

Ten Years On: Evaluating Eastern Enlargement

Workshop Directors

Aron Buzogány

German Public Administration Research
Institute Speyer

Antoaneta L. Dimitrova

Institute of Public Administration
Leiden University

Outline of the topic

Driven by the EU's membership conditionality, the ten post-communist Central and Eastern European states engaged in far going reforms of their legal, political and economic systems and underwent changes in their state-society relations. This development culminated in their EU membership in 2004 and, respectively, for Romania and Bulgaria, in 2007. The membership criteria included political and economic expectations, such as the stability of institutions guaranteeing democracy, respect for human rights and the existence of a functioning market economy. In addition, the candidate countries had to harmonize their legislation with the EU's *acquis communautaire* before accession and strengthen their administrative capacities. Early on, media, politicians and academic communities voiced doubts about the sustainability of the conditionality-induced impact of the EU on the Central and Eastern European states, arguing that EU transformative leverage will evaporate once the goal of membership is reached. More optimistically, others contended that the EU has successfully "locked-in" political and economic development in the accession states and commands over different efficient tools to exert leverage after accession. Ten years after the completion of the first round of the Eastern enlargement in May 2004, time is now ripe to assess the outcomes and the impact of EU membership on the Central and Eastern European member states. The proposed workshop will evaluate whether the promises of the 2004-2007 enlargement have been fulfilled in core areas of the Copenhagen Criteria: democratic institutions, functioning market economy, compliance with EU legislation and the establishment of administrative capacities. Which factors explain cross-national or crosspolicy differences in on-going compliance or backslide? Have different types of conditionality lead to sustainable formal and practical compliance after accession? How can we account for developments in areas of political conditionality, where the power of EU institutions vis-à-vis full members is limited? Beyond the immediate institutional outcomes, which are the broader political, economic impacts of membership on state and society? The anniversary provides a good opportunity to assess the complex influence of membership across the Central and Eastern European member states and to advance both our theoretical and empirical understanding of domestic transformative processes triggered by European integration.

Relation to existing research

For almost two decades now, assessing the impact of EU accession on the Central and Eastern Europe has been a frequently analysed topic within Comparative Politics, Public Policy, International Relations, and European Studies. During the pre-accession period, research has

concentrated on the EU's membership conditionality, often referred to as the "carrot-and-stick" approach (Schimmelfennig and Sedelmeier 2005). While the "carrot" of EU membership provided an incentive for the accession states to consolidate democratic institutions and "download" policies in the various sectors, the "stick" of conditionality meant that EU rules and norms had to be adopted in a rather inflexible way and under high time pressure. Conditionality combined coercive pressure to adapt EU norms in order to qualify for membership with capacity-building and legitimacy-enhancing measures. However, the impact of conditionality was highly uneven. When looking at the polity level, studies found that the EU's ability to strengthen democracy in the accession process has been limited to those fragile democracies in the region, which lagged behind in establishing liberal-democratic regimes during the early years of transition (Schimmelfennig 2005, Vachudova 2005). Still, there were marked improvements in governance in all CEE states linked to accession efforts (Levitz and Pop-Eleches, 2010). Recent developments, however, call for a re-opening the debate on the EU's impact on democratic governance and the possibility for backsliding even in the most advanced post communist states.

The EU's impact on the policy dimension was much stronger, where EU templates had to be adopted in a multitude of policy fields in order to harmonize domestic legislation with the *acquis*. At the same time, the main finding of research on pre-accession Europeanization, that the external incentive of membership was the key mechanism driving the adoption of EU policies by the candidates (and not socialization or lesson-learning) made observers wary about the prospects of the sustainability of those changes after accession (Sedelmeier 2006).

