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Analysis of public opinion on North Macedonia's accession to the European Union (2014-2021)

Author: Ivan Damjanovski

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Author: Ivan Damjanovski

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Summary of results

- The new deadlock of the Macedonian EU accession process didn't significantly alter the public support for EU membership
- In 2021, 68% of the population supports the idea of EU membership
- There is a significant decrease in the percentage of openly Eurosceptic respondents
- There is an interethnic gap in the support for EU membership between the two biggest ethnic communities in the country, the ethnic Macedonians and the ethnic Albanians.
- A very high number of ethnic Albanians (82%) support North Macedonia's membership in the EU
- Among the ethnic Macedonians, the European integration of the country is supported by 63% of the respondents
- Educational attainment continues to be a positive predictor of support for EU membership
- The older categories of respondents are more supportive of EU membership
- Half of the population perceives EU membership as highly important
- 80% of the population attaches some importance to the EU accession process
- Almost 40% of the respondents are convinced that the country is ready for membership, which is a reflection of the lack of information in regards to the accession process
- More than a third of the population thinks that the country didn't make any progress in the accession process in comparison to 2020
- Ethnic Macedonians are more pessimistic in comparison to the ethnic Albanians about the progress in the EU accession process in the last year
- Most of respondents (43%) blame the obstructions from the neighboring countries which are EU member states for the lack of progress in the accession process and why the country is not a member of the EU
- More than a third of the population prioritize domestic factors for the lack of progress in the accession process

- One third of the population believes that North Macedonia will never become a member of the EU
- More than a third of the population share a rather unrealistic expectation that North Macedonia could become a member of the EU in the next five years
- It is an indicator that the population is lacking information on the trajectory and the time frame of the accession process
- The rationalist-utilitarian factors continue to be the main determinants for the support of EU membership
- Majority of respondents that support North Macedonia's EU membership base their preference on the anticipation of future economic benefits
- The expectations for improvement of the standard of living as a consequence of EU membership continues to be the most frequent determinant of support
- Economic development, the reduction of unemployment, the quality of life and the improvement of infrastructure are perceived as key public policy areas that would be positively affected by the EU membership
- Identity and value-based factors remain the most dominant predictors of Euroscepticism
- Grievances over the change of the constitutional change of the country, cultural threats over national identity and loss of sovereignty are pinpointed as important motivations for the respondents' decision not to support Macedonian membership in the EU
- The support for EU membership among SDSM supporters reflects the cues of the party leadership, and it exceeds the 90% threshold
- EU membership is supported by a majority of VMRO-DPMNE sympathizers
- The percentage of Eurosceptic attitudes among VMRO-DPMNE supporters is declining

- There is a notable disparity between the perceptions of the supporters of the two political parties on the state of the EU accession process
- 70% of the SDSM sympathizers are of an opinion that the country has achieved considerable progress in the European integration process in the past year. In contrast, 60% of the VMRO-DPMNE supporters think that the country has not progressed at all or that it has regressed in the course of 2021
- 60% of the SDSM supporters are convinced that the country is ready for membership. On the contrary, 70% of VMRO-DPMNE supporters believe that the country is not ready for membership

Introduction

The support for North 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 on an ad hoc basis 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 research which would measure public attitudes through a generalized and coherent methodological framework 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 longitudinal database about the public support for the EU accession process and North 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 North 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 North Macedonia's EU membership. Furthermore, as an addition to this

unified design, every annual research further inspects 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 survey conducted in 2014, and represents a methodological reference point for all subsequent research outputs. This comprehensive study accomplished two objectives. First, it determined general trends of support for North 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 of support for EU membership. Second, the study established an analytical model of the determinants of support for EU membership through the interaction of three factors of public attitude formation: rationalist-utilitarian, identity-based and cues from political parties.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 personal or societal benefit from the accession to the European Union. On the other hand,

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 a wider theoretical explication of the model, cf. *ibid*, pages 13-24

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 of imposing their own attitudes regarding important social issues to their supporters. Thus, it is presumed that the variation of support for the European integration process depends on the homogeneity of the attitudes of the political parties about this question.

