
EASTERN ENLARGEMENT OF THE EU AS A SUBJECT OF POLICY RESEARCH: INTRODUCTION TO THE SYMPOSIUM

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Many European countries nowadays see the enlargement of the European Union in an eastern direction as one of the most important items on their political agendas and as a great challenge. It is an extensive political task that must be met by the political institutions of the European Union, the political representatives of its present membership, and primarily by the countries striving to become new members of the European Union. A whole series of political changes – including the tensions and problems that result from them – have appeared during the accession process itself. It is obvious that the candidate countries of Central and Eastern Europe must pursue a policy of adaptation and preparation for accession to the EU (in the cases of Cyprus and Malta, it is pursued to a lesser extent); nevertheless, the European Union itself, which has never awaited such a sizable enlargement before, must pursue this policy as well. Therefore, the EU has to modify not only the tools usually used for the accession of new members, but also the character of its institutions. Even when the search for a compromise that will result in necessary institutional reforms in the EU is in many cases difficult (as the summit in Nice made clear), the character and range of changes the EU will have to make can hardly be compared to the much more extensive and thorough reforms which must be undertaken in the countries seeking to join the European Union.

Should we interpret the policy of adaptation as a body of formal measures, as a series of rules, legal regulations, and laws that the candidate countries gradually pass in accordance with the requests of the European Union, we would commit a gross misunderstanding. While the implementation of European law in the accession countries is undoubtedly one of the most visible signs of the adaptation process, it is necessary to

emphasize that the policy of adaptation is a much more comprehensive process, which asks for the connection of general requests and conditions stipulated by the European Union with various particular economic and social interests and conflicts influencing political decision-making in the respective candidate countries. As the results of these interactions are, in special cases, hard to predict, this situation – among others – contributes to hesitant or even negative reactions toward the process of more countries joining the EU, not only on the part of the European Union's present members, but also in some candidate countries. Furthermore, these reactions emerge to such a degree that in the mid-1990s they would have been considered a surprise. Once the accession to the EU ceased to be a distant political target of the post-communist countries, and grew to be regarded as a common political task necessitating hundreds of particular reform measures, the idea of joining the EU lost its self-evident symbolic significance as a final hurdle in overcoming the communist past and as a "return to Europe", even when this symbolic significance had bred major unconditional support for the efforts of the political representatives to bring the candidate countries into the EU. The decrease of the symbolic function of the accession to the EU and the transformation of the process into dozens of minor political decisions and practically realized measures have meant a wider differentiation in the civic views within particular nation states; political representatives of the candidate countries have thus found themselves not only bound to make decisions motivated by the requests of the institutions in Brussels, but also forced to convince the citizens of their own countries that the particular reforms are reasonable, defensible, and useful.

Political science research must also take into account the real political shift of the problems of the Eastern enlargement of the EU from the level of a symbolic political proclamation toward the particular political decisions, their application and implementation. Unfortunately, the description and interpretation of the problems of EU enlargement present a field within political science research that still remains trapped in the prior normative position; thus, rather than analysis, other political arguments are offered. At best, there are studies that evaluate the degree of preparedness of the candidate countries in respective fields, or works that deal with the description of formal measures that have been made in the process of adaptation. Spectacular scenarios of future developments are drawn as well. (1) However, political science should be able to pass from these normative

or formally descriptive procedures to a more comprehensive analysis that could interpret the accession processes in a more adequate way and, on the basis of empirical data and verifiable hypotheses, state their possible advantages and perils.

Political science research on the process of EU enlargement should therefore accept as its task not only the description of the formal aspects of the accession procedures and the listing of how many amendments, regulations, and laws were passed (and when) within the framework of the preparation for the accession of new countries to the EU, but also the discovery and analysis of how these political decisions were reached, and what interests and actors took part in their enforcement. At the same time, political science should seek to show in what way these decisions are applied, and their effects in respective fields. This aspect is of particular importance in the cases of the candidate countries that, in accordance with the requests of the European Union, are currently passing a series of various reforms and amendments in virtually all political fields, even when it is not quite clear if and in what way these measures will be put into practice or what their consequences will be.

This symposium issue takes as its starting point a more comprehensive concept of political science research on the Eastern enlargement of the EU, as was mentioned above, and on the orientation toward the analysis of a particular accession policy. The symposium represents an attempt, though imperfect in many ways, to present - on the basis of relevant examples, selected under specific criteria that will be explained later - the essential problems of the accession process. The basic idea behind the concept of the symposium was to characterize the positions of the key actors (European Union, candidate countries) in the enlargement processes, and to show the functions and effectiveness of the institutions that decisively implement and influence the processes of adaptation. Seen as a whole, contributions included in the symposium combine these two theoretical levels.

