

Central European countries to catch up with developments in the West. Even though South Eastern European intellectuals and politicians usually regard their differences to East Central Europe as rather minor, they also see the new relationship to Western Europe as a historic chance to catch up economically.

The Western European attitude towards the division of Europe has to this day been characterised by a contradiction between the attitude as declared in official statements and the attitude taken in real life. On the one hand, the EEC, EC and EU countries have always claimed to support European unification over the past forty years. Thus the EC summit in The Hague in 1969 called the European Communities the "initial nucleus from which European unity has developed and derived its impetus." In the preamble to the Single European Act of 28 February 1986 the parliament of the twelve member states was explicitly called the "instrument of expression" for the political activities of the "democratic peoples of Europe" – in other words: the European Union about to emerge was to represent the democratic Europe "pars pro toto," so to speak.<sup>8</sup> After 1989 the European Council claimed to take over responsibility for "Europe", i.e. also for those European countries not belonging to the circle of EU members.<sup>9</sup>

On the other hand, the European Economic Community, and later on the European Communities, in fact became part of the Western community of nations, despite the pan-European aims of their founders. They became part of the East-West confrontation and developed into a political and economic pillar of the Western community next to NATO. In this context the Community was given, *inter alia*, the politico-strategic aim to integrate a re-emerging Germany. The geopolitical border between East and West became a constitutive element of the EC and was reflected in the way institutional boundaries were drawn.<sup>10</sup>

After a phase of stagnation in the 1970s, the project of creating the single European market was superimposed on the original motives behind foundation and integration. The objectives of the organisation were gradually shifted, i.e. the aspect of mutual economic benefit of a co-operation gained importance over the vision of a politically united Europe. This had the effect that after 1989 the new, primarily economic aim of the Community became dominant and that the changes in the East were not perceived as an impulse to change the organisation. The historic declarations at the end of the East-West conflict did not lead to institutional consequences. While the EU heads of government were conjuring up a new Europe and the Eastern European governments saw the EU as their ideal of Europe, the Union continued to embody the Western European community of nations (and in some institutional relics the Europe of the six founding members).

Instead of redefining their own foundations and adjusting them to the new situation, the Union negotiated Europe agreements with the Central and Eastern European states which do indeed offer the prospect of future EU membership to the associated countries, but the only concrete step they provided was a graduated

<sup>8</sup> Quotation in: Heinrich Schneider (1991), *Gesamteuropäische Herausforderung an eine Europäische Union* (Pan-European challenges to a European Union), in: Rudolf Wildenmann (ed.) (1991), *Die Staatsverding Europas*, Baden-Baden, Nomos.

<sup>9</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>10</sup> Michael Smith (1996), *The European Union and a changing Europe: Establishing the boundaries of order*, in: *Journal of Common Market Studies*, vol. 34 no.1, March, pp. 5-28.

liberalisation of trade. The concept of the division of Europe expressed in this gesture completely ignored the historic significance of the situation as perceived in East Central Europe. In addition, the graduated liberalisation of trade agreed upon fitted into the central idea of the single European market which, compared with other objectives, had dominated the 1980s.

In actual fact the Union created the status of a "not-yet-member," although at the same time the legitimisation which formed the basis for this graduation and exclusion had become questionable. By creating this status, the Union excluded the Central and Eastern European countries from the institutionalised redistribution mechanisms and decision-making processes which were linked to membership. Insofar the EU with its formal structure contributes to the division of Europe, the construction of its institutions reflects the constellation created by division. Only accepting the Central and Eastern European states into the Union and granting them the same formal rights as the current member states can transcend the institutionalised marks of European division.

### 3. Establishing trust in democratic institutions in Eastern Europe

Empirical studies on political culture in Central and Eastern Europe document that most citizens reject the idea of returning to the socialist governmental system as well as a military dictatorship or replacing parliament by a strong leader. If the majority of the population prefers the current political system to the old system and expects a positive development for the future. These results do not mean, however, that the Western idea of democracy is generally accepted in Eastern Europe. The fact that two-thirds of the population support the opinion to leave decisions concerning the economy to experts, indicates a lack of trust in the competence of politicians and a high rate of acceptance for expert rule.

