

Dear Readers,

The accession of Bulgaria to the European Union and its EU membership is a key event in the beginning of the 21st century that will define the orientation, the contents and the tempo of the ongoing processes in the country and its relationships with other countries around the Globe.

After more than ten years, EU membership is taken for granted as a natural state of affairs. The fact that it was uncertain and was very likely to be postponed for a couple of years (or more) remains unknown to the general public. And this is a small portion of the “Large unknown” about the process that led to the EU membership. Far too often the Bulgarian citizens do not keep in mind that many persons, institutions, governments, and expert teams have taken part in these processes, on Bulgarian behalf, as well as many persons, national and EU institutions, governments and political parties, on EU’s behalf. Most of them most of the time worked in favor of the Bulgarian euro-integration aspirations while others invested their efforts in the opposite direction. On some particular issues we receive support while on others – opposition even from one and the same actors (persons, parties, countries or institutions).

Because of this blind spot in our understanding even today we continue to misinterpret the essential mechanisms of the EU integration and this misunderstanding conduces to incapability to effectively make use (in breadth and depth) of all the advantages of the EU membership. This is a crucial misunderstanding which is the turf for one-sided, biased opinions – the anti-EU and euro-sceptic attitudes included – with very socially destructive consequences.

These are the main reasons due to which, upon the initiative and the thorough intensive and enthusiastic support of the Diplomacy Institute at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the resources of the Jean Monnet Center of Excellence of the European Studies Department of Sofia University, jointly with the European Institute, Sofia, (under the framework of an Erasmus+ project), we created the National Archive of Memoires about the processes of Bulgaria’s EU accession. We believe that these personal recollections delve and reveal in the complexity and the depth of the undergone historical processes. They provide evidence for unexpected but crucially important aspects of the motivations, attitudes and behavior patterns without which the historical success of Bulgaria would have been impossible. However, there are no traces of them in the official documents of the Bulgarian EU accession in the public archive. We appreciate very much precisely the considerations, opinions and personal evaluations of the participants in this historical event not least because the memoires expose the human face (and price!) of the event and its consequences.

For this reason, we addressed the persons who have had the direct and biggest input to the success of Bulgaria’s EU integration - prime ministers, vice-prime ministers in charge of EU integration, Bulgarian chief negotiators, ministers and deputy ministers, directors of EU integration divisions at various ministries, diplomats, experts, negotiation team-leaders on different chapters. Twelve of the listed persons could not be reached for a variety of reasons. Thirteen persons declined our invitation. However, our initial list has been permanently extended with new names, nominated by our respondents as key figure in the process. In total, we got the memoires of 46 prominent participants in the Bulgarian EU accession starting in October 2017 and ending in September 2018.

At present, the National Archive of these memoires is comprised of about 800 pages and there are numerous other documents and photos attached to them.

Making this Archive publicly available, we believe that it will attract the attention of a broad audience – nationally and internationally – among politicians, journalists, students and researchers. Yet, besides its public use, we expect that the Archive will be of high relevance for the academic work of historians, sociologists, political and international relations scientists and students of Europeanization.

We leave the door open to anyone who would consider his/her personal input to the success of Bulgaria's EU-integration important enough (to match the memoire already presented in the Archive) to give us his interview in order to be added to the rest.

To all our partners we send our most cordial and sincere gratitude!

Tanya Mihaylova, Director of Diplomatic Institute

Prof. Ingrid Shikova, Head of the Jean Monnet Project

Prof. Georgi Dimitrov, Team-member

Assoc. Prof. Mirela Veleva, Team-member

Bilyana Decheva, Team-member on behalf of Diplomatic Institute

Svetlosar Kovachev, Team-member on behalf of Diplomatic Institute

Lubomira Popova, PhD student, Team-member

You can reach us at: