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## Chapter 7

# **ANALYSIS OF BENEFITS AND HARMS AS A FACTOR IN CITIZEN SUPPORT TO CROATIAN ACCESSION TO THE EUROPEAN UNION**

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## **ABSTRACT**

This paper deals with the analysis of the utilitarian model of the explanation of popular support for Croatian entry into the European Union. The utilitarian model for explicating support or lack of support for accession to the EU has been analysed through subjective principled expectations of benefits and harms of entry into the Union at a personal and at a national level, and through concrete expectations at the level of twenty-two aspects of social and economic life. The research results show that on the basis of principled expectations it is possible precisely to predict support for entry into the EU, but that the principled expectations are not to any very great extent founded on concrete expectations in the observed aspects of social and economic life, and that they are to a certain degree linked with political viewpoints. On the other hand, concrete expectations are relatively weakly correlated with support for Croatian entry into the EU. Such a result suggests the conclusion that on the basis of a utilitarian explanation of support it is possible only relatively poorly to predict viewpoints concerning joining the EU, and

that principled expectations of benefits and harms are in good part an expression of general impressions about the EU, trust in the political elite and political views of Croatian citizens, and to a lesser extent realistic rational calculations of harms and benefits. The paper is based on empirical survey of the views and expectations performed on a probabilistic national sample of a thousand citizens older than 15.

**Key words:**

European Union, utilitarian explanation of attitudes toward accession, analyses of harms and benefits, political attitudes, Croatia

## INTRODUCTION

Since mid-2003 there have been considerable changes in the attitudes of Croatian citizens to accession to the EU. According to Puls agency investigations of mid-2003, about three quarters of Croatian citizens then supported Croatian accession, after which, from the autumn of the same year, the process of a decline in support began. Through several phases, the process of a weakening of public support for the integration of Croatia into the EU has arrived at the critical level of today, when the number of those who are against is equal to, and sometimes even higher than, that of those who are for Croatian membership.

Several explanations for the downward trends in public support in Croatia for EU accession have been tendered at various levels of abstraction, which can be more or less subsumed under the approaches that are met in the relevant professional literature. Rachel Cichowski (2000) says that in the literature that deals with the first three waves of enlargement (finishing with the entry of Austria, Finland and Sweden in 1995) it is possible to identify three approaches to an explanation of public support for the integration of a country into the EU: utilitarian, valued-based and economic and political issue-based. The utilitarian explanation is based on the hypothesis that the individual attitude to European integration stems from a profit and loss analysis vis-à-vis quality of life. The value-based explanation assumes that certain value orientations, such as post-materialist values (Inglehart, 1970) are more “fertile ground” for the acceptance of integration processes than other value orientations. The third explanation is based on the assumption that a positive macroeconomic situation and positive trends have a positive effect on the assessment of the processes that brought them about

and hence it is possible accordingly to explicate the pro or contra views of citizens to European integration. Political reasons are also to be added to this list of reasons for support or lack of support for European integration, such as the relation between national and supranational institutions, and the theory of social capital. A political explanation appears in several sub-versions. Sánchez-Cuenca (2000) suggests that the level of trust in national institutions is in inverse proportion to trust in supranational institutions and hence to the level of support for accession to the EU. According to this explanation, citizens look for some institutional authority that is capable of settling their problems. If domestic institutions are capable of this, supranational institutions are not necessary, and conversely, when national institutions do not perform their functions at a satisfactory level, hope is channelled towards the European institutions. Anderson (1998) suggests three types of political explanation that correlate citizen views about domestic political institutions and actors and views about European integration. The first type of argument suggests an opposite correlation between trust in national and supranational institutions than that found in Sánchez-Cuenca (2000), which means that it is proportional. This is backed up with the proposition that citizens use their own government and national institutions as a proxy or example or model via which they make judgements concerning supranational institutions concerning which they have far less knowledge and information. The fact that two authors give diametrically opposite explanations of the ways in which perception of national institutions affect attitudes about the EU can be explained by the diversity of the contexts with which they are concerned. Anderson is mainly concerned with the older members and Sánchez-Cuenca with the transition countries, in which the EU is seen as an ideal as compared with the young and undeveloped national institutions. Anderson's second proposition implies the existence of a directly proportional link between trust in the domestic government and support for European unity. This can be explained by the fact that those mainly spearheading European integration are officials of the governments of the member countries (and candidates) and trust in them as domestic political actors is projected onto trust in the processes of European integration that they are heading. The third argument links support for traditional political parties as compared with new parties that appear on the political scene as an expression of resistance to the policies that are implemented by the traditional parties, and views about European integration. This hypothesis posits that electors who support traditional political parties support

the processes of European integration to a greater extent because it is these parties that are heading the process. An explanation based on the concept of social capital implies that individuals who have greater social capital and are more open to cooperation and association in everyday life will also more easily accept the idea of European integration (Rimac and Štulhofer, 2003).

All these approaches certainly explain part of the whole process of attitude formation among citizens concerning European integration, but they are not all equally applicable to the understanding of the sudden changes in the views of citizens about the entry of a country into the EU. Explanations that are based on long-term and relatively recalcitrant characteristics, such as value orientations or quantity of social capital, can be employed with difficulty to explain the sudden fall of public support for Croatian accession to the EU of some 30-40%. These explanations would have to posit the occurrence of earthshaking social changes that in a relatively short period of time have altered value orientations and the amount of social capital. An explanation of sudden change can more convincingly be based on one of the approaches using changing social phenomena, such as perception of the domestic government, trust in domestic or European institutions or perception of the harms and benefits of EU accession.