About 30 per cent of the citizens think a dissolution of parliament and abolition of party pluralism likely, 27 per cent would show understanding for such a move or support it, respectively. Most Eastern Europeans doubt that civil rights stand a real chance to assert themselves in their countries. Less than 20 per cent of the citizens are convinced that they could defend themselves against a government decision violating their interests. The corresponding rates in Western European countries by contrast, are many times higher (e.g. Great Britain 62 per cent, the Netherlands 38 per cent).<sup>11</sup> Furthermore, Eastern Europeans show little trust in political institutions like parties, government and parliament. Trust is placed in the army and the church, two institutions not exactly well-known examples for democratic practice (Chart 1).

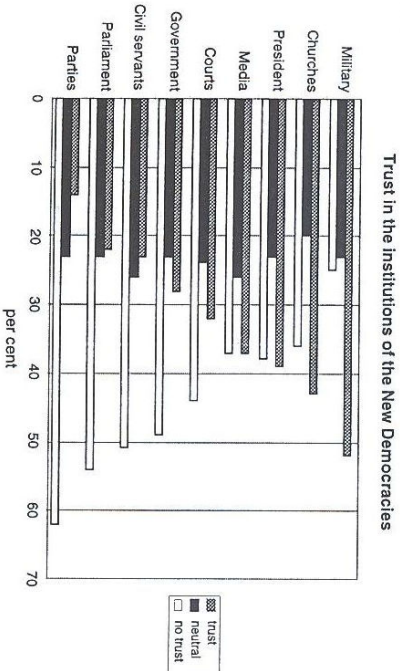
These findings point towards the fact that the young democracies in Central and Eastern Europe are not consolidated comprehensively yet. This does not mean that there is a danger of authoritarian regimes returning in the new Central and Eastern European democracies. It does increase the risk, however, that popu-

<sup>11</sup> Richard Rose and Christian Haerfeler (1996), *New Democracies Barometer IV: A 10-nation survey, Centre for the Study of Public Policy, Studies in Public Policy 262*; Rose, Richard/Haerfeler, Christian (1995), *Democracy and enlarging the European Union eastwards*, in: *Journal of Common Market Studies*, vol. 33, no. 3, September, pp. 427-449.

<sup>12</sup> Adam Przeworski et al. (1996), *Sustainable Democracy*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press.

list elites get a chance to establish themselves under the guise of formal democracies and re-establish authoritarian practices.<sup>13</sup>

Chart 1.<sup>14</sup>



Eastern enlargement of the Union reduces this risk, as the new EU members will become part of a democratic system with stable institutions and strong civil societies. As they will have to transfer parts of their national sovereignty in the course of being integrated into the EU and also have to co-operate and submit to majority decisions, interdependent systems will be created that contravene national going-it-alone strategies and nationalist policies. This would accelerate the change towards a democratic political culture in the region. The southward enlargement by Greece (1981) as well as Spain and Portugal (1986) can be seen as an example of such a development. In these countries early membership in the EU contributed to securing a stable democratic development after years of authoritarian rule. Contrary to the widespread opposition today against enlargement towards the east, which always points to the supposedly unmanageable difference in economic performance between these countries and the EU, supporting democracy was at that time given clear priority over aspects of difference in economic development. Western Europe profits from stable democracies in its neighbourhood in many respects. Democracies do not wage wars against each other and an international environment based on democratic principles will reduce the influence of nationalist ideologies. Established democracies develop symmetrical internal societal structures which allow diverse transnational co-operation, and economic and cultural exchange. Stable democracies guarantee a rule-of-law framework which is a precondition for economic development, co-operation and the reciprocal use of comparative advantages.

<sup>13</sup> The Slovak Republic is an example for such a development. The Mecliar government does not openly violate the principles of the Slovak constitution. It abuses its constitutional competences, though, in order to fight against other constitutional entities or democratic institutions (media, NGOs), respectively.

<sup>14</sup> Chart 1 presents mean values of the following countries: Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Slovak Republic, Hungary, Poland, Romania, Slovenia, Croatia, Belarus and Ukraine.

A protracted exclusion from the EU on the other hand would offer incentives for populist tendencies in Central and Eastern Europe. In all associated countries there is a more or less distinct conflict line between liberal Western, Europe-oriented political players and political powers that want to go their own national way, combined with authoritarian populist models of law and order. International support and prospective membership in the EU allow the liberal political players to harness the symbol of "Europe" with its positive connotations to their reform programmes. Up to now they have succeeded in securing a broad social basis for their transformation policy through this interconnection. In doing so, they have raised high expectations for a "return to Europe." More than 40 per cent of the citizens in the ten associated countries believe that the future of their country lies with the EU. The majority is expecting a significant improvement of their economic situation.<sup>15</sup> A postponement of eastward enlargement, but also Western gestures that could be interpreted as rejection and disrespect would compromise these expectations, shift political power to favour populist alternatives and endanger the reform consensus in Central and Eastern Europe.

#### 4. Integration of societies

Although a majority approves of eastward enlargement, many EU citizens currently take a rather sceptical attitude towards the integration of Central and Eastern European countries. In a Eurobarometer survey carried out in 1996, the citizens of almost all EU member states associated negative connotations with Eastern Europe.<sup>16</sup> This negative image mainly results from the fact that many Western Europeans are not sufficiently informed about Eastern Europe, as this region was perceived and depicted as a monolithic unit, as "the Eastern block, the countries of the Warsaw Pact, the Communist systems," for decades and Western Europeans were hardly given any chance to gain firsthand experience with Eastern Europe.

Even eight years after the fall of the Iron Curtain there are still very few opportunities for personal contacts which could be extended in order to initiate a change in awareness. The accession of the Central and Eastern European states to the EU will improve the institutional conditions and incentives for private meetings and contacts.<sup>17</sup> Private contacts are especially important as these are an expression of mutual interest in each other and can thus contribute to eradicating mutual clichés. Thus, for instance, it is easily forgotten that the present right to

<sup>15</sup> European Commission, Central and Eastern Eurobarometer, no. 7, March 1997, p. 21 and chart 10.

<sup>16</sup> Eurobarometer no. 46, issue autumn 1996, p. 51. Looking at how agreement to eastward enlargement has developed over time shows that in the valuation of the general public eastward enlargement has in the meantime been superseded by other topics and has been pushed into the background as a task that has to be achieved some time. Under the impression of the dramatic events of 1989, an average of 74 percent of EC citizens supported EU membership for the Central and Eastern European countries once demarcation had been completed (Eurobarometer no. 32, December 1989). In spring 1996 only 13 percent of respondents in the 15 EU countries were in favour of accepting new members. 16 percent, by contrast, thought the EU should stay the way it was. 55 percent were of the opinion that the current members of the existing EU should work more closely together (Eurobarometer no. 45, spring 1996, p. 63).

<sup>17</sup> Among other features, the intensity of private contacts can be assessed from "regular regional border crossings" cross-border tourism, the number of private letters and telephone calls or the number of transnational marriages.

unrestricted travel within the EU could not be taken for granted in former times. How successful European unification has been in the integration process can be seen from the fact that this right not only exists but that in the meantime citizens have come to take it for granted.<sup>18</sup>

To the same extent as EU membership will increase the exchange of goods and information,<sup>19</sup> as well as the structural integration of non-government organisations and public interest groups<sup>20</sup> between Western and Eastern Europe, the societies of Western and Eastern Europe will interlock more and more strongly and develop conflict-containing symmetries.

