians supporting EU membership even if the entry in the EU is conditioned by changing the country's name has increased by 6 percentage points, so now nearly 20% of the ethnic Macedonians would also support entry in the EU even if the price was changing of the name of the country. At the same time, the composition of attitudes among the ethnic Macedonians who would support EU membership only under the country's constitutional name is changing as well. The percentage of support within this category marks a significant fall of 18 percentage points, so now 45% of ethnic Macedonians agree with this attitude. In parallel to this dynamics, the number of Eurosceptic respondents who unconditionally oppose the entry of Macedonia in the EU is on the rise, primarily induced by change in perceptions among the ethnic Macedonians.

However, these changes do not reduce the ethnic cleavages which for a longer period of time have been defining public opinion on Macedonia's EU accession process. Contrary to this, the ethnic gap is further emphasised by a change in the distribution of attitudes among the ethnic Albanians in Macedonia. So, the number of respondents from the Albanian ethnic group who give priority to EU membership over the name issue has increased significantly, and in 2017 it touches upon the threshold of 80%. At the same time, the percentage of Albanians who support Macedonia's EU membership only under its constitutional name has dropped from 36% in 2016 to only 9% in 2017.

Table 11

Do you want/ support Macedonia to become a member of the European Union?	2014			2016			2017		
	General results	Ethnic Macedonians	Ethnic Albanians	General results	Ethnic Macedonians	Ethnic Albanians	General results	Ethnic Macedonians	Ethnic Albanians
Yes, even if membership in the EU is conditioned by changing the country's name	26	15	61	22	13	55	33	19	80
Yes, but without concessions for the country's name	63	74	28	66	74	36	45	56	9
No	6	7	2	9	10	5	15	18	5
I don't know	4	3	8	3	2	4	6	6	5
No response / Refuses to respond	1	1		1	1		1		

CUES FROM POLITICAL PARTIES

One of the most important objectives of this project on monitoring public opinion on the Macedonian process of European integration is to establish a basic framework of examination of the influence of political party cues on their supporters' attitude formation regarding this issue. It starts from the assumption that political parties, by means of their public attitudes and political priorities, indirectly influence the process of attitude formation of those respondents who are their members or supporters.

The preliminary findings of this analysis show a certain influence of cues from political parties on the general dynamics of public opinion for Macedonia's membership in the EU, the relatively high support, but also the gradual decline of this support. On the one hand, the general consensus in the party system regarding the priority of the EU accession process in Macedonian politics and the lack of any relevant openly Eurosceptic parties seem to successfully soften the negative effect of the blockage of the accession process and are able to maintain the support for membership on a relatively high level. Thus, the majority of respondents support Macedonia's membership in the EU across all categories of political affiliation. On the other hand, it may be presumed that the oftenly opposed attitudes of the biggest political parties in Macedonia regarding the implementation of these priorities, the resolution of the name issue and their relationship with the representatives of the European Union have influence upon the attitudes of their members and supporters about EU accession. In this context, occasional confrontations of the VMRO-DPMNE party with EU representatives during

the political crisis, as well as the resistance of this party over certain EU demands in that period should have an effect on decreased support for Macedonia's membership in the EU among their supporters.

The comparative analysis of the support for Macedonia's membership in 2014 and 2017 somewhat supports this thesis (Table 12). Support for EU membership among VMRO DPMNE supporters marks a significant declining trend over the observed period of 4 years. In the latest survey, 60% of those respondents who would vote for VMRO-DPMNE in potential elections support Macedonia's membership in the EU, whereas one third oppose such an outcome. Compared to the results from 2014, these figures present a drop of 17 percentage points in regard to membership support and an increase of nearly 50 percentage points of Eurosceptic attitudes among this population (from 16% in 2014 to 31% in 2017). A significant drop of approximately 10 percentage points in the support for membership can be detected among both those respondents who will not vote for any political party and among undecided respondents. On the other hand, supporters of the two more distinguished supporters of the role of the EU in Macedonia, SDSM and DUI, have been consistent in the observed period. In both cases, the percentage of support for EU membership is considerably higher than the average of 73%.

Table 12

If next week there is a referendum for membership of the Republic of Macedonia in the EU, how would you vote?	2014					2017				
	VMRO-DPMNE	SDSM	DUI	None	Undecided	VMRO-DPMNE	SDSM	DUI	None	Undecided
For	77%	86%	94%	69%	80%	60%	83%	90%	60%	70%
Against	16%	12%	4%	21%	10%	31%	10%	7%	26%	17%
I don't know	7%	2%	0%	8%	9%	8%	6%	3%	9%	12%
I won't vote	1%	0%	2%	2%	1%	1%	0%	0%	6%	1%

Similar dynamics is also noticed in the cases when support for EU membership is determined by the name issue (table 13). Compared with supporters of other parties, supporters of VMRO-DPMNE are more sensitive to the implications arising from the name issue. In spite of the slight increase in the percentage of the supporters of VMRO-DPMNE who support EU membership even if it is conditioned by changing the country's name, this percentage of respondents (12%) is significantly lower than the percentage of supporters of SDSM (35%) and DUI (84%) who support EU membership even if the price for that would be changing of the name of the country.

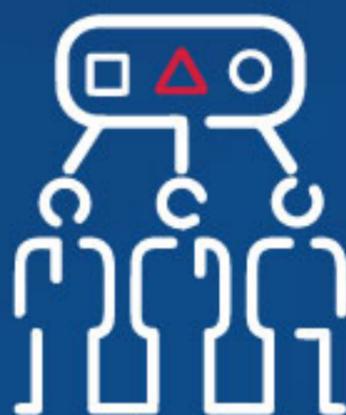
More considerable change in the mood among VMRO-DPMNE supporters is noticeable in the two following variables. The comparative analysis of the surveys from 2014 and 2017 indicates a significant drop of 23 percentage points amongst supporters of VMRO-DPMNE who support the entry of

Macedonia in the EU without concessions regarding the name. At the same time, one third of VMRO-DPMNE's supporters oppose EU membership, which is an increase of 20 percentage points compared to the data from 2014.

At the same time, substantial change in the distribution of attitudes is also seen among the other categories of respondents with the exception of SDSM supporters where over the last 4 years relatively consistent attitudes have been detected. On the one hand, among those respondents who do not vote in elections at all, a significant increase in Eurosceptic energy is detected. On the other hand, there is an increase of 21 percentage points of undecided voters who would support the entry of Macedonia in the EU even if conditioned by changing of the country's name.

Table 13

Do you want/ support Macedonia to become a member of the European Union?	2014					2017				
	VMRO-DPMNE	SDSM	DUI	None	Undecided	VMRO-DPMNE	SDSM	DUI	None	Undecided
Yes, even if membership in the EU is conditioned by changing the country's name	10%	39%	76%	43%	16%	12%	35%	84%	25%	37%
Yes, but without concessions for the country's name	83%	59%	22%	45%	79%	60%	58%	10%	43%	51%
No	7%	2%	2%	11%	5%	28%	8%	6%	32%	13%



Ivan Damjanovski

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(2014-2017)**

March 2018