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## **THE EUROPEAN UNION AS A CATALYST OF MODERNIZATION? The experiences from the Southern enlargement**

### **ABSTRACT**

*One of the most important lessons which could be learnt from the Southern enlargement was the fact that nationally conducted policies of modernization were most decisive for success or failure of a country that had entered the EC (in the case of Portugal and Spain we can speak about relative success, and in the case of Greece about a relative failure in this regard). What the new member states need is a consistent policy of modernization which converges with the institutional arrangements, rules and regulations of the EU. The candidate countries which are the most prepared for the EU (like Hungary) have to take into account not only the long-term benefits, but also the short-term adaptation costs.*

*Key words: modernization, treefold transformation, Visegrad states, Southern European states, Hungary, Bulgaria*

The transformation of former socialist states as well as their possible inclusion into the European integration has no historical precedence. If one is to discuss long-term development perspectives of the states in Central and East Europe (CEE), in particular their chances for modernization, then it appears appropriate to recall the experiences the states of Southern Europe have made since joining the European Community (EC). Greece's entry into the EC occurred in 1981, followed by Spain and Portugal in 1986. The CEE states are also striving towards membership in the European Union (EU), just as the Southern European states did with the EC. Besides all the differences between them, the Southern European CEE states and the states of Southern Europe have one decisive thing in common: the development deficit as compared to the average of the EC i.e. the present EU. Since achieving membership in the EU, the integration of the Southern European states into (Western) Europe has taken place in an asymmetrical fashion (Axt 1993).

## **The Southern enlargement as an asymmetrical integration**

Two dimensions are at work here: on the one hand the present and middle-term relations between the CEE states and the EU related to cooperation and association, and on the other hand the long-term perspectives of the CEE states, which concerns future membership in the EU.

This throws light on the question: is it at all legitimate to discuss the long-term perspectives of the CEE states in relationship to the EU on the background of the experiences of Southern Europe? The comparison is, as always, problematical, particularly here with this question, as the CEE states do not only have to establish their cooperation and membership capability towards the EU, they also have to equally achieve a threefold transformation: introduction of market economies, consolidation of democracies and establishment of civil societies. In comparison to these CEE states the Southern European states only had to overcome modernization deficits; they were already in possession of market economy structures. Also the re-establishment of democratic structures was more or less completed upon their entry into the EU.

Discussing long-term perspectives related to this remains risky as it is presently completely open what the EU will look like in the future, in particular concerning membership states. The first fundamentals will be laid down in 1996 with the Intergovernmental Conference (Maastricht II). The term modernization here is to be understood heuristically and its shortcomings will be pointed out in the following.

The following discussion starts with a twofold thesis: first, when scrutinizing the role of the EU as catalyst for the modernization of the CEE states, economic impulses in these states effected by the EU should be given paramount importance. Besides the Maastricht Treaty and the further development of the EC to the EU, the EU is in the last instance primarily an economic project. Second, modernization effects to be expected in the sphere of politics and society are only mediated on the basis of the economic effects of association and membership. But on the other hand this also means that economic pressures due to association and membership to the EU will not be limited only to the economies of the CEE states, but will also have their effect on the consolidation of democracy and the establishment of civil societies.

### **The pace of reforms**

In the following the actual state of transformation in the individual economies will be sketched, whereby more attention will be given to Hungary and Bulgaria. The first mentioned country stands for the group of reform states (Hungary, Poland, the Czech Republic, and with limitations the Slovak Republic) which concerning transformation and reform is relatively far ahead of the others.

Bulgaria, however, stands for those groups of states in South-East Europe (Romania, Albania and most of the states of the former Yugoslavia) which have remained behind in the pace of reform.

There still exist a number of common structural deficits in the economies of the former COMECON states, i.e. long-term isolation from the world markets, overweight heavy industries, as well as intensive capital, energy and materials production. The differences between the individual reform countries on the whole are, however, considerable:

Hungary is a state with a relatively long reform tradition stretching back into the era of socialist states. In contrast, Bulgaria does not have this tradition. Thus after its transition it was void of previous experience. Hungary's opening itself to foreign capital started before its transition. This was not so with Bulgaria and the other CEE states.

