
THE CONTEXT, THE ACTORS AND THE EFFECTS OF THE EASTERN ENLARGEMENT OF THE EUROPEAN UNION

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Abstract

This paper deals with the conceptualization of the European Union (EU) Eastern enlargement. The author shows to what extent it is necessary to analyze the Eastern enlargement in the context of the already completed EC/EU expansion, and to remind the reader of the often overlooked connection between the processes of enlargement and those of integration deepening. The characteristic features of the eastwards EU enlargement, including the difference between the general factors of expansion and the specific features of Eastern enlargement are also demonstrated, with special attention paid to the nature and the position of the actors and the supposed effects of enlargement. In the conclusion, the author defines, based on the analyses, some of the research perspectives that should be observed in further political science research.

1. Introduction

Although the enlargement of the European Union (EU) is one of the most topical whole-European political subjects, the phenomenon of the “enlargement” itself is inseparably associated with the progress of the European Community (EC), and later the EU, from their early beginnings. The process of European integration is irrevocably linked with EC/EU enlargement, and is formed in a far-reaching manner not only by single and narrowly conceived enlargement acts, but also by the context, aspects, and consequences that accompany each enlargement. This is also the case with the phenomenon comprehensively called the EU Eastern enlargement. It is apparent that the research on this complex process presents a very

contemporary research challenge. It is needless to add that at the same time, it is - from a theoretical and methodological point of view - a very complex topic, which is often underestimated.

This point of view will enable us to understand the main motive of this article. This essay is directed at the conceptualization of the issues of Eastern enlargement of the EU. Its objective is to prove to what extent it is necessary to analyze the Eastern enlargement in the context of the already completed EC/EU enlargement, and to remind the reader of the often overlooked connection between the processes of enlargement and the processes of integration deepening. The characteristic features of the eastward EU enlargement, including the differences between the general factors of expansion and the specific features of Eastern enlargement are demonstrated, with special attention paid to the nature and the positions of the actors and the supposed effects of enlargement. The conclusion defines, based on the analyses, some of the research perspectives that should be observed in further political science research.

2. The Connection of the Integration and Enlargement Processes

Three different interconnected forms of the enlargement - of the physical area, of the political and economic influence, and of the EC/EU (former EEC) power relations - can be distinguished in a general sense. 1) The most liberal form of enlargement is the cultivation of special bilateral agreements or treaties with the groups of countries; these treaties are aimed at the strengthening of the regional and global influence of the Communities (this form includes e.g. the special relations with Russia and the treaties with African countries). 2) The second, narrower form of enlargement consists in increasing the number of "associate" members. The adoption of the association agreements often represents preparation for future full EU membership, but in no case does the associate membership exclusively serve this purpose. The increase in the number of associate members may be aimed at the creation of substantial relationships with the countries bordering the anticipated or already existing EU area (North African countries), or it might act as a certain compensation for the countries that are applying for membership, but that are not expected to enter the EU, even in a long-term perspective (Turkey). 3) In the narrowest and most common form, enlargement is understood as an increase of the number of fully qualified members of the EC/EU. (Seidelmann 1996: 54) The various types (forms) of enlargement have, of course,

completely different political results. The exclusive enlargement of fully-qualified members has had considerable influence on the EC/EU internal life. It is from this point of view that the term “enlargement” is used in this essay.

The hitherto-completed EC/EU enlargement can be divided into several degrees or phases, which are also imprecisely called “waves.” (1) The historical facts of the territorial EC/EU enlargement are simple: Great Britain, Ireland, and Denmark joined the EC in 1973; Greece in 1981; five years later, Spain and Portugal; and in 1995, Finland, Sweden, and Austria became fully-qualified members of the European Union. Therefore, some authors differentiate the phases by terming them the Western (1973), Southern (1981 and 1986), and Northern enlargement (1995), which will be accompanied by the Eastern one in the first decade of the 21st century. From a political-proclamatory point of view, this identification, based on the approximate geographical orientation of the enlargement area, is well-accepted (2) and, moreover, characterized by apparent symbolism: the European integration gained a new space dimension and the EC/EU expanded in the one of the compass directions every decade. If one wants to observe the processes of enlargement in a more analytical way, bearing in mind not only the symbolic features, but also the real course and its political consequences, it would be better to speak of the four completed enlargements. This is because the EC enlargement involving Greece differed from the later accession of Spain and Portugal, not only in terms of time, but also of its course and results. The authors that have dealt with the problems of the enlargement in further detail (e.g. Preston 1997) have preferred this solution. In this context, it is possible – although scientifically unpredictable on the basis of the contemporary information – that the process called the “Eastern enlargement” will have two different phases, and it may also be necessary to speak of the fifth and the sixth enlargement in the future.