The rise in the number of personal contacts need not automatically also lead to a positive attitude in society, better understanding and fewer stereotypes. The opportunities for co-operation in an enlarged Union can be used in a positive way, however, as they take common interests as a starting point. The EU offers numerous possibilities for co-operation: from training and human resources development programmes to promoting inter-regional co-operation, from town twinnings and cultural events to international research and technology projects.

### 5. Learning ground for social and cultural innovation

Usually the transformation of systems in Eastern Europe is interpreted as catch-up modernisation in which the Eastern European countries establish basic institutions along the line of those in Western capitalist societies. This interpretation fails to note that the radical transformation of social realities in Eastern Europe also holds lessons for Western countries to learn. The political actors in Central and Eastern Europe have the visions, strategies, and resources to organise a peaceful and successful change of system to a liberal and constitutional democracy.<sup>21</sup> Through enlargement towards the east, Western Europe gains the players, the symbolism, the experience and the procedural knowledge of this comprehensive restructuring process as valuable assets. The close co-operation with Central and Eastern Europe and its integration also allow the diffusion of social capital which these societies have collected in their struggle with socialism. The following dimensions of experience and learning can be identified in this context:

<sup>18</sup> A fundamental study on this topic: Claus Giering (1997), *Europa zwischen Zweckverband und Superstaat. Die Entwicklung der politikwissenschaftlichen Integrationslehre im Prozeß der europäischen Integration* (Europe between functional body and supra-state. The development of integration theory in the process of European integration). Bonn: Europa Union Verlag.

<sup>19</sup> The volume of traffic in goods and information can be measured in terms of the amount and value of goods, loans, patents, insurance policies, etc. transferred between the member states of the Union. Another indicator is the transnational mobility of workers and trainees. The flow of information is measured in the number of letters and telephone calls, the sale of foreign print media or the exchange of programmes between electronic media.

<sup>20</sup> The degree of structural integration between non-government organisations and public interest groups can be assessed from the number of joint activities and transnational links established by trade unions, employers' associations and trade bodies as well as public and regional interest groups and parties.

<sup>21</sup> Bruce Ackerman (1993), *The future of liberal revolution*. New Haven/London, Yale University Press; Dieter Sanghaas (1990), *Jenseits des Nebels der Zukunft. Eine geschichtsmächtige Kontroverse neigt sich ihrem Ende zu* (Beyond the mist of future. A historically influential controversy approaches its end), in: *Leviathan* no. 2, pp. 184-193.

- The development of a "second society": side by side with the official political society of socialist Eastern Europe there also existed a second social sphere which succeeded in evading the efforts to interfere and control made by party and government.<sup>22</sup> This sphere generated lifestyles, milieus and social practices which derived enormous intellectual productivity and capacity for social innovation from the differences and contrasts between both spheres of society.

- The development of a "second economy": The deficits and bottlenecks inherent in the system of a socialist planned economy required ability to improvise, self-help and solidarity in Central and Eastern European business life. In a symbiotic relationship with the state sector this led to the development of a second economy which comprised agricultural subsistence and part-time farming, various kinds of trade and services and semi-legal ways of earning a living in the shadow economy. From a regulative point of view it may seem problematic that some types of second economy can still be found in Eastern Europe. The ability not only to maintain one's own economic existence but often even to manage to be successful in business, despite unfavourable framework conditions and scarce resources, represents a valuable social capital, though. This ability currently helps to improve the flexibility and adaptability of the Central and Eastern European countries and constitutes one of the implicit preconditions for the economic changeover in Central and Eastern Europe difficult to measure.

- Directing a transformation experiment: the Central and Eastern European countries succeeded in reorganising their economic systems according to the principles of a free-market economy, in making their legal systems compatible with market economy and a liberal parliamentary democracy, in establishing new political players and institutions and restructuring their social structures fundamentally in a very short time without creating social and political conflicts big enough to endanger the system.