About the survey

This public opinion analysis on the Macedonian process of accession to the European Union conducted in 2021 is a continuation of the research done in 2014, 2016, 2017, 2018, 2019 and 2020. It applies the same theoretical and analytical model of the determinants of support for North Macedonia's EU membership, and at the same time it compares its empirical findings with the findings of the previous surveys.

The primary data used in this analysis come from a public opinion survey research conducted in November 2021 on a sample of 1000 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 percentages and are subject to a statistical error of $\pm 3\%$.

This research uses the same methodology and questionnaire as the surveys conducted in the previous years. This approach creates conditions for a mini longitudinal analysis of the support for North Macedonia's accession to the European Union over the past seven years. Thus, in line with the previously established analytical model, this study focuses on analysing general trends and basic determinants of support for North Macedonia's membership in the European Union in the period 2014-2021.

General Trends

The public support for EU membership in North Macedonia has been gradually declining for more than a decade. These trends have been correlated with the continuously low credibility of the country's accession perspective, which was caused by several factors. The accession process has been initially stalled by the decade-long name dispute with Greece that was finally solved with the negotiation and ratification of the Prespa agreement in 2019. However, the resolution of the name dispute didn't meet the expectations of a rapid acceleration of the EU accession process, as the EU Commission's proposal to start the accession negotiations with North Macedonia was blocked by the demands of French President Macron for a reform in EU's enlargement policy for the Western Balkans. While the adoption of the "New methodology" on EU enlargement by the European Council in March 2020 brought optimism in regard to the perspectives of advancement of the accession process, all expectations were quickly offset by the decision of the Bulgarian Government in

December 2020 to block the adoption of the EU negotiation framework with North Macedonia due to a bilateral dispute based on questions of national identity. This has effectively pushed the credibility of the accession process in 2021 to a new low. Despite some efforts by the authorities of both countries to overcome the dispute and unlock the start of the accession negotiations, they failed to reach a mutual agreement, which meant that North Macedonia's EU accession has remained effectively blocked throughout 2021.

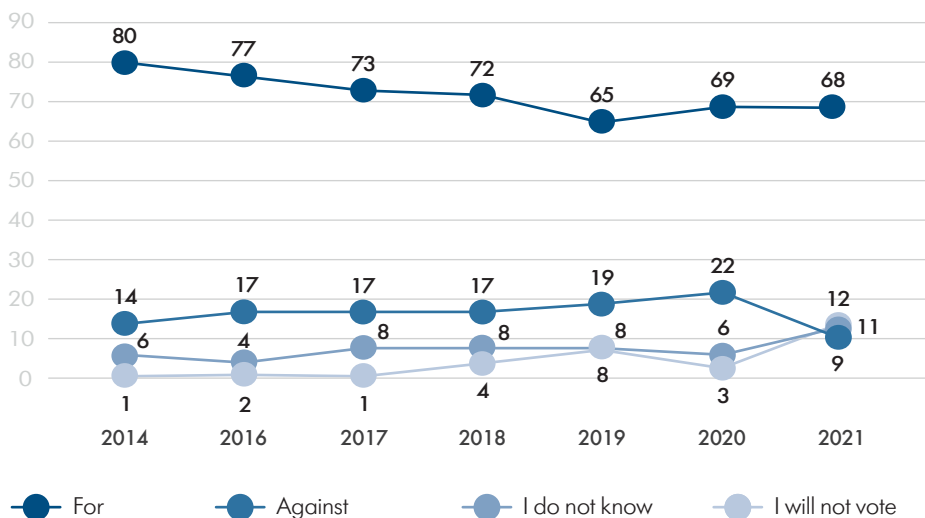
However, the new impasse in the accession process didn't meaningfully alter the public support for EU membership. The incremental, decade-long declining trends of support for EU membership were finally disrupted in 2020, when we witnessed a slight increase in public support in comparison to 2019. In 2021, the percentage of supporters of North Macedonia's EU membership is almost identical to 2020, i.e. 68%