The past specialization of the national economies in the CEE states did not develop due to comparative costs advantages but due to agreements negotiated in the COMECON. This means that at present the reform states have to develop specialization plans adequate to their own individual states. This applies to Hungary only with limitations, however, as it has also been successful in the past in integrating itself selectively into international markets.

From all this one can conclude that in Hungary the reform process was vigorously started early enough, whereas Bulgaria is still progressing at a slow, cumbersome pace. This is reflected in the present state of its transformation. Privatization of companies in Hungary is also more advanced than in Bulgaria, even though in both countries considerable backlogs in the heavy industries are still prevalent. In Hungary the private sector accounts for approx. 30% of the gross national product, whereas in Bulgaria it accounts for only 19%. It hardly needs mentioning here that, besides all progress made in this field, statistics from the CEE states still have to be treated with caution.

Also concerning democratization the CEE states present a differentiated picture: In all states two core conditions are apparent. On the one hand the culture of political compromise is still underdeveloped. Political discontinuities often have their origin in this state of affairs. On the other hand one can observe movement towards quasi socialistic tendencies due to disappointment towards the transformation process, but by no means should this be equated to „back to Socialism“ movements. Besides enormous social shortcomings, extremist parties hardly play a role for the peoples of these states.

Party systems in the CEE states are still not stable. The profile of individual parties is still opaque. In Hungary a leftist and a liberal party have consolidated themselves, but there still lacks a modern conservative party. In Bulgaria the Socialist Party has stabilized itself, but anticommunism as a uniting bond for the „Union of Democratic Forces“ does not suffice as a platform for an effective political program. Here one can expect the party system to differentiate further.

Democratization in the CEE states has progressed further without any serious backlashes; majority relations in the parliaments have presented themselves differently. In Hungary the government was able to stay in power throughout the whole legislative period and was able to win the election in 1994 with a clear majority, whereas Bulgaria can be best characterized as suffering political lability. First there was a minority government (under Filip Dimitrov, Nov. 1991 - Oct. 1992), followed by an „expert government“ (under Ljuben Berov) before the former Communists under the name of Socialist Party became the most powerful party again.

The legitimate constitutions of these two states agree on the whole to the standards set by the European Council. However, problems with ethnic minorities are still prevalent and constitute one of the most explosive problems in many reform states. Hungary presents an exception here (with the exception of ethnic conflict with Roma and Sinti). Problematic is, however, the situation of ethnic Hungarians in neighboring countries. The Bulgarian constitution needs improvement concerning ethnic minorities. On the one hand they are given no explicit mention at all, and on the other hand the formation of political parties on an ethnic or religious basis is not permissible.

Of all the CEE states, Hungary has been the most consequent in its orientation towards the West in its foreign and defense policies. Membership within NATO and the EU is still the most important issue of politics. Bulgaria's orientation towards the West has been shadowed by its conflict with Turkey. Only after the Friendship Treaty was agreed upon with Turkey in 1992 and after the negative climate in Greece could be reduced was it possible for Bulgaria to start moving towards integration with the West without inhibition. In 1994 Bulgaria joined the NATO Partnership for Peace.

Civil control of the military forces has been achieved in all of the CEE states, this being one of the most important features of Western democracies. In Hungary cooperation with NATO is particularly advanced.

The rigid focus on the state in the former socialist states has left behind weak civil societies. It would be inadequate to expect that this deficit could be completely remedied since transition. It is not the case of simply establishing institutions, but moreover of changing attitudes and convictions. The development of civil societies in these states could be undermined from two quarters. On the one hand consideration of adequate social policies could be neglected in the process of ongoing transformation, which might lead to early capitalistic elements and practices, and on the other hand ethnicization of conflicts in society threatens to increase. This is not the case in Hungary but all the more in Bulgaria. It is possible that anti-Turk resentments will further increase.

After the enforced internationalism of former years it is of no surprise that a positive orientation towards the nation has occurred in the CEE states. The question of whether this could become excessive is just as open as the question of how great the willingness will be to surrender national sovereignty rights for the sake of a uniting Europe. The uncertain moments which may arise here - even when grounded on other

prerequisites - are hardly more than a mirror image of the present circumstances throughout Western Europe. Not only here does the idea of a federalist Europe lose some of its persuasive force.