The completed EC/EU enlargement phases could of course be observed as settled historical stages of the Community development. From this point of view, they could be the subjects only of historical research. This is contradicted by the recent EU preparations for the next phase of enlargement, which should surpass all the previous enlargements in many ways. In this context, the previous EC/EU enlargements have again become a subject of interest for political, economic, scientific, and social-scientific research in general.

As the enlargement phenomenon is a natural part of the EC/EU development, the progressive effort at European integration deepening is an important constitutive attribute. Thus, it is possible to say that the EC and later the EU are characterized by two parallel processes: 1) the process of deepening the integration and 2) the process of enlargement. The processes cannot be regarded as continual qualitative and quantitative progress, but as very complex forms of development, influenced by many factors, the dynamics of which are mutable and oscillate between fast evolution and stagnation or regression. It is important that both processes bear the features of, among other things, a certain degree of interconnection and dependence. The processes are mutually linked, although the extent of this link differs in various historical periods. In general, the character of the enlargement process always depends on the degree of internal integration deepening, and the degree of the internal integration deepening influences the form of the enlargement. It is at the same time possible to state that each enlargement has an effect on the further progress of the integration, even though the impacts of the particular enlargements have always differed. Depending on its results, the enlargement can become the decelerating element, or it can be the factor that creates the possibility, or even the necessity, to deepen the integration or modify the integration process. The relationship between the enlargement process and the deepening process should be an important research issue, as it enables us to understand the causes and the course of the processes evident in the EU.

The European Union is generally perceived as an entity situated on the boundary between an international organization and a confederation unit. (3) The question of whether the advancement from inter-governmental co-operation to a structure with a supra-national administration of the maximum number of sectors will succeed has been topical since the foundation of the first of the three supra-national communities. The development of the Communities from 1952 to the present confirms the gradual dominance of the supra-national features. The increasing prevalence of supra-national tendencies over inter-governmental ones is especially apparent in particular policy fields. The original neo-functionalistic objective to implement the integration to certain limited sectors was based on the political decision that transformed into the intention to create a highly integrated economic area: the common market. Although the fulfillment of this objective was interrupted as a consequence of the crisis connected with the adoption of the Luxembourg accords during

the 1960s (4), the common market has finally been achieved. The transformation of the remaining restrictions on free movement (the “four free movement rules”) to a form of economic stimulus (5) brought the Communities out of stagnation and, with new goals in the early 1990s, even allowed them to proceed with the original integrative intentions. The next step of the common market was to be the acceptance of a common currency, which has been - as the highest stage of the economic integration - regarded as an appropriate means for building political union. With their acceptance of the 1992 Treaty on the EU, the member states declared their interest in building not only the foreign political unity of the Communities, but also their security and a common administration of domestic affairs. The original objectives of the European Economic Community (EEC), the European Coal and Steel Community (ECSC), and the European Atomic Energy Community (Euratom) were surpassed many times.