(graph 1). Hence, the new deadlock of the accession process did not have a significant effect on public perceptions about EU membership. Although it is too early to say, this distribution of attitudes could potentially signify a stabilizing trend of support for EU membership based on the long-term expectations of EU membership benefits. On the other hand, there is a significant drop in the percentage of openly Eurosceptic respondents. Thus, in 2021, only 10% of the population would vote against EU membership at a hypothetical referendum, 13% less than in 2020. However, as can be seen in graph 1, these attitudes didn't transform into positive perceptions on EU membership, but rather have transitioned into the undecided and I don't know demographics. Another recurrent phenomenon in the past decade is the interethnic gap in the support for EU membership between the two biggest ethnic communities in the country, the ethnic Macedonians and the ethnic Albanians. In 2021, a somewhat considerable cleavage is still evident. A very

high number of ethnic Albanians (82%) support North Macedonia's membership in the EU, 6 % more than in 2020; and almost identical to the 2019 survey results. Among the ethnic Macedonians, the European integration of the country is supported by 63% of the respondents, while 12% are Eurosceptic. However, that is 10% less than the previous year. Similar to the general distribution of attitudes, there is a considerable rise of undecided respondents and respondents that wouldn't vote at all on a hypothetical referendum for membership in the EU. Educational attainment continues to be a positive predictor of support for EU membership, as the respondents with higher education tend to be more supportive of the EU accession process. Comparably, the older categories of respondents are more supportive of EU membership. Only 53% of the respondents that are younger than 30 openly support North Macedonia's membership in the EU. A high percentage (40%) of this demographic is either undecided or won't vote at a hypothetical referendum.

Graph 1.³

If next week there is a referendum for membership of the Republic of North Macedonia in the EU, how would you vote?



A significant change is evident in the distribution of attitudes on the importance of EU membership (table 1). While there is a strong consistency in the past years among the population that doesn't perceive EU membership as important at all (16 % in 2021, same as the previous year), there are notable shifts of frequencies in the positive scales of importance. Thus, in 2021, half of the overall population perceives

EU membership as highly important, 15% more than the previous year. Even more, the cumulative percentages from the positive scales indicate that roughly 80% of the population attaches some importance to the EU accession process. The inter-ethnic gap is evident in this category as well. For example, only 7% of the ethnic Albanians consider EU membership as not important at all, compared to 20% of ethnic Macedonians

³ As the decimal numbers were rounded off, the total may not be 100% (this remark applies to all graphs and tables).

in the same category. Conversely, a very high percentage of the ethnic Albanian respondents (73%) consider EU

membership to be very important for them personally. This opinion is shared by 41% of the ethnic Macedonian respondents.

Table 1.

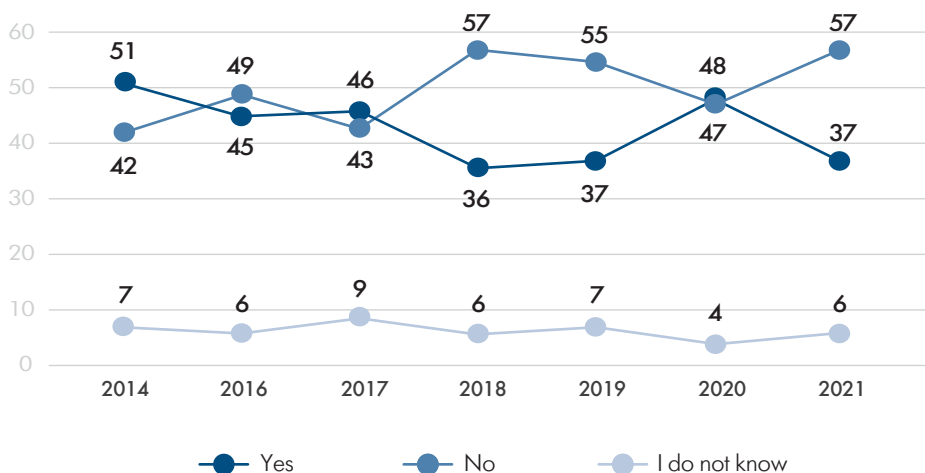
How personally important is it for you for North Macedonia to become a member of the EU?	2014 %	2016 %	2017 %	2018 %	2019 %	2020 %	2021 %
Highly important	48	48	54	56	36	36	51
Somewhat important	36	29	20	24	35	34	26
Somewhat unimportant	5	5	6	5	10	13	5
Not important at all	10	16	18	14	18	16	16
I do not know	1	1	1,5	1	1	1	2
No answer / refuses to answer	0	0	0	0	0	0	0