An unsystematic analysis of Croatian public discourse about European integration leaves the impression that the utilitarian perspective is one of the dominant angles from which the process of European accession is observed. If an analysis of the contents of newspaper articles and the public statements of politicians and analysts were made, probably it would be found that in the context of EU accession, most of the discussion is couched in terms of harms and benefits, even when the many motives for a negative attitude are actually to be found in the sphere of political views. Political actors expect citizens to perceive the harms and benefits of entry into the EU and therefore think that in the event of a referendum on this issue they would make their decisions pursuant to rational cost-benefit calculations. Of course, the possibility of a rational calculation of cost-benefits on the part of most citizens is quite restricted for several reasons: lack of basic information about the way the EU works; lack of interest in information about integration processes (Anderson, 1998); lack of information about the dimensions of changes that happen as a consequence of EU accession; the impossibility of a rational calculation of pros and cons even when there is a certain amount of information because of the absence of theoretical

knowledge and analytical abilities. But in spite of all this, it can be assumed that most citizens have their general (principled) expectations from EU accession, expectations that stem from information, half-information and interpretations that are conveyed via the media, personal experience and informal communication.

The possibility of forming a rational viewpoint (understood as a viewpoint founded on a calculation of cost-benefits) concerning entry into the EU depends to a very great extent on the atmosphere in which a decision is made, that is, on the vigour and character of public debate about the topic. When we speak of public debate, it is important to distinguish public debates among stakeholder groups and experts and public debate that the ordinary person can take part in and can understand. The first kind of public debate is important and essential, but has little effect on the formation of citizen viewpoints. The second kind, which we might call public debates in front of the citizens and aimed at them is much more important for the formation of public opinion about EU membership. The vigour of public debates performed in front of the public to date (meaning above all else debates in the media) concerning the importance and consequences of EU accession has been relatively slight, and they have been mainly of a superficial and generalised nature. We can expect in consequence that the views and expectations of citizens themselves are also relatively generalised and hazy, and that they are more under the influence of political point-scoring than of serious discussion and rational cost-benefit analysis.

The objective of the present paper is to analyse current expectations of people in Croatia about the harms and benefits for them personally and for the country as a whole from EU accession and to establish just how consistent they are and to what extent they explain the current viewpoints. We are also interested in the relation between concrete and general (principled) expectations, at a personal and a national level. The goal is better to understand the mechanism of expectation formation, and to define how much expectations are influenced by general and superficial impressions, and how much the consequence of an analysis of changes in individual aspects of social and economic life. An understanding of the character and structure of citizen expectations can clearly indicate the need to step up public debate in front of and for the citizens and the directions in which such a debate should be led. If it should be shown that the views of citizens are generalised, and that concrete expectations have no strong influence on the creation of viewpoints about EU accession, this might be understood as a clear evalua-

tion of the previous efforts of government and the line ministry to provide public information.

Also discussed in the paper are the factors that influence the general expectations of respondents, as well as concrete analyses of harms and benefits in given areas, primarily from the perspective of political viewpoints. We are interested how much principles expectations of profits and losses from EU accession are in fact rationalisations of other motivations for supporting or not supporting EU entry. For the purpose of analysing hypotheses concerning general expectations as expression of a rationalisation of political viewpoints, we decided to measure perceptions of the attitude of the EU to Croatia. This is above all concerned with cooperation with the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia (ICTY), the hypothesis being that such pressures lead to a conviction that the EU does not accept us, which in turn produces the reaction in which EU accession is rejected.

## **THE THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK: THE UTILITARIAN APPROACH TO EXPLAINING THE ATTITUDES TO MEMBERSHIP OF THE EUROPEAN UNION**

The utilitarian approach to an explanation of public support for European integration is one of the most highly-investigated theoretical perspectives and hence appears in several variants. In the first one, which we will call objective, the focus is directed on immediate economic gains that individual groups will have from the integration processes. It can be hypothesised that in any society certain groups can be identified that have a greater immediate benefit than others, as well as groups that will have to pay heavier losses. In line with this hypothesis, and with the theoretical model of economically motivated voting behaviour, it is expected that between these there will be an important difference in support to European integration (Gabel and Palmer, 1995; Gabel and Whitten, 1997; Gabel, 1998). Groups that can be supposed to have greater benefits from the integration processes, because they will be more competitive in the single market, are relatively young, well educated and have higher social and professional positions, with higher incomes. On the other hand, people who have less education, manual workers and persons with lower incomes will have

more harms than benefits from the process of European integration (because of their lower direct competitiveness), and it is expected that they will accordingly be less inclined to support the integration processes (Gabel and Palmer, 1995). By way of adjustment of this model of explanation so it can fit the conditions of the transitional countries, Tucker, Pacek and Berinsky (2002) offer a theory about transition winners and losers. Transition winners are defined as those groups that have profited from the transition processes, who have enjoyed benefits from the concomitant economic and political reforms. The transitional losers are those groups that have suffered negative consequences of transitional reforms.<sup>1</sup> The second variant of the utilitarian explanation is based on a subjective evaluation of the economic situation (Gabel and Whitten, 1998) and an evaluation of the potential personal harms and benefits in the case of a country's accession to the EU (Nelsen and Guth, 2000; Ehin, 2001). Here the main emphasis is placed on perception instead of on the objective position of a person in the social structure and hence it is called subjective. Research in the Baltic countries shows that it is possible to predict views on integration more precisely on the basis of expectations of personal losses or benefits than on the basis of personal competitiveness as measured by social-professional position. This tends to lead to the conclusion that the subjective dimension of expectations is independent of the objective market position of the person (Ehin, 2001).

In essence, the utilitarian model of explanation does not stick to economic arguments alone. Cichowski (2000) also includes in this group of explanations arguments that take for granted that entry into the EU means, for transition countries, a guarantee of the continuation of political reforms and political stability, that is the guarantee that totalitarian and communist regimes have been abandoned forever. From this point of departure, researchers in some eastern European countries have investigated the relation between satisfaction with democracy and support to democratisation and development of the free market as predictors of support to European integration (Mishler and Rose, 1997; Cichowski, 2000).

