

***Barbara Lippert and Gaby Umbach:
The Pressure of Europeanisation: From
Post-Communist State Administrations to Normal
Players in the EU System***

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The Pressure of Europeanisation was written by Dr. Barbara Lippert and Gaby Umbach, M.A. Lippert is the Deputy Director of the Institute für Europäische Politik (Berlin), the managing editor of the quarterly journal *Integration* and a lecturer at the Humboldt University in Berlin. Umbach is a Research Associate at the Jean-Monnet Chair for Political Science at the University of Cologne.

The research conducted in this book focuses on the development of the state administration in five post-Communist countries of Central and Eastern Europe (the Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Poland and Slovenia) (CEEC-5). The authors present three theses in the book. The first thesis “supposes that the pressure of the EU on the candidate countries increased according to the intensification of bilateral relations from association to membership negotiations”.¹ To answer this thesis, the authors study different phases of Europeanisation and define Europeanisation and key decisions and initiatives. The second thesis is „that the CEEC-5 react in different ways to the same demands and pressures of the EU on the domestic administration“.² The third thesis is related to “unconsolidated EU-related decision-making systems”,³ where the authors expect the process of decision-making to adapt to the accession and the new opportunity structures arising from membership. Lippert and Umbach use a neo-institutionalist approach as the background for their research, and they emphasise, “the impact of European institutions and rule setting on national institutions”.⁴

The book is divided into five chapters. The first chapter is called *Public administrations as key players of Europeanisation*. Here, the Authors define the objective of their study and the approach they are going to use. They also present their three theses and define the concept of Europeanisation. They define Europeanisation “as the shift of attention of all national institutions and their increasing participation – in terms of the number of actors and the intensity – in the EC/EU decision-making cycle”.⁵

The second chapter is called, *Phases of Europeanisation: EU increases pressure on candidates*. In this chapter, the authors present and analyse five phases. They show that during the membership negotiations, the pressure on candidate countries increased significantly as the EU enlargement was approaching. The first phase occurred between 1988 and 1991, when the communist regimes were breaking down in Central and Eastern Europe and the EU launched the assistance program PHARE in 1989 in Poland and Hungary. Countries, in order to absorb the money from PHARE, had to learn how to deal with the EU institutions. The ministries in the Central and Eastern European countries had to develop units dealing with the EU affairs. The second phase occurred in 1992–1994. During this phase, the Europe

Agreements were signed with Hungary (1991), Poland (1991) and the Czech Republic (1993). Estonia and Slovenia signed the Agreements later, in 1995 and 1996, respectively. The Agreements included the perspective of eventual EU membership and „introduced corresponding processes of optional and ‘anticipatory adaptation’“.⁶ At the Copenhagen summit in 1993, the EU declared that „all associated countries that fulfilled the political and economic criteria of EU membership could become members“.⁷ The third phase continued between the years 1995 and 1997. During this phase the CEEC-5 increased their relations with the EU, and especially with the Commission, by sending a mission to Brussels. The Commission sent a questionnaire to the CEEC-5 regarding the „necessary information for the preparation of the opinions on the membership applications and subsequent screening process“.⁸ This led to the involvement of other ministries, not just the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The fourth phase occurred within the period between 1998 and 2002, when the proper membership negotiations and the screening process happened. The CEEC-5 had to increase administrative capacities, in terms of quantity and quality, and strengthen the coordination links between administrative structures dealing with negotiations and administrative units involved in the preparation for membership. The last and fifth phase started in 2003 and still continues. Acceding countries were given the opportunity to become active observers in all EU institutions from April 2003 till May 2004, when the enlargement took place. The CEEC-5 already had to have the missions in Brussels after the accession; these missions were transformed into permanent representations.

The third chapter is called *Uniform pressure of Europeanisation – differentiated national solutions*. In this chapter, the authors try to show that the CEEC-5 would act differently to the adaptation pressure from the EU. They analyse the political transformation and the features of political systems in the CEEC-5 in order to see the development of executive and public administrations.

The authors examine the way of transition from a Communist to a Democratic system during the first two phases of Europeanisation. The way of transition was different in the countries. For instance, while in Poland and Hungary, the transition was the result of negotiations between the old and new elites, in Czechoslovakia, the breakdown of Communism happened after short round table talks when the opposition had no real opponents in the old elites. In Estonia, the Estonian Communist party, which wanted independence from the Soviet Union, led the transition. And in Slovenia, opposition intellectuals and reformers in the Communist party led the movement. But during the first phase and the beginning of the second phase of Europeanisation, communist regimes were abolished in all CEEC-5. The historical traditions and political bargaining between old and new elites influenced the constitution-making process. During the second phase of Europeanisation, all CEEC-5 had “the European constitution”.