The question of rule abidingness after membership was taken up in the emerging research agenda that focuses on the post-accession impact of Europeanization on the Central and Eastern European countries (Epstein and Sedelmeier 2008, Schimmelfennig and Trauner 2009, Dimitrova 2010, Zubek and Goetz 2010). During the early 2000s, many observers predicted declining democratic standards after accession and non-compliance with EU law in the newly accessed member states. Causes were found in the weakness of state and societal structures, unconsolidated party systems, high costs of EU adjustment, administrative capacity limitations and the low legitimacy of the EU policies to be implemented (Sedelmeier 2008). However, recent studies focusing on post-accession developments in CEE states across fields ranging such as democratic institutions, market institutions, compliance research or public administration are rather ambiguous in their findings and find high levels of cross-country and cross-policy variance regarding the acceptance and maintenance of EU rules.

Studies focusing on the polity dimensions agree that EU membership has triggered beneficial effects for democratic consolidation, when compared to those Eastern European countries, which did not become EU members (Cameron 2007, Petersheim 2012). The on-going dependence of the CEE member states on EU aid and trade, transnational connections and personal benefits of the population have hindered an outright roll-back of democratic institutions (Levitz and Pop-Eleches 2010). At the same time, however, there were several developments during recent years within the new members states, which can be regarded as regressions in domestic democratic standards (Rupnik and Zielonka 2013), even though the EU in several cases has applied special oversight mechanisms to prevent "post-accession hooliganism" (Ganev 2013). Not only did the quality of democratic institutions deteriorate, but so did levels of popular support for democracy (EBRD 2011).

Lacking its own authoritative model of market economy, the EU's impact on market regulation has been rather indirect and moderated through the legal harmonization of different policy fields. At same time, when compared to non-EU member post-socialist states, the CEE states were more likely to carry out liberal market reforms (Cameron 2009) and the EU membership

perspective has worked as a “seal of approval” for the CEE state’s credit ratings (Gray 2009). Their economic development was triggered by their willingness to attract foreign direct investments through liberalizing market regulations, which went hand in hand with most EU induced reforms (Orenstein 2009). Nevertheless, historical and technological path dependencies have led to regionally different strategies of economic opening and contributed to the consolidation of different types of welfare states within the region (Bohle and Greskovits 2012), which vary in their vulnerability and the capacity to adjust to the current economic crisis (Myant and Drahokoupil 2012).

The EU’s impact was most strongly felt within the policy dimension and it is here that the most vibrant debate about the impact of EU membership unfolded. Looking at the CEE states’ compliance levels with newly adopted EU legislation, some argue that these countries’ indicators are by no means worse, often even better, than those of the old member states (Sedelmeier 2008, Toshkov 2008). Others provide evidence that the CEE states belong to a “World-of-Dead-Letters” characterized by high levels of formal application, but combined with the lack of substantive policy change (Falkner and Treib 2008). Arguably, the different findings relate to the different foci in research applied so far. Researchers using quantitative data are usually more optimistic about the compliance behaviour of the new member states, but they cannot rule out the most common allegation voiced by scholars who have done research on the ground: that of “paper” compliance, i.e. the decoupling between formal and practical implementation. At the same time, case studies are limited by design to generalize beyond the typically few cases they study in detail. A common denominator in both quantitative and qualitative studies is the centrality of administrative capacity for compliance, which was already one of the EU’s central criteria when awarding membership (Dimitrova 2002). However, studies focusing on administrative reforms post-accession show highly divergent trends of professionalization and politicization of CEE public administrations (Beblavý 2009, Meyer-Sahling 2011, Meyer-Sahling and Veen 2012).

Against the background of these theoretically, empirically and methodologically diverse findings about the Eastern Enlargement’s outcome and impact in Central and Eastern Europe, this workshop aims to consolidate our knowledge by taking into account some of the following four cross-cutting analytical dimensions.

i) *Formal rules vs practical implementation.* The “new puzzle” that increasingly defines the postenlargement research agenda is “(...) why the formal adoption of EU rules led, in some cases, to real institutional and policy change and in other cases to reversal or neglect” (Dimitrova 2010:138). Therefore, one of the main challenges in assessing the substantive effects of EU membership in Central and Eastern Europe is to get both theoretically and empirically hold of the selective decoupling between formal rules and their practical application.