The utilitarian model of explaining public support for European integration in more recent time has met with two-pronged criticisms. The first criticism emphasises political factors, above all from the point of view of the impact of the perception of the national government and national institutions and party affiliation, which is a continuation of a line of reasoning familiar earlier in the older members. Thus Cichowski



(2000) demonstrates that party preferences are a key factor in the explanation of support in five of the new members of the EU just before accession. In other words, entry into the EU is more often supported by pro-European voters, and less by voters of eurosceptic parties.<sup>ii</sup> The great drawback of this argument is that it is impossible to see what is cause and what is effect in connection with party affiliation and views concerning European integration. The existence of such a correlation does not exclude the possibility that in the background of political inclinations there is some hidden utilitarian orientation in the sense that groups that have greater benefits from the integration processes will have more positive views on European integration and hence will support pro-European parties. A second type of political counter-argument to the utilitarian explanation is provided by Sánchez-Cuenca (2000), who suggests that there is a strong correlation between the perception of national and supranational institutions and views about European integration. In a situation in which citizens have a highly positive view about national institutions and a bad view of supranational (European) institutions there is a greater likelihood of a negative viewpoint about European integration and vice versa. As in the previous line of reasoning, here too it can be noticed that the viewpoint concerning national and supranational institutions can be the consequence of a utilitarian analysis of the consequences of membership.

The other line of criticism stresses the importance of national identity, national exclusiveness and openness to other cultures (McLaren, 2002). The EU does not after all mean just free trade and economic integration, but it has, increasingly, a cultural and symbolic dimension, as well as a political, in the sense of impacts on national identity and sovereignty. McLaren (2002) showed that pursuant to openness to other cultures the strength of support for the EU can be predicted extremely well, while Carey (2002) showed that the attitude to the EU is conditioned by a feeling of national identity almost just as much by utilitarian motivations (see Štulhofer, 2006). But irrespective of the critical attitudes to utilitarian explanations of public support for the EU, most investigations have shown that such considerations do play an important role in the process of explicating public support for European integration and trust in the EU.

Some methodological and epistemological criticisms may be directed at the utilitarian model or the various versions of it, criticisms that are not to be found in the literature to any great extent. The objective version of the utilitarian model can be criticised for starting out

from the assumption that certain groups support EU membership more than others because they would be more competitive on the common market, without convincing and direct proofs being given to show that these groups really are more competitive and that membership of their country in the EU will bring them direct benefit. It is particularly dubious when the main argument is derived only pursuant to correlations of levels of education, income levels and professional status on the one hand and views among EU membership on the other.<sup>iii</sup> It could easily be shown that the same groups could be more or less well-disposed to EU membership for other reasons, such as a greater amount of social capital (Rimac and Štulhofer, 2003) or other kinds of value orientations (Inglehart, 1970). For example, how can it be proved that people with higher educations and with higher professional status are more supportive of EU membership because of the utilitarian motivations related to their supposed greater competitiveness and not because of different value orientations, better levels of informedness or some other reason again? It may be objected in principle to the subjective version of the utilitarian explanation (apart from the choice of indicators in some research – as in Tucker, Pacek and Berinsky, 2002) that it is based on an expressed viewpoint that does not necessarily have to be the expression of real expectations but can rather be the result of a process of rationalisation of other motives for anti-European stances. The whole process of European integration is presented in public within the framework of the primarily economic cost-benefits, and all other kinds of reasoning are put out of court as undesirable. This can lead to the rationalisation of real motivation through the assertion of utilitarian grounds. On the other hand, an advantage of the subjective version of the utilitarian model is the possibility that some of the members of the public who at the moment have no benefit from the transition process can view the EU in the light of a saviour that will solve their key problems. Another weakness of the utilitarian model is that it is on the whole focused on egoistic utilitarianism, at the personal level. Little attention has been devoted to a broader understanding of cost-benefits, not focused only on interests and benefits of the individual, but on those of the broader society or particular groups in it, which can also be a subject for analysis of the advantages and disadvantages of EU membership.

Our point of departure is in the utilitarian model that explains people's views about European integration. One of the most well-researched approaches, it can provide an explanation for the relatively fast change of views about an important number of citizens concern-

ing the accession of their country to the EU. From the evident requirement that this model of explanation should be subjected to further critical interrogation and analysis, in this work we shall test the following hypotheses:

- *The general expectations of citizens from EU accession are a powerful predictor of support for entry into the Union.* Since in most transition countries this hypothesis proved to be correct, we expect that it will also be shown to be so in Croatia. It is a truism to hypothesise that those citizens who expect more positive effects from EU entry at a personal or national level will support accession to a greater extent. The question arises however as to what part of the variance of the total attitude to the EU is explicable by these utilitarian expectations, and which part remains inexplicable and can be related to some of the other models for explaining support to EU membership. The question also arises of whether the attitude to membership can be predicted more accurately on the basis of general or concrete expectations. Concrete expectations would be closer to the theoretical model of the utilitarian explanation since it can be supposed that they are to a greater extent based on a cost-benefit analysis, and less influenced by general impressions or political viewpoints.
- *General expectations from entry into the EU are based on a rational evaluation of concrete changes to be expected from entry into the EU, above all in aspects that are directly linked with the standard of living of the people, such as the prices of goods and services, wage levels and unemployment levels.* In the literature relatively little attention is devoted to the structure of expectations from EU membership and to the manner of structuring the system of expectations. First of all the general or principled expectations should be distinguished in the sense of ratio of harms and benefits, whether at a personal or at a national level from concrete expectations in individual life domains. The first model implies that on the ground of the general impression or some other motives the general expectations are first of all formed, which are then projected onto concrete issues and areas of life. The second model assumes a rational construction of general expectations that are the resultants of expected changes in concrete aspects of economic or other conditions. Another important issue related to the mechanism for the formation of general expectations is the extent to which general utilitarian expectations are the consequence of concrete expectations relating to the standard of living of the individual, to what extent of general economic expectations, and to what extent

they are the consequence of expectations that do not at all refer to the economic sphere of social life. This hypothesis seems to us to be very important for an evaluation of the utilitarian approach to an explanation of support for European integration. Although it is used as one of the key indicators for the utilitarian approach to European integration in most of the research published to date, there has been a relatively poor analysis of the rationality of general expectations from the membership of a country in the EU. The utilitarian model of explanation is primarily founded on the assumption that actors are rational, and form their views on this issue on the basis of estimates of their own personal interests. This would necessarily entail the assumption that general personal expectations are founded on concrete rational expectations. In order actually to evaluate the rationality of general expectations it would be important to test the extent to which expectations concerning individual concrete areas explicate general expectations from EU accession. The relation between general (principled) and concrete expectations can also be an indicator of the vigour and quality of public debate and the level of people's information about the importance and consequences of EU membership.