## **Relationships with the EU**

The EU supports the transformation in the CEE states in various ways. Amongst these, the project PHARE (Poland and Hungary Action for Restructuring of the Economy) and the Europe Agreements will be discussed in the following.

With PHARE the EC commission coordinates Western aid (G-24). The allocation of resources is executed in the form of (non-repayable) funds (up to 75% of the project costs). The goal is transformation and restructuring, not macroeconomic stabilization. Modernization of the infrastructure is in particular on top of the agenda. Guideline programs are annually defined between the Commission and the receiving state. After evaluation through the Administration Committee of the EU states, national execution of the programs are carried out, which have the objective of developing a sector or a region. Self-responsibility plays a role insofar as the receiving state defines the priorities.

The following problems have been previously observed with PHARE: the receiving states are not in possession of consistent programs; the temporal limitation of financial aid to one year (now with some loosening) has proven to be disadvantageous; the concentration on technical cooperation and training human resources as well as the lack of financing for investment expenditure has proven to be a weak point; monitoring and evaluation are missing. Self-participation of the reform states is also too low.

Concerning the Europe Agreements, the academic discussion has pointed out the following critical points:

1) Structural policies have concentrated on technical cooperation and training of human resources under exclusion of financial cooperation.

2) The reform countries are disappointed that the treaty has no own financial protocols with guaranteed credit pledges, and that the expressed desire for long-term cooperation stretching over a number of years with reference to PHARE has been rejected. The reform countries were exposed to the pressures of the world markets without being offered financial aid. The more the reform states are in debt the less they are in a position to acquire the financial means for infrastructure and modernization measures on the international finance markets.

3) Trade protectionism of the EU and the increase of regulated trade are criticized. In particular the EU is restrictive concerning sensitive industrial and agricultural products, which not only excludes the reform states from export sales and thus from resources badly needed for their own structural transitions, it also inhibits structural transition in the EU.

4) A certain degree of centralization has become apparent as the competencies of the EC Commission have been expanded.

5) The Europe Agreements give preference to the Visegrad states and disadvantages the states of South-East Europe.

This critical discussion on the association of CEE states with the EU has pointed out two core problems which will arise when the question of membership of the CEE states in the EU becomes crucial: On the one hand it is unlikely that the new member states will be able to benefit of the EU agricultural and structural policies as the funds are running short. On the other hand it is doubtful whether the measures considered necessary for this can be politically pushed through. The internal EU network of interests between agrarian and industrial exporters, rich and poor countries, net payers and receivers, can disintegrate over this question.

### **Southern Europe's experiences with EC-membership**

Experiences, which were made by South European countries, when they entered the European Community, are of a double interest. Firstly, what have been social-economic effects with respect to less developed economies, and secondly, what have been the implications for political institutions?

Economic effects can be summarized as follows:

1) EC membership of less developed countries implies a heavy burden for their economies as the economic and the finalization of the customs union leads to a deterioration of trade relations. In the case of Greece, Spain and Portugal trade balances worsened significantly after 1981/86 (see Annex, Table 1).

2) The new member states benefitted from the Community budget, especially Common Agrarian Policy (CAP) and structural policies (regional, social and cohesion policy). Greece, Spain and Portugal are net recipients of the EC budget, i.e. they pay less than they receive (see Annex, Table 2). In 1990 every Greek received 247 ECU, every Portuguese 58 ECU and every Spaniard 44 ECU from the EC.

3) Financial transfers from the EC to the poorer member states can be regarded as an economic compensation for liberalization costs which emerged from entry to the EC. Costs (trade related deteriorations) and benefits (financial benefits) equaled in the case of Greece, Spain and Portugal (see Annex, Table 3). The assumption can be made that one third of the whole intra-EC-deficit stemmed from the entry to the Community (Axt 1993).

4) Low wage costs in less developed countries do not attract foreign investors automatically. Quite a lot of factors make a location attractive or not. In the case of Spain

and Portugal foreign investment increased after the entry to the EC. This was not the case with Greece (Axt 1993, p. 417 f.). The reasons must be seen in the economic performance and the politics followed by these countries.

5) The economic performance of new EC member states differed despite similar liberalization costs. As far as macroeconomic indicators matter modernization effects were modest in the case of Greece (see Annex, Table 4). Spain and Portugal, however, showed a more positive balance. Unemployment was (and is) a major problem for Spain.

