

Methodological Appendix

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To make this Capstone Project as rewarding and intellectually stimulating of an exercise as possible, our team agreed from the onset to have regular meetings. These meetings were not only supposed to help us in answering our research question but were also supposed to hold us accountable to each other and to allow us to get to know each other better. Overall, we met on a weekly basis, usually having our meetings on Saturdays or Sundays to adjust to everyone's busy schedules.

Our very first meeting took place on **23 October**, when we met with our supervisor Kinga for the first time. This meeting was quite introductory in the sense that Kinga graciously offered us an overview of the structure of the assignment. We also had a first small discussion about the prompt and its different sub-elements that we would dive more deeply into afterwards. We also discussed how we may be able to divide the work among our four team members once it came to researching and writing the policy brief.

Our first substantive group meeting took place on **2 November**. During this meeting, we exchanged initial thoughts on how our research question could be answered. This discussion helped us to understand each other's general line of thinking, which proved to be incredibly useful for finding a common line of reasoning later on. We also agreed to first conduct a comprehensive review of the relevant information to get ourselves more acquainted with previous work in the field of EU enlargement. Specifically, we divided this review into four parts, including a part on the historical context of EU enlargement, on the current situation of enlargement, on the basics of the European Political Community (EPC), and on previous models for EU integration. We agreed to take one week to conduct this comprehensive review.

On **10 November**, we reconvened for our third overall meeting. Here, we discussed the findings of our review and identified what we saw as the key challenges in the EU enlargement process. These challenges are the following: economic disparities between EU member states and membership candidates, skepticism towards enlargement among the EU publics, internal tensions among membership candidates (including ethnic tensions and rule of law concerns), and a lack of readiness for enlargement within the EU institutions. We also tried to think of potential ways of solving these challenges, although those were too preliminary to delve into them more deeply here.

A week later, on **18 November**, we then met to define the main argument of our policy brief. Based on the challenges we identified in the previous meeting, we discussed whether the EPC could actually solve those challenges. We came to the agreement that the EPC could not actually solve the challenges we identified, primarily because the EPC also includes several countries who are not concerned with enlargement at all, such as Switzerland, the UK, and Norway. This argument should be crucial for our final policy brief. At the end of our meeting,

we also started thinking about potential alternative solutions that may be able to solve the challenges of enlargement that we had identified previously.

Only a few days later, on **22 November**, we had our second meeting with Kinga, in which we presented her our thoughts so far. She gave us very useful feedback, particularly emphasizing that we should make it clear from the beginning of our policy brief that the EPC is not suitable to solve the challenges of enlargement. She even encouraged us to make this point in a detailed and very clear fashion. As a next step, we agreed to write the first 500 words of our policy brief, outlining exactly why the EPC cannot solve the challenge of EU enlargement.

We took until **2 December**, so a little more than a week, to write this initial section because we wanted to make our argument as clear as possible. We debated different ways of phrasing our argument and eventually agreed on four specific reasons for why the EPC cannot solve the challenge of EU enlargement. On 2 December, we sent these initial 500 words to Kinga, who gave us feedback within a day.

Over the course of the following week, until **8 December**, we implemented Kinga's feedback and revised the initial statement of our argument. Having laid this groundwork for a successful policy brief, we then wrote the other sections of the brief, including a section on what the EU has done so far to tackle the challenges of EU enlargement and a section with our policy recommendations. We divided the work so that one person wrote the initial section, one person the section on current EU efforts and one person the section on policy recommendations. The fourth person was in charge of writing the introduction and conclusion as well as of ensuring the coherence of the document. We sent the first draft of the policy brief to Kinga on 8 December.

On **11 December**, we then met one last time with Kinga to discuss the first draft of the policy brief. Kinga was already very satisfied with the first draft but still offered very useful feedback that subsequently allowed us to improve our policy brief in several ways. For instance, we improved upon one of our policy recommendations by including a more specific and creative recommendation relating to a potential change in Art. 7 TEU. We also revised the language of our introduction to make it a little less dramatic and generally revised our entire draft to reduce the word count. After all team members had a final look at the document, we wrote the policy brief as well as this methodological appendix (for which we had taken notes already throughout the entire project). We submitted everything by the deadline on **15 December**.

Now that this project has come to an end, we want to express our thanks to our supervisor Kinga, who was incredibly helpful throughout the entire project. Without her support, we certainly would not have been as productive as we were. We also want to thank the CIVICA staff for facilitating this project. Overall, we had a very valuable experience, both substantively but also personally. Working together across countries was certainly a challenge, but we are satisfied with the way in which we tackled this challenge.