The introductory theoretical text (*Fiala*) puts the Eastern enlargement of the EU into the wider context of the former enlargements of the European Community/Union, and delineates the relationship between the twin processes of the enlargement and the deepening of European integration. The study analyzes the characteristics and specifics of Eastern

enlargement, and sheds fresh light on the connection between the reforms made within the context of preparation for joining the EU and the political and economic transformation that has taken place in the post-communist countries since the early 1990s. Additionally, some research perspectives are outlined that political science should take into account in further research on the enlargement of the EU.

The symposium considers two basic views - that of the European Union and that of the candidate states - of the positions of the decisive actors at the level of nation states and their supranational counterpart. *Woyke's* contribution relates the process of preparation for the acceptance of new members as it was carried out by the European Union during the 1990s, including the proposals for reform of common European institutions that were envisaged at the Nice summit in December 2000. The author also outlines the problems of the effects the enlargement is likely to have on the EU and its members; finally, he takes a brief view of the issue of the low level of support the citizens of the member states of the European Union express toward the enlargement.

With regard to the obvious differences in social, economic, political, and cultural aspects that exist among respective candidate countries, it was necessary to choose candidates capable of extensive comparison as examples to enable the study of problems concerning the enlargement from the candidate countries' points of view. For this reason, the studies involved deal with Poland (*Jasinski*), the Czech Republic (*Šimíček*), and Hungary (*Ágh*), i.e. candidate countries that, from an economic standpoint, are among the most advanced, that are characterized by a stable democratic political system, and that since 1999 are the only candidate countries that are members of NATO, and thus in a comparable position in international politics.

The editor of the symposium attempted to present the actors operating at both the nation state and the supranational level, and the functions of key political institutions that play decisive roles in the processes of accession and adaptation; he also intended to indicate some main problems related to the implementation of necessary pre-accession reforms. The roles that the institutions of the European Union – primarily the Commission, but also in part the Council and the European Parliament – play in the preparation for the EU enlargement and in the negotiations with

the candidate countries are shown in *Woyke's* text. Moreover, further attention has been paid to the institutions that are authorized to perform the main tasks in the process of preparation in the respective countries; at the present stage of adaptation, which consists particularly of the creation, enforcement, and application of various rules and legal amendments, this position is mostly held by the executive and legislative bodies. *Jasinski's* contribution mainly focuses on the roles the government, executive bodies, and administration play in the process of preparation; *Ágh's* article deals with the position and functions of parliament. The text written by *Šimiček* concentrates on the decisive problems of the preparation – i.e. the introduction of EU law into the constitutional and legal systems of the respective candidate countries – and, consequently, covers both these aspects; to a lesser extent, *Šimiček's* article also shows the functions of the judiciary system (in particular the Constitutional Court) performed in the process of solving some problems connected with adaptation.

The contributions in the symposium, whose authors are leading scholars dealing – from different points of view – with the process of adaptation or with individual problems related to the accession of new members to the EU, naturally offer only some of the many possible opinions on the selected problems of this complex and extensively comprehensive process. It can be said that those aspects of the processes connected with the enlargement of the EU that are seen by the policy analysis approach as the most interesting are only in the process of emergence, because the results of the decisions and effects of the changes implemented within the candidate countries' adaptation of their respective policies are not yet clear. It is also true that policy research, as practiced in the social sciences, has not yet fully developed in the former communist countries of Central and Eastern Europe; furthermore, there is a very limited number of studies that elaborate on the basis of policy analysis or at least focus on particular policies. (2) This symposium does not aspire to confirm the present state of affairs; it rather presents itself as an attempt to overcome it. Finally, this symposium seeks to contribute to the development of policy research in the Central and Eastern European countries.(3)

Notes

1) Naturally, we can also find a series of high quality studies aimed at different partial problems. In recent years, several monographs were

published that deal with the Eastern enlargement of the EU, e.g. Grabbe and Hughes 1998, Mayhew 1999. It is also possible to make use of a series of symposia trying to relate the views of social scientists from member countries of the EU to those of their colleagues from the candidate states, e.g. Kaiser and Brüning 1996, Wagener and Fritz 1998, etc.

2) Political science in the countries of Central and Eastern Europe could freely develop only after 1989. Just as in the case of the formation and establishment of political science in other countries – e.g. in post-war Germany – at first, normative works prevailed that enabled the utilization of political science as a field contributing to the advancement of democracy and the explanation of the importance and functions of particular democratic institutions. Empirical research, founded on a sufficient theoretical background, has begun to develop only recently in the field of political science while struggling with limited personal and other sources.

3) In this connection, I would like to thank Klaus Schubert, the main editor of this journal, for his help with the difficult task that the compilation of the symposium proved to be under the given state of policy research in the Central and East European countries, and for the long-lasting efforts he has made to introduce and promote policy analysis in the Czech Republic.

References

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