6) National policies must be made responsible for the success or failure of EC membership. The problem of Greece in the 1980s has been that the government followed policies of etatism and welfare without being able to improve international competitiveness and modernization of the production system. The question of EC membership has split and polarized the Greek society in the 1970s. So, the political elite was not able to shape a „grande strategie“ to modernize the country by entering the EC. The EC did not become the „motor of development“ but degenerated to an object of internal struggle.

Spain and Portugal learnt their lessons from the (bad) experiences with the demand-oriented policy in Greece (and also in France) and shaped their modernization strategies in accordance with given internal and external restrictions. The result were policies which were market oriented, which reduced etatist interventions, closed non profitable enterprises and made the labour market more flexible. New jobs were created to a greater extent. EC membership was not subject to controversery debates in Spain and Portugal. Adaptation costs to the EC regulations could be compensated rather quick.

Concerning political institutions, it can be argued that they were also influenced by the modernization path followed in Spain and Portugal. Contrary to personalism and clientelism political parties modernized themselves in the Iberian countries. This process did not progress in Greece. What happened in Greece was a symbiosis of traditional clientelist elements with modern party structures. The outcome was a specific form of „party clientelism“ (Axt 1985).

To give an example: International finance organisations demand since a long time that the process of privatization should speed up in Greece. That the results are so meagre has multiple reasons. One important factor, however, is the need of the political system to have at its disposal a reasonable number of jobs provided in the public sector. Offering employment improves the chances for the ruling parties to be reelected. That is what is called „rousfeti“ (political barter) in Greece. To define it in strict sociological terms: primary institutions (marriage, family, church) have faced a loss in public appraisal whereas secondary institutions are not capable to compensate this deficit. What can be observed is an institutional vacuum in Greece.

## Conclusions

Taking into account experiences made by South European countries some conclusions can be drawn with respect to CEE states:

1) Science does decide by no means, which country qualifies for EU entry or not. Scholars, however, should oppose opportunism of politicians. They promise an open door to EU even for those countries, which do not have the chance to qualify in a foreseeable future. It can be heard rather seldomly, what the adaptation costs of EU entry are. Politicians may have good reasons to do so. They do not want to discourage reformists in CEE countries and want to avoid a public discussion on follow up costs of enlargement in the old member states. The problem, however, could arise that promises do not hold true and that discouragement becomes the dominant trend with all disrupting implications for the CEE countries. Adaptation problems may prove to be transitory. All the more it seems adequate to prepare the public in time.

2) Even for those CEE countries, which have a realistic chance to become member of the EU in a nearer future, the costs of EU entry will be remarkable. There are different reasons:

- CEE countries were excluded from world market competition for a long time in the past. They had had no chance to develop a peculiar pattern of specialization for their productive system.
- Becoming member of the EU implies an increase of imports which means a reduction of disposable investment sources, as long as the adaptation goes on.
- It must be doubted that it will be possible to let the CEE countries benefit from agrarian and structural funds of the EU in a scope which was at disposal for the South European countries in the 1980s. Restrictions are of a financial but also political nature.

3) One of the most important lessons which could be learnt by the Southern enlargement of the European Community was the fact that nationally conducted policies of modernization were most decisive for a country's success or failure after having entered the EC. What the new member states need is a consistent policy of modernization which fits the necessities of EU membership.

4) Even if we concede that the economic balance of Greece's EU membership is less satisfying we have to stress the fact that membership did not lead to political disruptions. Insofar the intention materialized to stabilize democracy in Greece which overcame its dictatorship in 1974. However, the financial burdens for the EC were significant.

5) The group of CEE countries which is represented by Bulgaria has a longer way to cover to become member of the EU. The reasons may be demonstrated by Bulgaria:

- In relation to other CEE countries the status of development is lower, transformation and modernization did progress less.