The instability of the distribution of attitudes in regard to the question whether North Macedonia is ready for membership in the EU is further confirmed with the results of the 2021 survey. Unlike the more positive outlook in 2020, when almost half of the population considered the country to be ready for membership in the EU; in 2021 this opinion is shared by 37% of the respondents (graph 2). Conversely, there is a rise in the percentage of respondents that believe that the country

is not ready for membership. While this development might indicate a more balanced and objective perception on the state of affairs in North Macedonia's accession process, the lack of long-term consistency in regard to this variable infers that in general the Macedonian population lacks a detailed understanding of the EU accession process and comprehension of the assessment of the EU institutions on the progress of the country in fulfilling the criteria for membership.

Graph 2.⁴

Do you believe that North Macedonia is ready for EU membership?



A similar trend of more balanced perceptions can be traced in the public opinion insights on the level of the country's progress in the EU accession process in the course of 2021 (table 2). While the distribution of attitudes that consider that the country has had a considerable progress in the previous year is constantly low (at 11% in 2021), there are notable discrepancies in the frequencies within the other categories. Decreasing trends can be identified among those respondents that believe that the country has somewhat progressed (27%, a

drop of 11% compared to 2020); and those respondents that detect only marginal improvements in the EU accession process (27%, a drop of 6% compared to 2020). On the other hand, more than a third of the population (13% more than in 2020) thinks that the country didn't make any progress in comparison to 2020. This rather realistic distribution of perceptions in the 2021 survey is likely correlated with the reality of a new blockade of North Macedonia's EU accession aspirations. The above mentioned inter-ethnic division is also evident in this case. The ethnic

⁴ The graph excludes the values for the respondents who refuse to answer the question. In all cases, these values are equal to or less than 1%

Macedonians appear to have more pessimistic views on the dynamics of North Macedonia's accession process in 2021, a sentiment that has also been consistent in the previous surveys as well. Roughly 40% of this demographic believes that the country didn't achieve

any progress in the course of 2021. In contrast more than half of the ethnic Albanian respondents suppose that the country has achieved either considerable or moderate progress in the EU accession process in the previous year.

Table 2.

Regarding the previous year, how much has North Macedonia progressed in the EU integration process?	2014 %	2016 %	2017 %	2018 %	2019 %	2020 %	2021 %
It has progressed a lot	14	11	13	13	11	10	11
It has somewhat progressed	33	28	31	25	27	38	27
It has progressed a little	20	20	20	28	23	27	21
There was no progress at all	26	30	27	30	33	20	33
It has regressed	5	7	2	2	5	5	4
I do not know	2	3	7	2	1	1	3
No answer / refuses to answer	0	1	1	1	0	0	1