- *General expectations are correlated with political views about the EU attitude to Croatia.* In essence, behind this hypothesis lies the assumption that general and individual expectations from membership in the area of economic cost-benefits are actually partially also the consequence of the rationalisation of other motives for supporting or not supporting membership, particularly political motives. One of the motives that might be expressed in this kind of rationalisation is a sense of outraged national pride as the result of the political pressures of the EU on Croatia.<sup>iv</sup> Since politicians and analysts rarely openly articulate the feeling of hurt national pride as a reason for euroscepticism, and do not clearly express the resistance to such pressures, it can be hypothesised that citizens rationalise this feeling, if it does exist, through other forms of reasoning. We can assume that such a rationalisation will primarily be expressed through utilitarian expectations, because this is the dominant discourse in public debate about the entry of Croatia into the EU. Although the aspect of injured national pride in the literature has not been analysed to any great extent, we think that in the case of Croatia and of other countries from the former Yugoslavia it could have an important impact on the general attitude to association, yet mediated through the rationalisation mechanism described also upon utilitarian expectations from entry into the EU.<sup>v</sup>

## RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

In order to test out these hypotheses a separate investigation was carried out on a two-stage, stratified, probabilistic sample of 1,000 citizens above the age of 15 as part of the omnibus survey of the Puls agency.<sup>vi</sup> The sample taken statistically significantly deviated from the structure of the overall population because of the level of education, which was adjusted by weighting of the sample (the method of rim weighting was used). This deviation was caused by the refusal bias, the rate of refusal being about 40%. The field part of the survey was carried out in February 2006.

We posed six questions by which we collected the necessary data for testing the hypotheses, along with the standard demographic questions. As indicator of general viewpoint of citizens to EU entry the following question was used: *Taking it all in all, do you personally support the accession of Croatia to the EU or not?* This indicator was selected as a simple and direct manner of measuring stances towards accession. It does not involve additional factors and subject characteristics that might affect answers to the questions, as is the case concerning the question about voting in any referendum there might be. The referendum question actually contains a quantification of the intention of the respondent to vote in such a referendum which might lead to a certain distortion of response from that part of the electorate that does not go to the polling stations.

To measure general expectations from entry into the EU, two questions were used, similar to the standard questions used in Eurobarometer research, often the main source of data for testing out hypotheses related to the influence of utilitarian factors on the understanding of attitudes to EU integration.<sup>vii</sup> One question was asked about personal expectations: *Do you think that you personally will have more benefit or more harm from the accession of Croatia to the EU?* and one concerning expectations at a national level: *Do you think that Croatia will have more benefits or more harm from the accession of Croatia to the EU?* We expected respondents to evaluate their own personal and general social benefits and harms from entry into the EU separately. For both questions, the same scale with five points expressing the expected beneficial and harmful consequences.

As one of the objectives of the paper was to check out the concrete structure of expectations that were concealed behind principled expectations at a personal and national level, a special instrument was

developed for the measurement of concrete expectations. For twenty-two different aspects of social and economic life in which the impact of EU accession could be expected, subjects were asked to evaluate the extent of the impact and the consequences to the life of the average citizens. A five-point scale was used, from “Will deteriorate considerably” to “Will improve considerably”.

*Table 1 Groups of concrete expectations\**

Quality of life	Liberalisation of commerce and migration	Working of national institutions	General economic expectations
Level of crime (0.74)	Sale of Croatian firms to foreigners (-0.85)	Working of state of law (0.83)	Development of farming (-0.83)
Risk of terrorism (0.69)	Sale of Croatian real estate to foreigners (-0.85)	Efficacy of civil service (0.73)	Export of Croatian products and services (-0.74)
Job security (0.66)	Import of foreign products (-0.80)	General level of democracy (0.70)	Opportunity to produce domestic food products (-0.69)
Cost of healthcare services (0.65)	Immigration from less developed countries (-0.74)	Defence capacity of the country (0.60)	Development of the economy (-0.65)
Price of goods and services (0.65)	Emigration of young abroad (-0.67)	Level of corruption in public institutions (0.58)	Wages and salaries (-0.55)
Level of unemployment (0.64)		Development of economy (0.56)	Level of unemployment (-0.49)
Level of social security (0.53)			
Wages and salaries (0.51)			

\* *Factor structure matrix after oblimin transformation (saturation)*

This kind of approach is necessary because change in a given area does not necessarily mean an improvement or a deterioration, rather depends on the value- and interest-laden evaluation of the respondent. For example, the migration of the young abroad can be a negative or positive consequence, depending on the personal preferences of the subject. Areas were chosen such as to cover the most important of the dimensions that, in public debate, were considered to be likely to be affected by EU accession. These areas mostly relate to people's standard of living and generally to economic conditions. Apart from these areas, there were also areas relating to the working of government institutions and other areas of society.

In order to reduce the amount of data and make them suitable for further analysis, factor analysis was carried out on the concrete expectations with the use of an oblique oblimin transformation. Four groups of areas were picked out with respect to the correlation of expectations in each of them.<sup>viii</sup> The groups brought together areas that were (i) primarily related to personal living standard and eventual personal risks of the subject, (ii) primarily related to liberalisation of commerce and investment as well as population migration, (iii) with their effects related to the function of national institutions and (iv) economic expectations not directly linked to the quality of life of the individual citizen. This kind of structure suggests the conclusion that the expectations of Croatian citizens are relatively logically and rationally structured.