- The low influx of foreign investment demonstrates that the economic attractiveness of Bulgaria is still assessed to be on a low level.
- It has proved that labour costs are not necessarily a self-driving motor of development.
- World market competition creates severe problems for the Bulgarian economy.
- It would be too early to identify already a consistent reform strategy which is not only designed but also put into reality.
- It cannot be excluded that Bulgaria will be a case where it will be very difficult to manage economic transformation with at least tolerable social standards. A capitalism of the 19th century type would put enormous pressure on the reformist political forces.
- As the party system is not yet stable enough it may be that opposing political forces radicalize. However, authoritarian regimes are of less probability as the military is controlled by civil forces.
- Political instabilities may strengthen developments which lead to ethnic differences and strives. As soon as the Bulgarian Turks would claim again that they are discriminated foreign relations with Turkey were worsened immediately. This is of major importance in this sensitive area of the Balkans.
- The actual political situation and the disappointment at the economic situation make the process of reforms more difficult. It is unlikely that policy makers will be able to make tolerable the political costs of modernisation among the population.
- The EU is very reserved in South East Europe and is not willing to act as a „Ordnungsmacht“ in this part of the continent. A preference is given to the Visegrad countries.
- Actual association relations between the EU and Bulgaria are not based on medium termed capital transfers. Because of its still important agrarian sector and its deficits in infrastructure Bulgaria would need such transfers. Finances of the EU run short - or to put it in other terms: the political will to raise new funds is limited in the EU countries.

When the conclusion can be drawn that the Bulgarian membership in the EU (and that of comparable countries) is of a longer term prospective, then this statement should not be misinterpreted as a plea that the EU may play a passive role as far as the process of reform is concerned in these countries. On the contrary, the prospective of EU membership has to be kept open. In the meantime the EU should develop a strategy for this group of countries which includes transfers of public capital as the inflow of private capital is insufficient due to existing infrastructural lacks. However, structural transfers of the EU should not replace national ambitions, but could function in addition (Axt 1994). And when the EU wants to act corresponding to the principle that „trade is better than aid,“ then the EU has to open its markets also for sensitive products (agriculture, steel, textiles). Countries like Bulgaria would benefit significantly.

6) The group of countries which is represented by Hungary has good prospectives to become member of the EU in a shorter term. The main reasons are:

- Based on a longer tradition of reforms the process of transformation has proceeded to a greater extent.

- Foreign investment has already honoured this development.
- The political system has proved to be stable. The process of reform benefits of a broader public acceptance.
- Hungary does not face the problem to „soften“ the economic transformation in terms of social policy as much as other countries. It is indicative that it is a prime minister of the political Left who decrees sharp cuts in social welfare actually.
- It is unlikely that internal political conflicts may take an ethnic form in Hungary. However, relations with neighbour countries could be injured by ethnic differences.
- Like other Visegrad countries Hungary may profit from a privileged status of these countries provided by the EU.
- The Western orientation of Hungary has proved to be stable as far as economic, foreign and security policies are concerned.
- Problems may emerge from the fact that information deficits can be identified among the public. What the public opinion expects from EU membership may be exaggerated.
- The costs of liberalization and adaptation will be tremendous for Hungary as it is the case with other CEE states. But Hungary may master these problems and EU membership could become the motor of development as it has been the case in Portugal and Spain.
- Positive perspectives make it all the more necessary to improve informations about the EU, its benefits but also its adaptation costs. This is necessary to make countries like Hungary fit for EU membership.

## Annex

**Table 1**  
**Trade balances of acceding countries in intra-EC-trade<sup>1</sup>**  
 - Mill. ECU -

	Greece		Spain		Portugal	
	balance	change	balance	change	balance	change
	in % <sup>a)</sup>		in % <sup>a)</sup>		in % <sup>a)</sup>	
1976	-1,065	8.2	-1,246		-906	
1977	-1,517	42.6	-881		-1,155	
1978	-1,419	-6.4	-48		-998	
1979	-1,759	24.0	5		-837	
1980	-1,304	-25.9	182		-1,146	
1981	-2,391	86.6	-108	159.3	-1,876	63.7
1982	-2,760	15.4	-128	18.5	-1,944	3.6
1983	-2,635	-4.5	319	-349.2	-872	-55.1
1984	-2,572	-2.4	3,185	-898.4	-255	-70.8
1985	-3,199	24.3	2,626	21.2	-18	92.9

<sup>1</sup>Sources: Eurostat, Außenhandel, Statistisches Jahrbuch 1990, p. 59; Eurostat, External Trade, Monthly Statistics, 11/1990, p. 23; Eurostat, Außenhandel und Zahlungsbilanz, 4/1992, p. 23.