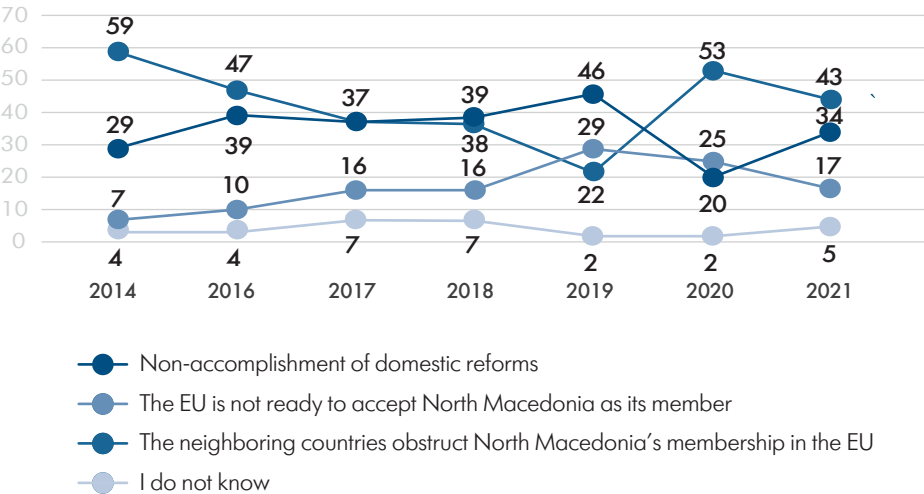
There is a considerable variation also in the perceptions on the factors that contribute to the fact that North Macedonia is not a member of the EU (graph 3). As expected, most of respondents (43%) blame the obstructions from the neighboring countries which are EU member

states. The results are consistent with the recent developments regarding Bulgaria's decision to block the accession process and the start of North Macedonia's accession negotiations with the EU, even if the intensity is lower than in 2020. On the other hand, the number of respondents who prioritize domestic

factors, such as failure of reforms to comply with EU conditionality as the main reason why the country isn't in the EU, has increased by 15%. This cohort now comprises more than a third of the

overall population. Conversely, in the past three years, the number of respondents who blame the unwillingness of the EU to accept the country as a new member is continually decreasing.

Graph 3.⁵ In your opinion, what is the most important reason why North Macedonia is still not a member of the EU?



Finally, the surge in optimistic expectations in regard to the time frame of North Macedonia's perspective of EU membership that was evident in the results of the survey in 2020, has been offset by a rather more realistic

set of perceptions in 2021. As seen in table 3, still, a relatively high number of respondents (18%), believe that North Macedonia will become a member of the EU in the next three years. On the other hand, the percentage of respondents that

⁵ The graph excludes the values for the respondents who refuse to answer the question. In all cases these values are equal to or less than 2%

anticipate EU membership in the next five years has rapidly decreased to 16% (compared to 28% in 2020). The more realistic scenario of membership within the next decade is also less favored in 2021 compared to the previous year. The most striking turnaround in the public perception on the prospects on EU membership is noticeable among the pessimistic group of respondents. In the course of 2021, the population that believes that North Macedonia will never become a member of the EU has doubled, thus reaching a peak value (in the whole 8 year period of measurement) of almost 30%. The rather inconsistent distribution of

attitudes in the longitudinal presentation of results suggests that the respondents are shaping their expectations on the prospects of EU membership in relation to the fluctuations in the credibility of the accession process in general. The survey results also suggest that the population is not well informed about the trajectory and the anticipated length of the accession process within EU enlargement policy. Thus, more than a third of the population share a rather unrealistic expectation that North Macedonia could become a member of the EU in the next five years.

Table 3.

When do you think North Macedonia will become a member of the EU?	2014 %	2016 %	2017 %	2018 %	2019 %	2020 %	2021 %
In the next 3 years	14	18	27	23	14	20	18
In the next 5 years	18	22	22	25	20	28	16
In the next 10 years	21	18	12	17	21	25	18
In the next 20 years	12	7	7	14	16	9	11
Never	23	25	20	17	24	15	29
I do not know / refuses to answer	11	10	11	5	4	3	8

DETERMINANTS OF SUPPORT FOR THE EUROPEAN INTEGRATION PROCESS

Rationalist-utilitarian factors

—

The longitudinal analyses of our datasets as well as previous research on the characteristics of public opinion on the EU accession process in North Macedonia, undoubtedly point towards the predominance of rationalist-utilitarian factors in the formation of attitudes of support for EU membership. The Macedonian citizen is most likely to support North Macedonia's membership in the EU due to expectations for economic benefits that stem from the process of European integration. More specifically, those expectations are of sociotropic nature, meaning that they are based on anticipation of future economic rewards for the society as a whole, rather than instant personal gain.