The gradual move towards the supra-nationalization of a higher number of areas was influenced by the factors limiting the internal negotiation of the Communities. One factor was the issue of the heterogeneity of the member states; this heterogeneity was permanently intensified, hand in hand with the gradual enlargement of the Communities, from both an economic and a political point of view. Each wave of enlargement increased the requirements for reaching any political accord seen as the necessary condition for transferring the integration into other fields. The acceptance of new member states simultaneously brought the danger of “dilution” of the achieved level of integration, and, in the prevalent majority, represented a financial burden for the Communities, which manifested itself in the increasing pressure on the “pure payers” to the common budget. Attempting to prevent the “dilution” of the actual degree of integration as a result of the accession of the countries without a certain unification level (the free movement rules legislation, the customs union), the Communities adopted a strategy to minimize this danger. Since the first enlargement, the accession of new members has been “compensated” by deciding the remaining integration goals and by defining new objectives. In terms of results, the change of the integration obligations meant an increase in the requirements for the new member states, though only on the political level (6) in rare instances. The risk-minimization strategy, which was based on the process of deepening communities, and which successfully prevented the disintegration of the present level of unification, was further applied, although the instantaneous fulfillment of

all the conditions imposed upon the candidate countries was not expected. In situations in which the requirements of the Communities did not correspond with the actual possibilities of the accessional countries, the instrument of temporary periods has become the solution. However, the temporary limited exceptions were not obstacles to strengthening the integration frame by formulating new objectives to act as a stimulus for the new member states to reach political and economic homogeneity with most of the other member states.

Because of this strategy, it is possible to observe the increased integration dynamic waves in the Communities, which are attempts at compensation for the individual phases of enlargement. The adoption of budgetary treaties, the introduction of European Political Cooperation (EPC), the amendment of the integrational aims in the Single European Act (SEA), and also the conception of Economic and Monetary Union (EMU), introduced before the fourth enlargement in 1995, can be regarded as an example of the Communities' reactions to the accession of new members. The specific feature of this method consisted in granting permanent exceptions to the particular integrational Communities' activities after 1992. The status of the permanent exceptions ("opt-outs") does not, however, mean any contradiction to the principles stated above, because it was not applied to the accessional countries, but it was reached within the framework of the agreement between the contemporary actors of the integration process. (7)

The progress toward the supra-nationalization of the new spheres in the Communities was practiced in the institutional framework, the development of which did not correspond with the initial speed of integration. After the crisis in the 1960s, the European supra-national bodies were weakened, and did not have the opportunity to ensure continuity in building the common market. Effects of the crisis negatively influenced the abilities of the Communities to fulfill the declared aims in the sphere of particular policies. The question concerning the institutions was not classified as one of the European Union's priorities until the 1990s, when institutional reform became the fundamental condition for the implementation of the goals defined in the framework of the so-called Maastricht Temple.

The limited possibilities of the institutional system to positively influence the integration process were, among other things, determined by the qualitative aspect of the repeated enlargements of the Communities. Therefore, only partial adjustments have been achieved; the aim of these adjustments was to ensure further expansion of the influence of the member states in the Council, the European Parliament, the Commission, and other organs. Besides these arrangements in the number of votes and mandates, no other significant changes supporting the greater flexibility and legitimacy of the institutions have been made; this has gradually resulted in the institutional system overload.

The accession of the first three countries in 1973 is now seen as an entry of the countries not sufficiently prepared for the internal negotiation mechanisms based on the “package deal.” (8) (Cini 1996: 30) In the case of Great Britain, Denmark, and Ireland, the reason for the difficult adaptation of negotiation methods usual in the Communities was influenced not only by their intergovernmental attitude, which differed from the standpoint of the present members, but also by the insufficient flexibility of common policy principles in the Communities, which in particular culminated in problems with concerning the common budget. The decision to politically and economically cover Greece, Spain, and Portugal in the frame of the “southern” enlargement presented a burden for future negotiation processes within the Communities as well. The specific feature of this wave was the similar economic position of the new members; this economic position soon led to a common course of action and the formation of a coalition. In the 1980s, the creation and the actions of the permanent coalitions of the countries enforcing their common economic interest and holding significant geopolitical influence became obvious. The 1995 enlargement further intensified the activities of the permanent member state formations, which replaced the original formation of variable coalitions. Sweden and Finland – due to their traditional close political and historical relations – followed a “geopolitical coalition” strategy.