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1986	-3,076	-635	124.2	-667	3,605.6
1987	-3,080	-3,514	453.4	-1,747	161.9
1988	-3,676	-5,276	50.1	-2,978	70.8
1989	-4,656	-8,781	66.4	-3,440	15.5
1990	-5,924	-9,185	4.6	-4,063	18.1
1991	-6,036	-9,338	1.7	-5,290	30.2

a) Corresponding to the previous year.

**Table 2**

**Receipts and payments of the EC budget with respect to acceding countries 1981-1990<sup>2</sup>**

-Mill. ECU-

	Greece			Spain			Portugal		
	a	b	c	a	b	c	a	b	c
1981	254.5	394.7	140.2	-	-	-	-	-	-
1982	381.6	985.9	604.3	-	-	-	-	-	-
1983	377.7	1,351.4	973.7	-	-	-	-	-	-
1984	355.8	1,364.0	1,008.2	-	-	-	-	-	-
1985	388.0	1,702.8	1,314.8	-	-	-	-	-	-
1986	632.4	1,905.1	1,272.7	2,320.6	2,415.5	94.9	278.6	497.8	219.2
1987	340.4	1,876.9	1,536.5	1,708.7	1,984.8	276.1	341.8	731.4	389.6
1988	429.9	1,921.5	1,491.6	2,678.1	4,012.3	1,334.2	399.9	914.8	514.9
1989	566.3	2,564.5	1,998.2	3,575.1	4,950.8	1,375.7	458.3	945.5	487.2
1990	563.6	3,033.8	2,470.2	3,671.4	5,382.7	1,711.3	502.4	1,103.2	600.8
1981-90			12,710.4						
1986-90						4,792.2		2,211.8	

a = Payment of the member state to the EC budget

b = Receipt of the member state of the EC budget

c = Net balance (+: Net recipient, -: Net payer)

<sup>2</sup>Sources: Rechnungshof, Jahresbericht zum Haushaltsjahr 1985 zusammen mit den Antworten der Organe, in: Amtsblatt der EG, 29 (15.12.1986) C 321, p. 178; Rechnungshof, Jahresbericht zum Haushaltsjahr 1987 zusammen mit den Antworten der Organe, in: Amtsblatt der EG, 31 (12.12.1988) C 316, p. 224; Rechnungshof, Jahresbericht zum Haushaltsjahr 1988 zusammen mit den Antworten der Organe, in: Amtsblatt der EG, 32 (12.12.1989) C 312, p. 228; Rechnungshof, Jahresbericht zum Haushaltsjahr 1989 zusammen mit den Antworten der Organe, in: Amtsblatt der EG, 33 (12.12.1990) C 313, p. 76; Rechnungshof, Jahresbericht zum Haushaltsjahr 1990 zusammen mit den Antworten der Organe, in: Amtsblatt der EG, 34 (13.12.1991) C 324, p. 66.

**Table 3****Costs of economic liberalization und financial transfers in percent of GDP 1988**

	deficit intra-EC-trade in % of GDP	finance transfers from EC in % of GDP
Greece	8.3	2.3
Spain	1.8	0.7
Portugal	9.7	3.7

**Table 4****Selected economic indicators for Greece, Spain and Portugal after EC entry<sup>3</sup>**

	Greece	Spain	Portugal
1. Change of real GNP (average per year)			
1981-91	1,5 %		
1986-91		4,3 %	4,1 %
2. Increase in consumer prices (average per year)			
1981-91	19,0 %		
1986-91		6,4 %	11,3 %
3. Unemployed in % of workforce (average per year)			
1981-91	7,4 %		
1986-91		18,5 %	6,0 %
4. Current account in 5 GNP/GDP (average per year)			
1981-91	-4,9 %		
1986-91		-1,5 %	-0,2 %
5. Investment in manufacturing industry in volume indices (1985=100)			
1986	73	115	105
1987	64	137	122
1988	82	157	139
1989	82	179	143
6. Public debt 1989 (share of GDP in %, EC-12=74 %)			
	80 %	83 %	70 %

<sup>3</sup>Sources: OECD, IMF, EC-Commission and national statistics.

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