The results from the 2021 survey further confirm this assumption. Majority of respondents that support North Macedonia's EU membership base their preference on the anticipation of future economic benefits (table 4). The expectations for improvement of the standard of living as a consequence of EU membership remains to be the most frequent determinant of support (23%). When combined with the remaining economic/materialist variables (reduction of unemployment, easier access to working abroad), the cumulative number of respondents that base their support for EU membership on rationalist assumptions exceeds the 50% threshold. On the other hand, a

growing number of respondents perceive the benefits from the EU accession process through non-materialist lenses. Thus, 20% of the population base their support on the assumption that EU membership will bring improved stability and security of the country. Ideational

factors, such as improvement of democracy or “a sense of belonging to the European family of state” have also become more frequent. As seen in table 4, in the past three years there is a significant level of consistency in the distribution of attitudes across all variables.

Table 4.

What is your reason for deciding to vote for membership in the EU?	2014 %	2016 %	2017 %	2018 %	2019 %	2020 %	2021 %
Improvement of the standard of living	29	46	51	36	22	21	23
Reduction of unemployment	26	17	23	22	18	19	16
Improvement of democracy	10	5	7	9	13	13	14
Mobility of workers/ easier access to jobs abroad	3	10	5	6	15	16	14
A sense of belonging to “the European family of countries”	2	5	2	4	13	13	12
Improved security and stability of the country	27	16	12	23	19	19	20
I do not know / refuses to answer	2	1	1	1	0	0	0

A similar consistent trend in the past three years can be detected in the distribution of attitudes regarding respondent expectations on the societal areas that would be positively affected by North Macedonia's membership in the EU. Again, the rationalist/ utilitarian hypothesis is confirmed as the economic aspects are favored by

the majority of the respondents (table 5). Anticipation of economic development (19%), reduction of unemployment (15%) and quality of life (15%) are the most frequent preferences of the respondents. On the other hand, 12% of the population believe that EU membership will significantly improve the human rights portfolio of the country.

Table 5.

Which area will be most positively affected by North Macedonia's membership in the EU?	2014 %	2016 %	2017 %	2018 %	2019 %	2020 %	2021 %
Economic development	23	25	25	20	18	19	19
Stability	13	15	15	13	14	12	13
Reduction of unemployment	23	18	21	19	20	21	15
Human rights and freedoms	12	9	12	14	12	11	12
Improvement of infrastructure	6	5	5	9	11	13	11
Quality of life as a whole	16	18	11	13	17	16	15
Strengthening of national identity	3	4	4	7	3	5	9
Other	1	3	2	1	2	2	3
I do not know	3	3	6	3	3	1	2

Identity and value-based factors

The trends in the past five years indicate a strong correlation between identity and value-based factors and Eurosceptic attitudes.⁶ This tendency is also evident in the results of the 2021 survey. Despite a slight increase in the economic predictors of Euroscepticism, identity and value based factors remain the most important reasons for the formation of attitudes that confront the idea of EU membership (table 6). Thus, grievances over the change of the constitutional name of the country (16%), cultural threats over national identity (14%) and loss of sovereignty (11%) are pinpointed as important motivations for the respondents' decision not to support

Macedonian membership in the EU. In comparison to the previous year, the biggest shift in public perceptions amongst this cohort of respondents can be seen in the distribution of frequencies under the variable "the EU does not want us". The percentage of respondents that doubt the openness of EU for new members has doubled over the course of 2021 (reaching 20%). It is highly probable that this shift is a reflection of the developments in 2021 within the EU in regard to EU enlargement on one hand, and the plummeting of the credibility of the accession process in the wake of the recent blockade of the accession negotiations.