In connection with the enumeration of the impact of particular enlargements on the negotiation principles, it is necessary to emphasize factors such as the area and population of individual countries. The institutional structure of the Communities was built on the principle of protecting the smaller countries from the bigger ones. For this reason, the small countries represented by the Benelux were traditionally overestimated during the process

of redistribution of mandates and votes. However, after several enlargements, the original necessity of defending the small countries was not present any longer. The principle of adopting decisions in the Communities, where, in general, the consensus and the interests of the small countries were protected by the necessary condition of a minimum number of countries for qualified majority voting, caused a decrease in the influence of the big countries. The fact that any other enlargement will probably include rather small countries, and that the weakened big countries are the main payers to the Community budget, represents another significant motive to initiate reforms of the EU institutions. (Fiala and Pitrová 2001: 125 – 129)

The political decision of the EU to integrate the Central and East European countries strengthened the outlined quantitative factor of the reform. The reasons are obvious. The EU still has in many aspects a structure that corresponds to the original six members, and which is not optimal from a functional and legitimate point of view, even for the current fifteen member states. If enlargement above a critical level of twenty members occurred (9), the EU could not function at all without reforms. This fact is reflected e.g. in the Treaty of Nice, which stated the acceptance of a compromise program of reforms that should make the EU ready for the new members accession. The necessary conditions of the new members accession also include the transformation of the Community financing, the reform of the actual policies including the re-evaluation of regional policy principles, and the stabilization of the preceding steps, e.g. the completion of the introduction of a common currency – the Euro. The relationship between the enlargement and the institutional reform does not present the sole influence, but rather the reform accelerator. Other substantial reasons for a reform of the institutions include: the discrepancy between the ambitious objectives in the field of policies and the actual instruments of the European bodies; the non-transparency of the decision process; the democratic deficiency; and the necessity to legitimize the variety of the member states' obligations in the form of "opt-outs." (10)

3. The General and Specific Factors of the Eastern Enlargement

Due to the relationship between the enlargement and the deepening of the EU integration, one important question is to what extent the previous enlargements can be compared, and if any common attributes and common principles can be found that could be analogically supposed to be valid in

the future Eastern enlargement. From this point of view, not only the entire political context that precedes the candidacy of the individual countries, but also the comparison of the course of negotiations and the whole process of accession is very significant. The important issues for political science research are the character and the depth of the adaptation of particular countries to the EC/EU accession, and the political and economic aspects of these rapprochement processes. It is intriguing to observe the political, economic, social, and legal effects that every EC/EU enlargement has generated. At this point, it is necessary to differentiate several analytical research levels, as the problems of the effects are naturally divided into three groups: the effects 1) on the countries that have become new EU members, 2) on the countries that were already EU members, and 3) on the European structures themselves. The provoked interest in the exploration of the previous enlargement phases could lead to a better understanding of the preparation processes for the Eastern enlargement, and to more accurate predicting the possible scenarios of further progress after its completion.

It is, however, needless to say that the construction of far-reaching analogies is not appropriate, and that the reference to the previous EC/EU enlargements should not lead to insufficiently founded general conclusions. The EC/EU enlargement is a process for which the historical dimension and contingency is important. It is a process that should always be viewed within the specific historical moment, the actual geopolitical situation, the certain degree of progress of common European structures, and the status of the internal integration; therefore, it is not possible to describe and explain it effectively in only general legal and social science categories. The individual enlargements differ significantly in many factors. The differences can be found even in the features of the accessional countries themselves: in their economic and socio-political readiness, and in their cultural-political determinants. The particular phases of the EC/EU enlargement are also – as mentioned above – characterized by the substantial differences in the degree of the EC/EU integration at the time of the enlargement, and thus by the nature of the adaptation process that the candidate countries had to undergo. It is not necessary to mention that the enlargement always took place in a different international political context, according to the decade in which it occurred. One remarkable aspect of the enlargement process was the fact that the Community was one of the central actors in the Cold War. The end of the Cold War after 1989 was among the important factors influencing the modification of the enlargement strategy and consequent motivation of the Communities for

the new members' accession. For all these reasons, the previous EC/EU enlargements are to be studied individually, and on the basis of detailed description and analysis, in order to carefully consider the general aspects of the enlargement.