ii) *Bridging the qualitative-quantitative divide:* As highlighted above, qualitative and quantitative studies often produce seemingly diverging answers to the same questions related to Eastern Enlargement. Such discrepancies often go back to the differences in the empirical materials these studies use. Carefully controlled mixed-method designs can become a promising opportunity to bridge the gap between the two methodological approaches and provide more solid knowledge about the effects of EU membership.

iii) *Intra-temporal analysis:* One decade of EU membership lends itself to test several major theories developed in the pre-accession phase about mechanisms of international socialization. To date, connecting research on transposition and implementation remains

largely unaddressed in the context of the Central and Eastern member states. While there are numerous studies analyzing the pre-accession period and increasingly also compliance in new EU member states, only few studies established a connection between preaccession modes of conditionality and post-accession compliance (Sedelmeier 2011:27) Such studies could explicitly take into account effects of pre-accession modes of rule transfer on post-accession compliance and add a much needed temporal perspective to analyses of Europeanization (Goetz and Meyer-Sahling 2009).

iv) Levels of comparison: One possibility to evaluate Eastern Enlargement which is increasingly explored is to compare within the group of CEE states that show high divergence in outcomes and impact of EU membership. At the same time, the other promising possibility is to set it against the backdrop of other comparable cases. The history of the EU is a history of enlargements. Also the different gradations of relationship between the EU and its member states, candidate states and neighborhood states provide a rich laboratory to test different theoretical assumptions about the EU's impact.

Participants and types of papers

The workshop seeks to attract a wide range of applicants working in the areas of Comparative Politics, Public Policy and Administration, International Relations, and European Studies focusing on Central and Eastern European states. We equally encourage application from doctoral researchers or young academics as well as established scholars of the field.

We invite papers that are innovative, theoretically informed, and use qualitative and/or quantitative methods to analyse the impact of Eastern Enlargement comparatively – across different issue areas (democracy, economic development, legal and practical compliance, and public administration), different countries, or policy fields. We are open also for larger comparisons with previous waves of EU accession or studies that compare EU impact between the Central and Eastern European member states and other candidate or neighborhood countries.

Depending on the quality and coherence of the papers presented in the workshop, the organizers will aim to publish an edited book with a major publishing house and/or a special issue from the papers presented at the Joint Sessions.

Biographical note

Antoaneta L. Dimitrova is Associate Professor at the Institute of Public Administration, Leiden University. The democratic transformations of the post-communist states of Central and Eastern Europe (CEE) have been an enduring theme in her work. Her current research focuses on the implementation and institutionalization of EU rules in the new member states. Her work has appeared in leading European journals such as *European Union Politics*, *West European Politics*, *Journal of European Public Policy*, *Journal of Common Market Studies*, *Democratization* and others. Since 2013, she is co-coordinator of the EU-FP7 project consortium MAXCAP (*Maximizing the integration capacity of the European Union: Lessons and prospects for enlargement and beyond*).

Aron Buzogány is a Post-doc at the German Public Administration Research Institute, Speyer. His current research focuses on national parliaments in the European Union as well as compliance with EU legislation in Central and East European and neighbourhood countries. His

work has appeared in journals such as *Regulation and Governance*, *Environmental Politics*, *Acta Politica* and *Europe-Asia Studies*.