⁶ For more information on the shift in the trends of influence of identity and value-based factors on the Eurosceptic attitudes, cf. Damjanovski, Ivan and Kirchner, Marie Jelenka. *Analysis of Public Opinion on Macedonia's Accession to the European Union (2014-2018)*. Konrad Adenauer Foundation / Institute for Democracy 'Societas Civilis' - Skopje, 2019

Table 6.

What is the reason for your vote against EU membership?	2019 %	2020 %	2021 %
Deterioration of the standard of living	12	9	13
Threats to the Macedonian economy	7	9	13
Change of the constitutional name of the country	21	20	16
Loss of national identity	17	23	14
We will become dependent on Brussels	10	9	12
Loss of sovereignty and independence of the country	17	19	11
EU does not want us	16	11	20
I do not know / refuses to answer	0	0	0

However, these attitudes did not have a straightforward impact on the self-perceptions of the Macedonian citizens on their identity. As the data in table 7 suggest, there is a significant drop in the percentage of respondents that identify themselves exclusively as members of an ethnic group. However, despite these developments, this type of self-perception remains dominant in Macedonian society, as 60% of the population identifies exclusively as Macedonian, Albanian or a member

of the other ethnic groups in the country. On the other hand, there is a considerable increase in the sentiment of a non-exclusive, double identity, i.e. ethnic and European (25%).

As confirmed in the previous surveys, exclusive identification with an ethno-national identity does not undermine support for EU membership, as the distribution of attitudes among this cohort is almost identical with the distribution among the respondents

that declare ethnic and European identity. In both cases the breakdown of frequencies is very similar to the general results in graph 1. As expected, the tiny sample of respondents that identify as European first, overwhelmingly

(94%) supports North Macedonia's membership in the EU. These results are similar to the findings in mainstream literature on the support for EU membership in most European countries.

Table 7.

Above all, do you feel as	2014 %	2016 %	2017 %	2018 %	2019 %	2020 %	2021 %
Only Macedonian/ Albanian/other	69	70	77	69	67	78	60
Macedonian/ Albanian/other and European	20	20	15	20	24	14	25
European and Macedonian/ Albanian/other	6	7	3	4	7	7	10
Only European	3	3	3	5	1	1	2
I do not know	2	1	2	1	1	0	3

Cues from political parties

Political party cues as a determinant of support for EU membership relies on the assumption that due to informational deficits for complex processes such as EU accession, sympathizers of political parties form their opinions about those processes in accordance with the official positions (on those processes) of the party and the party leadership they follow. The longitudinal analysis of the perceptions of party sympathizers on the process of European integration generally confirms the influence of party cues on the formation of attitudes on EU membership among the sympathizers of the biggest parties in North Macedonia.

The trends that have been established in the previous years are expected to continue in 2021, as the principal positions of the two biggest political parties on the political aspect of the

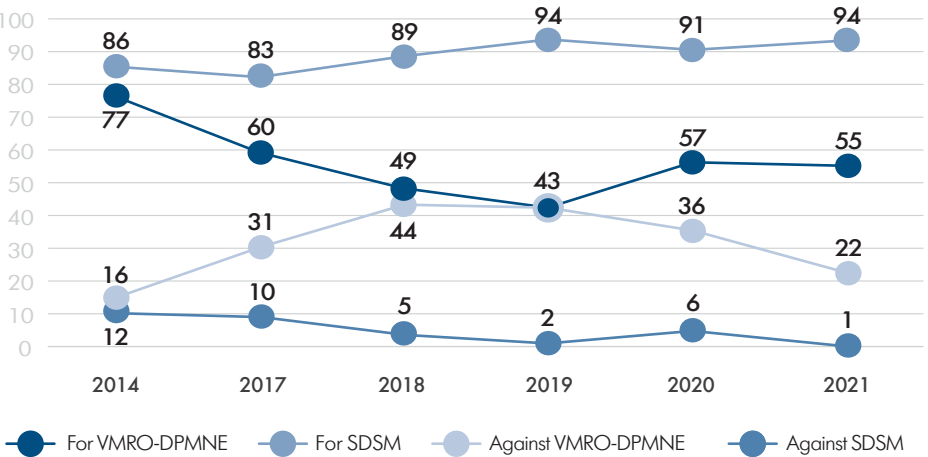
accession process have been consistent throughout the forementioned period.