Currently, it is clear that the previous EC/EU enlargements share some features, and in spite of all the differences a certain enlargement "model" can be derived. Therefore, it is possible to speak of a "classical method of enlargement," and to determine certain general principles on which it is based. The key principles of the classical method of enlargement consist particularly, according to Preston, in: "1. Applicants must accept the *acquis communautaire* in full. No permanent opt-outs are available. 2. Accession negotiations focus exclusively on the practicalities of the applicants taking on the *acquis*. 3. The problems arising from the increased needs of an enlarged Community are addressed by creating new policy instruments to overlay existing ones, rather than by fundamental reform of the existing instruments' inadequacies. 4. New members are integrated into the EC institutional structure on the basis of limited incremental adaptation, facilitated by the promise of a more fundamental review after enlargement. 5. The Community prefers to negotiate with groups of states that already have close relations with each other. 6. Existing member states use the enlargement process to pursue their own interests and collectively to externalise internal problems." (Preston 1997: 18-22) This group of methods, which have to be implemented on both sides in order to enable some of the countries to become EU members, proved to be applicable but insufficient for the political task that the European Union had to face during the 1990s, and that will characterize the European Union's progress in the first decade of the 21st century: the EU Eastern enlargement.

The EU Eastern enlargement is, in its qualitative and quantitative aspects, only barely comparable with the preceding phases of the EU enlargement. (Neuss 2000: 45 – 63) The period in which the Eastern enlargement is being prepared and carried out corresponds to this fact. (11) The beginning of the Eastern enlargement process is usually associated with the year 1989, when the communist regimes in Central and East Europe collapsed and the countries of the region gradually set out on a journey through complex transformational processes. The process of creating special relationships with the post-communist countries led from particular assistance programs and the development of economic co-operation, on to

accepting the so-called European agreements on association with the individual countries of the region, and up to the actual onset of the enlargement itself. Generally, the beginnings of this process are to be found at the June 1993 summit of the European Council held in Copenhagen, which stated that the associate countries should have the official possibility to become EU members, and enacted certain political and economic criteria that the candidate countries had to fulfill. (12) The whole process gained specific outlines during the December 1997 European Council meeting in Luxembourg, which decided to start pre-accession negotiations with Poland, the Czech Republic, Hungary, Slovenia, Estonia, and Cyprus. The rest of the candidate countries – Bulgaria, Romania, Lithuania, Latvia, Slovakia, and Malta – could open their pre-accession negotiations after the December 1999 European Council summit in Helsinki. In this way, a group of twelve countries, each of which theoretically have an equal chance to join the EU, was formed. (13)

The complexity of the Eastern enlargement as a whole can be easily proven by the fact that even after twelve years of consideration, particular steps, and apparent progress on the part of many countries during the pre-accession negotiations, it is still not clear which countries will manage to reach the final stage – the entrance to the EU – or when exactly it will happen. In the case of the Eastern enlargement, the European Union formed a special procedure approximately similar to the methods used in the previous enlargements. The necessity of the specific procedure derives mainly from two factors.

First, the process of EU integration intensified during the 1990s. This intensification was followed by attempts to permanently deepen the political and economic linkage; the visible symbol of the linkage was the acceptance of a common European currency. This effort is related to a number of problems and doubts, which are, above all, connected with the direction and intensity the European Union should acquire. The background of this question is even more complex: European integration has no obvious objective. The absence of a commonly shared vision (e.g. a federal Europe, or the close co-operation of national states) has, of course, considerable impact on the process of rapprochement and on the entry of the Central and East European countries (CEECs), because the number of countries to be accepted and the perseverance in the requirements imposed upon them in order to fulfill the *a priori* conditions depends to a certain extent on the future image of a unified Europe.