In order to be able to test out the hypothesis vis-à-vis political viewpoints and concrete and general utilitarian expectations from entry into the EU, we added a question designed to elicit perception of EU attitudes to Croatia. We chose this dimension of political views because of the frequently voiced hypothesis that some of the citizens of Croatia interpret the demands of the EU for cooperation with the ICTY, regional collaboration and other, similar, political demands through the prism of danger to national pride, out of which, by way of reaction, euroscepticism is produced. This dimension is operationalised through six statements, four of which express views about EU attitudes in the context of regional politics and the Homeland War<sup>ix</sup>, while two are concerned in general with an evaluation of the justification of the demands the EU is making on Croatia,<sup>x</sup> to which a five point scale of agreement associated. In the factor analysis of these six assertions, two factors were formed, the first of which is primarily formed by statements about the attitude of the EU to Croatia in the context of regional politics and attitudes to the Homeland War, and a second to claims relating to an evalu-

ation of the requirements that the EU is making with respect to Croatia.<sup>xi</sup> The reliability of the first factor is 0.8 and of the second 0.6, which can be considered satisfactory. The latent scales formed in this way were employed in further analyses.<sup>xii</sup>

## RESULTS

### **Predictions of views about entry into the European Union on the foundation of general expectations**

The main reason behind a given country wishing to join the EU lies in the expected positive consequences for the functioning of government and the standard of living of the people. The main resource for making a utilitarianly grounded decision as to whether to support or not the accession of Croatia to the EU should be an estimate of whether membership will bring more harms or more benefits, whether at a personal or a national level. The results of this investigation show that Croatian citizens think membership in the EU will result much more in harms to them personally and to the country as a whole than in benefits. The proportion of respondents who thought that positive consequences on personal life would be preponderant was only 21%, or 24% for the overall impact at the national level. As against this, as many as 40% thought that the consequences would be mainly deleterious for them personally, and 45% for Croatia as a whole. As could be expected, views about the consequences for Croatia and for personal life were correlated. The correlation of these two variables comes to 0.79 ( $p < 0.01$ ), which puts it in the order of large correlations and indicates the strong link between expectations at personal and national levels. The high correlation between these two dimensions is on the whole understandable because the consequences for a large number of individuals are also consequences at the national level, or consequences at the national level cannot avoid having direct or indirect consequences for most individuals. But still, to some extent there is a distinction between the two dimensions, and it is not possible with any certainty to state which of the two levels of utilitarianism has the greatest effect on the formation of views. Because of the high reciprocal correlation, in the further analysis, both dimensions of the explanation are used.<sup>xiii</sup>



*Table 2 General/principled expectations from the accession of Croatia to the European Union at a personal and at the national level (in %)*

	National level	Personal level
Much more harm than benefit	21.8	18.4
A bit more harm than benefit	24.4	21.2
Equal amounts of harm and benefit	20.0	27.6
A bit more benefit than harm	18.7	16.3
Much more benefit than harm	5.5	4.5
Don't know	9.6	12.0
Total	100.0	100.0

A logistic regression analysis shows that there is a strong correlation between general expectations at a personal and a national level and a general view about Croatian accession to the EU.<sup>xiv</sup> Such a result is not an astounding discovery, but it does confirm the correlation of the first hypothesis between expected harms and benefits and the overall attitude about EU membership. The correlation between general expectations and the general attitude about EU membership can be seen in table 3.

*Table 3 Comparison of utilitarian expectations with general viewpoint about Croatian membership in the European Union*

	N	Don't support	Support	Don't know/ no opinion
Whole sample	1,000	47.4	39.4	13.2
Croatia				
More harm than benefit	462	76.7	15.1	8.2
Equal harm and benefit	200	35.0	46.5	18.5
More benefit than harm	242	9.6	87.7	2.7
Don't know	96	26.9	20.3	52.7
Personal				
More harm than benefit	396	77.8	15.5	6.7
Equal harm and benefit	276	39.1	45.2	15.7
More benefit than harm	208	11.9	85.5	2.6
Don't know	120	27.4	25.4	47.2

It can be seen quite clearly that over three quarters of respondents who support EU accession expect more benefits than harms for themselves personally, as well as at the level of the country as a whole,

while over 85% of those who are against entry have the opposite expectations, that is, they expect more harms than benefits to themselves personally as well as to the country as a whole. But this result does not necessarily mean a confirmation of the utilitarian model of explaining support for European integration. It is possible that the utilitarian expectations expressed in terms of harms and benefits are just a rationalisation of some other reasons on the basis of which the basic stance about Croatian membership in the EU has been formed.

### **Prediction of views about accession to the European Union on the basis of concrete expectations**

At the level of concrete expectations, in each of the twenty-two areas analysed, most of the subjects had pronouncedly negative expectations. In two thirds of the areas, more subjects thought that the changes would lead to negative consequences for the lives of the population of Croatia. By far the most negative effects are expected in the matter of the prices of goods and services, particularly of healthcare services, which we surveyed separately.<sup>xv</sup> Interestingly, in third place in terms of expectation of negative consequences lies “ability to produce domestic food products” (for example, cottage cheese, sour cream and cured meat). The view that these changes would considerably diminish the quality of life of the average inhabitant of Croatia suggests that citizens still do not have full information and that they think only within the terms that have been foisted on them at the moment through the media. The subjects expected the most positive changes in the working of a state of law, efficacy of the civil service and the development of the economy. Apart from these three, there are four more aspects in which more pollees expect positive than negative changes.