Regarding public administration, the CEEC-5 have different traditions. The authors present three types of public administration – the Prussian-German, the French and the Anglo-Saxon model. For example Hungary, the Czech Republic and Slovenia are influenced, according to Lippert and

Umbach, by the Germanic model. In contrast, Estonia tends more towards the Anglo-Saxon model.

Then they describe the change of public administration during the Communist period and after the transition, the creation of the EU units within the CEEC-5 public administration and the management of EU affairs by the administration. In all CEEC-5, the foreign ministers represented the countries in accession negotiations. For example, in Hungary, the key figure regarding EU decision-making and coordination with the EU was the Minister of Foreign Affairs. In the case of Poland, the leading role was more complicated because there were shifts of power within the triad of the Prime Minister, the Foreign Minister and the plenipotentiary for European integration and foreign assistance. But after the 2001 elections, the decision-making in EU related issues shifted more towards the Foreign Minister.

Next, the authors describe and analyse the missions of CEEC-5 to the EU. All the missions were headed by the ambassador and were divided into sections. For instance, the Hungarian mission had three sections. The head of the mission was the chief negotiator and ambassador. Similarly, the Czech and Polish missions consisted of sections and the heads were the ambassadors. But the Estonian and Slovenian missions had only an informal division into sections. As the missions shifted to permanent representations, the authors observed that the number of sections and staff had risen. The number of A-level staff from permanent representations varies from 41 (Slovenia) to 68 (the Czech Republic). They found that uniform pressure and demands from the EU do not lead to a single type of administration and uniform response from the CEEC-5. The main differences are in the agendas and time frames of the national administrative reforms and the leading roles of the political elites. All CEEC-5 dealt with problems in their own individual way.

The fourth chapter is called *Unconsolidated EU decision-making systems: new opportunity structures and new demands in the period of membership*. In this chapter, the authors assume that real EU membership influences the changes and adaptation of the EU-related institutions within the CEEC-5. They study new opportunity structures and demands. The first opportunity came with the Convention on the future of the EU in 2002, in which the CEEC-5 were involved as active observers. This meant that although delegates could not vote, they could present their opinions. Even during the observation period, there were changes and reforms to the design of the decision-making structures within the CEEC-5. The trend is toward the centralisation of horizontal coordination systems and functional decentralisation through the involvement of more actors. This leads to the question of „how would the new member states influence the process of Europeanisation?“ Lippert and Umbach present three possible scenarios on future development within the CEEC-5. The first scenario is normalisation or positive scenario, where the new member states would successfully cope with their problems and become normal players. The second scenario is a mixed scenario, where the structural shortcomings would remain and make the new members sub-standard players. The last scenario is a negative one, where the administration would fail and make the new member states failed

players. The authors claim that the first positive scenario is expected to happen in the CEEC-5. In the CEEC-5, the development of structures and institutions can already be seen, and even „the period of formation of executive EU decision-making systems is completed at the central level“.⁹

The fifth chapter is called *Conclusions*. In this chapter, the authors revise all three theses of the research and face them with the findings of their research and analysis. The first thesis, regarding the increase of pressure from the EU towards the CEEC-5, was supported by the five phases of Europeanisation, through which the authors show how pressure and demands from the EU increased on the acceding countries. The authors “observe three major trends”¹⁰ within the CEEC-5 administrations – enlargement and complementation of the institutions, building of structures to coordinate the work of the actors involved and the establishment of programs for EU-specific training. In the second thesis, the authors expected that the CEEC-5 would all react differently. During their research, they found that there were national solutions and differentiation in timing and reforms in the CEEC-5. The third thesis expected that demands on system adaptation and the reformation of the CEEC-5 administration were needed in order to cooperate with the EU. Here, the authors observe “centralisation of the horizontal coordination systems and stronger functional decentralisation through inclusion of new players”¹¹ in the CEEC-5. The results of this analysis lead the authors to a final question, “How will the full integration of new member states into EU policy-making influence the process of Europeanisation?”, in which they provide three scenarios. They conclude that the first positive scenario “is most likely to occur”.¹²

This book is an interesting and concrete study of the influence of the EU on the new member states and of the demands and changes regarding the negotiations with and membership in the EU as observed by the CEEC-5. The accessible with and self-explanatory diagrams and charts used in the book make it neat and well arranged. The text is written in a way that is accessible for students and useful for academics and politicians as well.

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ENDNOTES

¹ Lippert, Barbara; Umbach, Gaby (2005), *The Pressure of Europeanisation: From post-communist state administrations to normal players in the EU system*. Baden-Baden: Nomos, p. 28.

² *Ibid.*, p. 29.

³ *Ibid.*

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 25.

⁵ *Ibid.*

⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 33.

⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 34.

⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 36.

⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 174.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 176.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 183.

¹² *Ibid.*