The character of the accessional countries presents the second problem. Although many significant differences exist in historical and cultural traditions, in social and economic structures, and in area and geopolitical positions, these countries – except Cyprus and Malta – have one thing in common. Before 1989, because of the decades of communist dictatorship they had not disposed of the functioning democratic institutions and even of a functional, at least partially, market economy. This fact represents a notable difference from countries like Spain, Portugal, or Greece joining the EC in the 1980s after their authoritative regimes had been overthrown in the preceding decade. The basic social and economic relations (private ownership, etc.) of the latter countries had not eroded as they had in the case of the former Soviet satellite countries. These former satellites are now forced to implement deeper and more painful transformation steps; their adaptation to the conditions of the advanced democratic society and functioning market economy has been more demanding.

If we leave the level of proclamatory political theses and the normative interpretation of the EU Eastern enlargement process, we must admit, then, that we encounter a number of problematic issues caused by the new members joining the EU. This fact does not challenge the substantial progress undoubtedly achieved recently, and the obvious fact that the Eastern enlargement will actually occur eventually. Many problems accompanying the process can, however, significantly affect its form and quality. It is increasingly clear that the results of the EU Eastern enlargement effort might alter or even endanger the thought of further deepening of the European integration.

4. The Actors, Their Advantages and Perils, and the Effects of the Enlargement

The Eastern enlargement process has, from the actors' point of view, some remarkable characteristic features that are to be considered in its description. Let us list at least some key factors that form the specific Eastern enlargement framework.

The most important factor is that the substantial asymmetry of the positions and roles of the individual political actors defines the whole process of the rapprochement and accession. The actor that unequivocally

designs “the play rules,” the enlargement scenario, terms, and conditions, is the European Union, or its present member states respectively. It has, of course, its own logic and it is - from a certain point of view - legitimate, because the countries that ask to join the EU must adapt to the situation in this community. Although this procedure can be supposed to be fair and in the framework of the enlargement process the only logical, in the political sense its application represents a certain problem for the majority of the candidate countries. The problem follows from the negative historical experience of the Central and East European countries, as this experience has made the political culture in most countries more sensitive to any requirement from the outside. Although in any case it is not possible to make inadequate historical analogies, this factor has to be applied in the accession process analyses; ignoring this makes it impossible to understand the reactions of the citizens and political representatives to certain aspects of the EU rapprochement as they manifest themselves within the CEECs.

Though it is the European Union that unilaterally designs the play rules and adopts the set of measures with which the candidate countries have to comply, the preparations and adaptation to the Eastern enlargement are not a unilateral process. As shown above, as a rulemaker the European Union also prescribed itself certain tasks, focused on the reforms that were inevitable in order to complete the admission of new members. Therefore, it can be stated that two parallel processes are in effect in the sphere of adaptation: not only do the candidate countries prepare for the entrance under the rules given by the EU, but simultaneously the EU itself gets through the reforms that are aimed at making the admission of the candidate countries possible.

Another factor is the wide range of preparations every individual Central and East European candidate country has to perform. It is essential to adapt to the EU demands in the legal, economic, and political spheres to an extent necessitating the creation of principal reforms. It is this process that is most complex – although legitimized by the aim of joining the EU – and that evokes certain tensions in the candidate countries, and is neither technically nor politically easily manageable. In this context, we can speak of a “second”, *extrinsically conditioned* transformation. It is needless to mention that the Central and East European post-communist countries have undergone an *intrinsically conditioned* transformation since the early 1990s and that this transformation consists in the fact that the citizens of these

countries have attempted to achieve a fully developed democratic political system and a functioning market economy. A number of reforms serving to attain these objectives, and based on social consensus, were carried out here. In the majority of the countries, the process of social, political, and economic transformation was not completely finished when it was overlapped by the “second” transformation, as it was influenced by the EU conditions given in the framework of the rapprochement process. Both the transformations differ in their courses, conditions, and political support; however, both represent, from the political and psychological points of view, an obvious burden for the population of these countries.