*Table 4 Expectations of citizens from accession to the European Union in 22 aspects of social and economic life<sup>xvi</sup>*

	Will deteriorate	Won't change	Will improve	Don't know	Difference
Working of state of law	7.3	40.8	34.1	17.7	26.8
Development of the economy	13.3	36.5	33.7	16.5	20.4
Efficacy of civil service	10.3	43.3	28.5	17.9	18.2
Export of Croatian goods and services	17.5	32.4	33.0	17.2	15.5
General level of democracy	8.8	46.7	23.9	20.7	15.1
Defence capability of country	7.7	48.7	21.5	22.1	13.8
Level of corruption in public institutions	17.4	42.7	21.9	18.1	4.5
Development of farming	25.9	32.9	24.7	16.5	-1.2
Emigration of young people	26.9	32.0	22.3	18.8	-4.6
Level of social security	26.3	37.1	19.5	17.0	-6.8
Import of foreign products	31.0	29.3	23.7	16.0	-7.3
Wages and incomes	30.3	35.4	20.0	14.3	-10.3
Level of unemployment	34.6	34.5	16.5	14.3	-18.1
Immigration from less developed countries	34.7	28.9	15.0	21.4	-19.7
Sale of Croatian firms to foreigners	41.8	23.9	17.6	16.8	-24.2
Job security	36.1	35.6	11.0	17.3	-25.1
Sale of Croatian real estate to foreigners	42.6	23.6	16.4	17.4	-26.2
Risk from terrorism	39.1	31.1	12.3	17.5	-26.8
Level of crime	39.3	31.3	11.8	17.5	-27.5
Ability to produce domestic food products such as cottage cheese, sour cream and cured meats	41.3	30.4	11.7	16.6	-29.6
Price of goods and services	54.2	20.0	13.0	12.8	-41.2
Price of healthcare services	54.4	21.8	10.4	13.4	-44.0

Logistic analysis shows that on the basis of concrete expectations it is possibly only rather poorly to predict support for member-

ship in the EU. Only about 65% of cases are exactly assigned, which is a relatively small percentage considering that with random choices the probability of a correct classification into groups would be about 50%. That this is a relatively weak correlation is shown by the coefficient of determination, which in this case is only 0.21, if all 22 aspects are included into the analysis or 0.17 if the latent dimensions of concrete expectations are included.<sup>xvii</sup>

With literally all the analysed aspects one can see a difference in prediction of changes and the effect of these changes between those who support and those who do not support EU accession. This is indicated by the inverted sequence of the logic of thinking as compared to expectations of the utilitarian aspect of the definition of views about support to integration. It can be assumed, that is, that individuals will make decisions about supporting or not supporting entry on the foundation of objective analyses of advantages and disadvantages. If this were true, at least in some aspects, both groups of subjects would have the same expectations. A real and objective analysis would have to lead to more or less concordant results of thinking in at least a few of the individual expectations of changes deriving from accession and the results of these changes. The fact that subjects who differ in their views about support differ from each other in absolutely all the expected consequences suggest that expectations are in fact the consequences of a *parti pris*. A viewpoint about support is clearly not adopted mainly pursuant to objective analysis of the consequences, but is highly determined by some other predictors. On the basis of an attitude towards support already formed, the consequences are evaluated in such a way as to justify the viewpoint. Of course this conclusion does not mean that a decision about support is not based in a certain measure on an objective analysis of consequences, but only that other elements too affect it to a very great degree.

## **The relation between general and concrete expectations**

Regression analysis in which concrete expectations are used as predictors for general expectations show a weak correlation between the two levels of expectation. With the use of concrete expectations, it is possible to predict only about 22% of the variance of the general expectations.<sup>xviii</sup> It is possible that some important areas have been omit-

ted from the list of measured concrete areas, but since a relatively large number of areas were included in the research, it is hard to believe that an increased number of areas would significantly increase the correlation between the concrete and the principled expectations. All those aspects that are stated in the literature as being crucial are certainly included into the areas measured, that is, the economic aspects related to personal standard of living, and aspects that relate to the continuation of political and institutional reforms. This kind of result suggests the conclusion that principled expectations are founded on concrete expectations only relatively weakly. Apart from this they are not to any great extent the result of rational calculation and an informed estimate of harms-benefits in individual areas and aspects of social and economic life. Principled expectations are rather the result of a generalised emotional stance or perhaps a stance based on value orientations or political views (see Štulhofer, 2006), which would tend to suggest that the second hypothesis can be partially discarded. This kind of result can be considered evidence of the weak results of public debate, which clearly has not helped people clearly to structure their expectations from EU accession and pursuant to this to make a rational estimate of the harms and benefits, and hence make a more rational decision to support or not to support Croatian accession.

Views about the consequence to personal income and wages and the possibility for the production of domestic food products are the best predictors of principled expectations. While the importance of expectations that relate to income for the quality of life is inherently intelligible and justified, the prominence of this second aspect is astounding. An aspect that in itself is not crucial for the quality of life of the majority of people has become, pursuant to a single campaign based on mainly erroneous premises and insufficiently clear reasoning concerning, or provision of information about, European consumer protection rules, is positioned as the top topic of an analysis of the consequences of membership in the EU. The conclusion that must inevitably be drawn here is that the crucial influence on ultimate judgments of consequences and hence to a certain extent on viewpoints about giving support to accession will be exerted by the quality and strength of the campaigns managed by the proponents and opponents of accession. The other statistically significant elements are expectations that relate to the functioning of a state of law and the level of corruption in the public institutions.