References

- Beblavý, M., 2009. Europeanization And Bureaucratic Autonomy In The New Member States: A Case Study Of The Agricultural Paying Agency In Slovakia. *Public Administration*, 87 (4), 923-937.
- Bohle, D. and Greskovits, B., 2012. *Capitalist Diversity on Europe's Periphery*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press.
- Cameron, D.R., 2007. Post-communist democracy: The impact of the European Union. *Post-Soviet Affairs*, 23 (3), 185-217.
- Cameron, D.R., 2009. Creating market economies after communism: The impact of the European Union. *Post-Soviet Affairs*, 25 (1), 1-38.
- Dimitrova, A., 2002. Enlargement, institution-building and the EU's administrative capacity requirement. *West European Politics*, 25 (4), 171-190.
- Dimitrova, A.L., 2010. The new member states in the EU in the aftermath of accession. Empty shells? *Journal of European Public Policy*, 17 (1), 137-148.
- EBRD, 2011. *Life in Transition Survey II*. London: European Bank for Reconstruction and Development.
- Epstein, R.A. and Sedelmeier, U., 2008. *Special Issue: Beyond Conditionality: International Institutions in Postcommunist Europe After Enlargement*: Taylor and Francis.
- Falkner, G. and Treib, O., 2008. Three Worlds of Compliance or Four? The EU-15 Compared to New Member States. *JCMS: Journal of Common Market Studies*, 46 (2), 293-313.
- Ganev, V.I., 2013. Post-Accession Hooliganism Democratic Governance in Bulgaria and Romania after 2007. *East European Politics & Societies*, 27 (1), 26-44.
- Goetz, K.H. and Meyer-Sahling, J.H., 2009. Political time in the EU: dimensions, perspectives, theories. *Journal of European Public Policy*, 16 (2), 180-201.
- Gray, J., 2009. International Organization as a Seal of Approval: European Union Accession and Investor Risk. *American Journal of Political Science*, 53, 931-949.
- Krastev, I., 2012. A Fraying Union. *Journal of Democracy*, 23 (4), 23-30.
- Levitz, P. and Pop-Eleches, G., 2010. Why no backsliding? The European Union's impact on democracy and governance before and after accession. *Comparative Political Studies*, 43 (4), 457-485.
- Meyer-Sahling, J.-H., 2011. The durability of EU civil service policy in Central and Eastern Europe after accession. *Governance*, 24 (2), 231-260.
- Meyer-Sahling, J.H. and Veen, T., 2012. Governing the post-communist state: government alternation and senior civil service politicisation in Central and Eastern Europe. *East European Politics*, 28 (1), 4-22.
- Myant, M. and Drahokoupil, J., 2012. International Integration, Varieties of Capitalism and Resilience to Crisis in Transition Economies. *Europe-Asia Studies*, 64 (1), 1-33.
- Orenstein, M.A., 2009. What Happened in East European (Political) Economies?: A Balance Sheet for Neoliberal Reform. *East European Politics & Societies*, 23 (4), 479-490.
- Petersheim, M.-J., 2012. The European Union and Consolidating Democracy in Central and Eastern Europe. *Journal of European Integration*, 34 (1), 75-91.
- Rupnik, J. and Zielonka, J., 2013. The State of Democracy 20 Years on Domestic and External Factors. *East European Politics & Societies*, 27 (1), 3-25.
- Schimmelfennig, F., 2005. Strategic Calculation and International Socialization: Membership Incentives, Party Constellations, and Sustained Compliance in Central and Eastern

- Europe. *International Organization*, 59 (4), 827.
- Schimmelfennig, F. and Sedelmeier, U., 2005. *The Europeanization of Central and Eastern Europe*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press.
- Schimmelfennig, F. and Trauner, F., 2009. Post-accession compliance in the EU's new member states. *European Integration online Papers (EIoP)*, 13 (Special Issue 2), http://www.eiop.or.at/eiop/pdf/2009-SpecIssue-2_Introduction.pdf.
- Sedelmeier, U., 2006. Pre-accession conditionality and post-accession compliance in the new member states: a research note. In: Sadurski, W., Ziller, J. and Zurek, K. eds. *Après enlargement: legal and political responses in central and Eastern Europe*. Florence: European University Institute, 145-160.
- Sedelmeier, U., 2008. After conditionality: post-accession compliance with EU law in East Central Europe. *Journal of European Public Policy*, 15 (6), 806-825.
- Sedelmeier, U., 2011. "Europeanisation in new member and candidate states. *Living Reviews in European Governance*, 6 (1).
- Toshkov, D., 2008. Embracing European Law: Compliance with EU Directives in Central and Eastern Europe. *European Union Politics*, 9 (3), 379-400.
- Zubek, R. and Goetz, K.H., 2010. Performing to Type? How State Institutions Matter in East Central Europe. *Journal of Public Policy*, 30 (Special Issue 01), 1-22