Not surprisingly, on neither side - the present member states on one side and the candidate countries on the other - does the EU Eastern enlargement meet (even after all the political proclamations) with unequivocal “actual” support. Both sides have to adapt to each other within the rapprochement process; moreover, it is unclear what the individual actors obtain by the enlargement, although pros-and-cons catalogues have been formulated on a prognostic level many times. (Compare Wagener and Fritz 1998: 30-31; Mayhew 1998:185-199) If the enlargement is accomplished –even in a limited way – it will mean a great change, both for the possible future members and for those that will not succeed in the first phase of the Eastern enlargement; the change of the European Union as a whole will influence the present members as well. (14) The other problematic matters should not be forgotten; they are connected with the enlargement process only indirectly, or they exist independently but influence its course. They are associated with the EU status, the acceptance of European integration by the populations of the individual EU countries, the situation in the individual candidate countries, etc.

The interesting question for political science research is what consequences the process of adaptation to the EU conditions will have in the mid- and long-term perspectives, and what the real effect of the adopted arrangements will be. This question can be examined nowadays in the numbers of prescriptions, regulations, and legal acts (often in packets) that are very quickly prepared and passed by the governments and the parliaments in order to comply with the *acquis communautaire*, even when the process is dependent, of course, on the capacity and the potential of the particular political systems (Brusis 2000). These changes significantly modify the legal – and often the constitutional – order, economic rules, etc.

The dynamics of such changes not only depend on the need to implement hundreds of normative regulations, but they are also highly conditioned by pushing the candidate countries into the positions of competitors, evaluated according to their success and speed in fulfilling the given “tasks.” In terms of the attainment, acceptance, and function of the adopted arrangements, this external form of the adaptation processes, which is symbolically expressed in the “regatta conception,” might have problematic consequences, due to the pace of the implementation and the possible superficiality of the changes being introduced.

These changes cannot be seen as only the expression or the output of the internal political decision processes respectively; they are not the results of the usual mechanisms of solving social and economic conflicts, and do not come out of the requirements, needs, and interests of the society that were formulated, intermediated, and controlled exclusively by the current political system of the candidate countries. On the contrary, they are the results of the extrinsically conditioned transformation, i.e. even when they possess democratic legitimacy, they are *de facto* applied from above. That is why it is hardly predictable what political and social effects the accession process arrangements in the individual countries will finally have, and to what extent they will be effective in the key phase of their implementation. This problem can be considered in a wider context. It is obvious that, in the case of the Central and East European candidate countries, the extrinsically conditioned “second” transformation has been connected with both an attractive vision of the economic prosperity and social welfare incorporated in the advanced EU member countries, and with the need of the candidate countries of another kind of “recognition” by the EU, including recognition in the bilateral relations field. It is possible to speak of the specific mimesis (“transfer” or “imitation”) of the models of West European provenance. (Strmiska 2001: 32) At this point, all the results of the adaptation and imitation of the models that might be relevant in the middle and long-term perspectives cannot be estimated. The question of the degree of the authenticity and internalization these models, including the rules hurriedly adopted within the EU rapprochement process, will acquire in the environment of the candidate countries to sufficiently reproduce themselves is still open. These questions should, and surely will, become an important subject of political science research in the next few years.

5. Conclusion

The whole character of the topic discussed here and the apparently unfinished EU enlargement process do not enable “definite” conclusions. In accordance with the aims stated in the introduction of the essay, it only formulates several problems and hypotheses, which could stimulate further studies in this research field, made from the perspectives of the EU accession countries.

1. More attention than in recent years should be paid to reflection on the development of strategic impetus of the EU Eastern enlargement actors, above all, to the political elite of the candidate countries. In this context, it is necessary to take into account the continuing partial changes on the enlargement process horizon that influence the development and implementation of the impetus. Due to the interconnectedness of the enlargement and the deepening processes we should not neglect the fact that the candidate countries will enter “another” European Union than it was at the beginning of the accession efforts. In the decisive phase of the enlargement, a further differentiation of the attitudes of individual political elite or of their particular components cannot be foreclosed. The differentiation might be conditioned by calculations involving a wide range of heterogeneous factors related both to the “internal” (i.e. “domestic”) and to the “external” (“European”) operational frameworks of the political elite. This differentiation might also include the calculated, teleological diminution of the previously provided support for the enlargement process or for the European integration in general.