*Table 5 The impact of individual expectations on principled expectations of membership in the European Union (regression analysis)*

	Beta weighting	Direct correlation with criterion	Percentage of variance explained <sup>xix</sup>
Incomes and wages	0.227	0.342	7.76
Possibility of producing domestic food products such as cottage cheese, sour cream and cured meat	0.234	0.335	7.84
Functioning of a state of law	0.140	0.267	3.74
Level of corruption in public institutions	0.118	0.244	2.88

In order to verify the hypothesis about the rationalisation of political motivation for support or lack of support via utilitarian expectations from entry into the EU, we correlated expectations from entry into the EU with views about how the EU was politically treating Croatia. An analysis showed that among these dimensions there was a link, but a relatively weak link. Correlation of the factor of the perception of the EU attitude to Croatia in the context of the Homeland War/regional politics and general expectations comes to 0.26 ( $p < 0.01$ ). Correlation of the factor of the justification of EU demands on Croatia and general expectations is a bit stronger, but is still in the sphere of small correlations, and comes to 0.35 ( $p < 0.01$ ). The two dimensions of the views about the way the EU treats Croatian politically also explain a relatively small part of the variance of general expectations ( $R^2 = 0.14$ ). These results suggest that general expectations are not dominantly dependent on political views, or at least not by those political views measured in this investigation. Still, if we measure the common effect of political views and concrete expectations on general expectations, we will see that political views make up almost 40% of the total variance explained (27.7%) which is cumulatively explained by factors of political views and concrete expectations. A result of this nature means that concrete expectations have an only slightly greater impact on the formation of general expectations than political views. This shows that the general expectations that should be an indicator of a utilitarian attitude towards EU accession are in fact not that, or not that alone.

When the correlation of political views about the attitude of the EU to Croatia and support to membership is analysed, it will be seen

that this dimension explains significantly less of the total variance of support to entry into the EU than the general expectations, and as much as the concrete expectations in individual aspects of social life. On the basis of familiarity with the political viewpoints it is possible correctly to predict the viewpoint about Croatian entry into the EU in 67% of the cases. This is approximate to the percentage of accurate prediction on the basis of concrete expectations and significantly lower than the percentage of correct predictions on the basis of general expectations. Such a result shows however that political views are at least as good an explanation as the utilitarian approach, as long the utilitarian approach is operationalised through concrete expectations, the methodologically more correct approach than general expectations, since general expectations to a great extent express a general attitude about the EU, not just an analysis of harms and benefits.<sup>xx</sup>

## CONCLUSIONS

This paper has endeavoured to verify the hypothesis concerning the utilitarian basis of viewpoints on whether Croatian accession to the EU should be supported or not, and above all the subjectivist version of the utilitarian explanation, which assumes that citizens form their viewpoints about European integration on the grounds of expected gains and losses for themselves as individuals and for the country as a whole. It is assumed that the actors are rational, which implies that they make their evaluation on the basis of a more or less detailed analysis of the harms and benefits that would accrue to individual aspects of personal and social life on membership.

The results of the investigation bear out the proposition that on the basis of general expectations of benefits and harms from EU entry it is possible precisely to predict support for EU accession. On the other hand, general (principled) expectations are grounded quite weakly on concrete expectations about individual aspects of social and economic life, being rather the result of generalised impressions about membership in the EU. Only a few of the general expectations can be explained by the expectations in the twenty-two concrete areas of social and economic life, while most of the general expectations at personal and national level are not explained by concrete expectations. This is a result that clearly indicate two conclusions, one of them essential and one methodological. Firstly, viewpoints about entry into the EU are formed

at a relatively superficial level, without any great amount of information or rational calculation. Just how true this is can be confirmed from the fact that one of the strongest predictors of general expectations from the group of concrete expectations is the view about the possibility of producing domestic food products, which is itself the outcome of a superficial and on the whole unfounded public campaign. Thus the general expectations on the basis of which it is possible to predict the ultimate viewpoint concerning entry into the EU are much more formed according to impulse than they are the outcome of rational evaluation.

This is to a large extent the result of the relatively low number and low quality of public debates about the consequences and significance of Croatian entry into the EU. There are very few public debates that are carried on in front of members of the public and that are aimed at helping people to form and articulate their views, irrespective of whether these are negative or positive. Previous endeavours to inform people were on the whole aimed at providing basic information about the institutional system of the EU. Passive forms of communication have been mostly used, such as brochures, leaflets, web sites, quizzes and workshops for the young, which is not appropriate for getting to the majority of the population. This population is on the whole not interested in topics related to the institutions of the EU and is not ready to put in the amount of effort that such passive forms of communication require. Citizens on the whole do not want, after a hard day at work, to read brochures, no matter how interesting, or to comb the Internet for news about the EU. This cuts down the effect of such activities on the general population. On the other hand, information provided by the media and politicians can be judged as being diffuse and confused. There are some media which do try to inform people about the EU (the special broadcasts of Croatian TV and Radio 101, for example, specialised pages of T-portal), but these efforts are few and far between, scattered at the end of broadcasting schedules or spaces. Special broadcasts tend to appear every two to three weeks, at non-prime times. This kind of topic is not at the centre of the media, nor does it thus reach any significant proportion of the population. On the other hand, these same media often have stories that are over-generalised, quite often the product of the ignorance and error of the journalist, and often with admixtures of scandal mongering and gutter journalism, the result being that one and the same medium will send messages of varying qualities; those that explain, and those that confound. Politicians adapt their communications about the consequences of accession from case to case,



on the whole depending on short-term political needs. When it suits them, politicians can be very concrete and precise, and in other situations very unfocused and diffuse, clouding the issues. All this results in an absence of adequately qualitative, concrete and clear information and, what is most important, the explanation and demystification of individual aspects of the common policy of the EU (for example, why the EU is interested in cheese and cream, domestic slaughtering and the production of home-made plum brandy). Naturally, the function of public debates about entry into the EU is not just to give citizens the information on the basis of which they can make a rational decision, for such a decision cannot be made just on the basis of rational elements. It will necessarily have value and political elements, and public debates are equally important for their formation and definition, for in themselves they are not clear either to citizens, politicians or experts (with or without inverted commas). The value and political connotations of such huge social decisions are also formed in the process of public debate. Our impression is that these also are not at the moment clear and well formed in Croatia, and that at this level we are more in arrears than we are with respect to knowledge of facts about the EU.