Thus, SDSM as the leading party in the government coalition has continued to highly prioritize the accession process both in its political agenda and its communication strategy. The party has strongly supported the government's efforts to unblock the accession process through engaging in discussions with the Bulgarian government that tackle very sensitive issues of national identity. On the other hand, VMRO-DPMNE, although supportive of the overall process of European integration, has been very critical of the government's approach towards the resolution of the dispute with Bulgaria and has advocated for a more balanced approach that will not undermine national interests only for the sake of progress in the EU accession process. In this sense, the results

from the 2021 survey are consistent with the results from the previous year. SDSM supporters maintain their overwhelming support for the EU accession process. A staggering number of 94% of SDSM voters support North Macedonia's membership in the EU. On the other hand, the distribution of attitudes among VMRO-DPMNE

sympathizers is more balanced across all variables. A majority of respondents from this demographic supports EU membership (55%), while 22% have Eurosceptic attitudes. In comparison to the previous year, the number of Eurosceptic supporters of VMRO-DPMNE has dropped by almost 15%.

Graph 4.⁷ If next week there is a referendum for membership of the Republic of North Macedonia in the EU, how would you vote?



⁷ The analyses takes into consideration only the data for the two biggest parties in the country VMRO-DPMNE and SDSM. The data for the other parties has been omitted due to the small sample size. The values that refer to the answers *I do not know* and *I will not vote* have not been included in the graph.

Finally, the notable disparity between the perceptions of the supporters of the two political parties on the state of the EU accession process is also evident in their vastly divergent positions in regard to some of the variables that have been analyzed previously in the text. For example, 70% of the SDSM sympathizers are of an opinion that the country has achieved considerable progress in the European integration process in the past year. In contrast, 60% of the VMRO-

DPMNE supporters think that the country has not progressed at all or that it has regressed in the course of 2021. In a similar vein, almost 60% of SDSM supporters are convinced in the country's readiness for EU membership. The standpoint of VMRO-DPMNE sympathizers in regard to this question is diametrically opposite, as more than 70% of the respondents do not think that the country is ready for EU membership.

Information about KAS

Freedom, justice, and solidarity are the basic principles underlying the work of the Konrad Adenauer-Stiftung (KAS).

The KAS is a political foundation, closely associated with the Christian Democratic Union (CDU) of Germany. We conduct education programs for the society and cooperate with governmental institutions, political parties, civil society organizations and handpicked elites, building strong partnerships along the way. Together with our partners, we make a contribution to the creation of an international order that enables every country to develop in freedom and under its own responsibility.

Contact information about KAS

Address: Risto Ravanovski No 8,
1000 Skopje

Phone number: +389 2 321 70 75
+389 23 21 70 76

E-Mail: Skopje@kas.de

Information about IDSCS

IDSCS is a think-tank organisation researching the development of good governance, rule of law and North Macedonia's European integration. IDSCS has the mission to support citizens' involvement in the decision-making process and strengthen the participatory political culture. By strengthening liberal values, IDSCS contributes towards coexistence of diversities.

Contact information about IDSCS

Address: Str. Miroslav Krlezha No.
52/1 /2, 1000 Skopje

Phone number: +389 2 3094 760

E-Mail: contact@idscs.org.mk

Information about the author

Ivan Damjanovski is a professor at the Department of Political Science, Faculty of Law Iustinianus Primus, Ss. Cyril and Methodius University in Skopje. His research interests are focused on democratization, Europeanisation of candidate countries, EU enlargement, EU integration theory and ethnic identities.

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<https://idscs.org.mk/en/2022/02/22/analysis-of-public-opinion-on-north-macedonias-accession-to-the-european-union-2014-2021/>

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