2. The generally low and superficial level of legitimization of the EU “rapprochement,” and the methods used to achieve the legitimization, represent a notable problem, especially as in most of the candidate countries it is connected with public apathy (though the majority *passively* supports the rapprochement and integration process) and with the prevailing sterility (“the exception proves the rule” is valid again) in the approach of the appropriate political elite toward the European integration. The problem probably follows from the symbolic capital that still dormantly operates and that was generated by the fact that accession to the EU was seen as an underlying political vision. (Grabbe and Hughes 1998: 6 – 8) However, the crucial problem is that the reforms accepted and performed in the rapprochement process framework have not, in fact, had a great effect, and their range prevents the prediction of all their consequences to the extent

that these could become a subject of political discussion, and consequently the new factors being considered in the political decision-making and policy creation.

3. The question remains if the “second,” extrinsically conditioned transformation will be terminated by the accession of the transforming candidate countries as full EU members. Indeed, “symbolically” this is possible; as a point of fact, it would be more appropriate to accept it as a kind of “beginning of the end,” i.e. as the entrance to the final phase of this “second” transformation, which will be completed after the political measures adopted during the rapprochement processes appear in the form of observable outputs, and after their effects are known. In that sense – as a continual process with an unpredictable and temporally limitable end – the EU adaptation policy in the Central and East European countries should be conceived.

Notes

1) The particular enlargement phases are often indicated as “waves”. However, the expression is rather misleading, because it does not cover the nature of historical events as it should. The enlargement process, permanently controlled and disposing of the clearly defined subjects and precise rules, in most cases lacks the symptoms of spontaneity; moreover, repeated strokes are not “a quick and saltatory phenomenon” as is implied by the term “waves.” This indication can only be supposed to express that the Communities prefer the admission of a group of countries to the separate entrance of an individual candidate country.

2) Of course, with the exception of Denmark, which is not situated in the “west” of the former EC; Austria also certainly did not represent the “north”. Further, the first (1973) enlargement was originally called the “northern” one; Malta represents the same problem, as it is not situated to the east of the EU, etc.

3) Although the inclination towards a federation is generally accepted in the context of European integration, it is more appropriate to use the term “confederation.” (O’Neil 1996: 225)

4) The Luxembourg accords are the political agreements of January 29th

1966 that regulated the possibility of a veto in a case when the vital national interests of individual countries were endangered. This act, which contradicted the text of the primary law, was followed by further steps against the supra-national dimension of the Communities. The method of qualified voting was applied again in the agenda of the common market in the 1986 text of the Single European Act.

5) The fulfilment of the task to ensure the so-called free movement of goods, persons, services and capital was discussed mainly in the White Paper on the internal market (1985) and the Cecchini Report (1988), in which the expenses of the “non-Europe” were published. (Tsoukalis 1997)

6) Many activities of the Community were formed on the basis of political intergovernmental agreement obligation without the appropriate support in the primary law. The European Political Cooperation (introduced by the Davignon Report) or the common currency conceptions (the Werner Report) are the appropriate examples.

7) Certain exceptions were given, e.g. to northern countries in the accession process. Their character is, however, completely specific, because they do not imply general exceptions to the whole policy, but only partial arrangements.

8) The package deal represents the method of submitting proposals when the Commission suggests the simultaneous discussion of the questions that would be separately unacceptable for the individual countries.

9) This number is, of course, rather hypothetical; it could be indirectly approved e.g. by the present number of Commission members.

10) This refers in particular to the exceptions Great Britain, Ireland, and Denmark acquired during the Treaty on the EU acceptance process.

11) Although the first enlargement was also time-consuming, as the period between presenting the first application and its acceptance in the case of Great Britain, Ireland and Denmark lasted twelve years. (compare Preston 1997: 11)

12) I do not mention other important milestones such as, e.g. the meetings

in Essen, Cannes, and Amsterdam.

13) The group is, however, very differentiated: the two former Mediterranean British colonies (Cyprus and Malta) highly differ from that. Due to their specific position and problems, they cannot be characterised by some of the general features of the "Eastern enlargement" discussed in the subsequent lines.

14) E.g. the increase in number and influence of the small and middle-sized countries, and the accession of countries with different political and cultural traditions and experience.

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