The second, methodological, conclusion, which derives from the weak correlation of general and concrete expectations, is that general expectations cannot be used as indicator of a utilitarian basis for stances about the EU. General expectations are clearly more founded on impulsive and situational relations than on a rational evaluation of personal and collective interests and the benefits and harms. The investigation showed that the general evaluation of personal and collective harms and benefits to a small extent also represents a rationalisation of political views about the attitude of the EU to Croatia. The need for rationalisation of political motives for not supporting entry into the EU can be provoked by the general public discourse in which there is discussion of membership, and which is dominantly framed in the language of benefits and harms, effects on the economy and standard of living. From the sphere of political viewpoints, in this paper we have analysed the influence of the perception of the attitude of the EU to Croatia as the most important aspect of the political dimension of Croatian joining the EU. The issue of the treatment of the Homeland War, the war-crimes trials relating to the Croatian army and the associated issue of cooperation with the ICTY and the attitude of Croatia to the other countries of former Yugoslavia became during the last decade key political issues that determine the great majority of other political is-

sues in Croatia (Bagić, 2006). It is these political matters that constitute the political dimension of Croatian association with the EU and these often produce (or produced until quite recently) disputes between Croatia and the EU. Hence it is justified to assume that these questions will be a potential rival to the utilitarian explanation for (lack of) support for entry into the EU, as well as an occasion for a possible rationalisation via general expectations.

It is a fact that on the basis of concrete expectations it is not possible accurately to predict support for EU accession, and their predictiveness is the same as the predictiveness that the political viewpoints have, which leads to the conclusion that the utilitarian model of explanation is equally as valid as that based on political viewpoints. This in turn suggests that a decision about EU accession from the perspective of Croatian citizens, much more than a cold and rational decision based on an analysis of losses and gains, should be seen as a very complex social and political phenomenon through which various aspects of the current social, political and economic reality of Croatia are refracted.

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- \* *The authors would like to thank the anonymous reviewers for their helpful suggestions as well as Katarina Ott for her committed efforts to make this paper more readable and understandable. The authors contributed equally to the paper and are given in alphabetical order.*
  - i *With the difference that Tucker, Pacek and Berinsky (2002) differently operationalise the concepts of winner and loser as against the traditional version of this behaviour model. While Gabel and Palmer (1995) used the objective features of the subject (education level, social and professional status, income level) to describe groups that benefited from European integration, the first group of authors operationalised their concepts of transitional winners and losers via the subjective impression about the change in personal financial situation in the previous 12 months and expected changes in the coming 12 months. This kind of operationalisation of theoretical concepts can be criticised because the concept about positive or negative financial moves in the last 12 months does not exactly have to mark the transition winners and losers, particularly when the research is carried out ten years after the beginning of transition.*
  - ii *The concept of party affiliation here should be considered provisionally, since it does not relate to membership of a party, rather the support for a given party at the moment the inquiry was carried out.*
  - iii *It is worth pointing out that in some investigations other measures of attitudes to European integration are used.*
  - iv *The authors use this concept as an analytical category and its use does not express their own judgement about the policy of the EU to Croatia and the countries of the region.*
  - v *We think there is a significant difference between a feeling of national identity or cultural openness (enclosedness), which have been investigated as predictors of*

- views about membership in the EU (Carey, 2002; Štulhofer, 2006) and the feeling of outraged national pride. This feeling can appear in persons who do not have a particularly marked feeling of national identity, and can as such have a very important role in the formation of views about membership of the EU among persons for whom national identity is averagely important, while among the same people, if a feeling of outraged national pride develops as a consequence of political pressures from the EU, then resistance to membership can be expected as a reaction.
- vi The authors would like to thank Puls agency for its kindness and the financing of the implementation of this investigation.
  - vii Eurobarometer is the name of regular public opinion surveys in member countries and candidate countries, carried out for the European Commission. For more about these surveys, and the results, see: [http://ec.europa.eu/public\\_opinion/index\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/public_opinion/index_en.htm).
  - viii The extracted factors explain 54% of total variance.
  - ix Statements: The EU is not pushing Croatia into the Balkans; the EU is not partially responsible for degrading the dignity of the Homeland War; the EU is not attempting to equate the roles of Croatia and Serbia in the recent war; the EU is not treating Croatia worse than other countries in the region.
  - x Statements: Most of the requirements of the EU are for our own good; the EU is treating Croatia decently, and asking of us only what is essential.
  - xi Factor analysis was carried out with component model and with perpendicular transformation.
  - xii Reliability of the scale tested with Chrobach's alpha coefficient.
  - xiii A significant factor was extracted with factor analysis, on which both variables were saturated at 0.95 and through which 89% of variance as explained, the reliability being 0.88. Of course, no new information is gained with this kind of factor analysis between two variables. Factor analysis is carried out only so that the latent dimension created in this way can be used in further analysis.
  - xiv  $R^2=0.55$  and 81% of correctly distributed subjects into the appropriate category of criteria on the basis of value in the predictor variable.
  - xv This result can be the consequence of the fact that at the moment the research was carried out a public debate was going on about reforms in the healthcare system that might mean much more expensive healthcare services to users, which it would seem people connected with entry into the EU.
  - xvi The scale was recoded from a five-point to a three-point scale for the sake of easier readability of results and easier interpretation.
  - xvii Coefficient of determination is derived from the coefficient of correlation and marks the strength of the correlation among the variables. It ranges between 0 and 1, and the closer to one the stronger the correlation among the phenomena being compared.
  - xviii In the analysis of data a linear regression analysis was used with the stepwise method. If a regression analysis is carried out on concrete particles of concrete expectations 22% of general expectations are explained, or 20% if the analysis is carried out on the latent dimensions of concrete expectations.
  - xix Obtained as the product of the standardised beta weight and the direct correlation of predictor with criterion, in line with the regression formula:  $R^2=\beta_1*r_1+\beta_2*r_2+\beta_3*r_3+\dots$
  - xx As proved by the weak correlation of concrete and general expectations.

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