Social sciences have come to the conclusion that modern Western industrial societies, by contrast, consist of subsystems differentiated along functional lines, each based on its own rationale for its actions. Therefore they see very little chance for projects aimed at comprehensive reform, which would depend on the co-operation of various players, to be realised. The Eastern European transformation of systems represents such a project of comprehensive social reform which would have been given hardly any chance for success under the conditions of modern societies. Transformation processes that have been successful despite these prognoses to the contrary, give some insight into the preconditions of successful political leadership.<sup>23</sup> In view of the, for instance, economic and ecological challenges Western societies have to face in the coming century it becomes evident that knowledge about directing complex social processes will be in great demand.

Eastward enlargement of the European Union is certainly not the only strategy to turn this knowledge and social capital to good account. There are some indicators, however, that ignoring Eastern European experiences and realities is part of

<sup>22</sup> Elmer Hankiss (1989), *East-European alternatives*, Oxford, Oxford University Press.

<sup>23</sup> Helmut Wessenthal (1994), *Die Krise holistischer Politikansätze und das Projekt der gesteuerten Systemtransformation*. Berlin (The crisis of holistic policy approaches and the project of geared system transformation), working paper AG TRAP 94/10.

a widespread attitude which perceives defending the institutional status quo for as long as possible as the best answer to the challenge presented by Eastern Europe.

#### 6. Codification of common European values

The young Central and Eastern European democracies (and Turkey's) request to become members of the European Union has forced the Union to look closer into questions of basic liberties and human rights and how the accession candidates respect these rights. But as the Union can hardly expect accession candidates to meet criteria that are either not clearly defined or are not even respected by the present member states, the Union and its member states are compelled to draft a catalogue of basic rights and to come to a binding mutual agreement.

This has led to the implementation of the changes to Art. F proposed by the Dutch presidency and the introduction of an Art. F.1 into the text of the treaty. By implementing these changes the Union and its member states commit themselves to the principles of liberty, democracy, respect of human rights and basic liberties as well as rule of law. On the basis of Art. F.1 the Council can determine that a member state has seriously and continuously violated the principles mentioned and suspend certain rights, including the right to vote in the Council.

In membership negotiations the amendment to Art. O EUT – "Each European country respecting the principles mentioned under Art. F [...] can submit an application to become a member of the Union" – provides the European Union with an additional means to exert pressure and control, which commits prospective members to the common (western) European values.

The codification of basic rights promoted by membership applications – added were also (again a Dutch proposition) a ban on discriminatory treatment (Art. 6a ECT), equal opportunities for men and women (Art. 2 and 3 ECT) as well as regulations on data protection (new article 213 b ECT) – will ensure the enforceability of a citizens' Europe and thus strengthen its credibility. In the long run this also constitutes a step forward to consolidate and secure the values regarded as basic principles of a democratic social order by the present member states.

#### 7. Building a European collective identity

In all Central and Eastern European countries advocates of democracy and market economy struggle with those who support nationalist ideologies and separate development. The reformers need the European Union and the firm prospect of future membership as an important point of reference in their policy. Western European interests in supporting the liberal political forces are not confined to democracy and security policy. In view of the future development of the Union there is also the further interest not to allow national patterns of thinking and interpretation to gain a hold in Central and Eastern Europe. If a collective identity mainly influenced by nationalist ideas is allowed to develop and take hold in the single countries of the region, then nationalist politicians will have a lot of scope to pursue a selfish policy of "national interest" in their relationship with the EU countries. In connection with the EU institutions, which have been given hardly more scope for action by the Amsterdam reforms of the treaty, a self-

centred, nationalist policy would reinforce the mechanism of a "negative integration."<sup>24</sup>

These tendencies are supported by the fact that in the minds of many Central and Eastern Europeans the end of Communism is linked to regaining national sovereignty. As a consequence on the one hand many citizens tend to equate the transfer of sovereignty rights with relinquishing sovereignty, or rather being patronised by foreign powers, on the other hand the importance of national sovereignty in the globalised, interdependent world of today is overestimated. A further "nationalisation" of political culture and politics in Central and Eastern Europe would cast more fundamental doubts on the process of European integration than the problems of governing an enlarged European Union. Insofar supporting the emergence of a European collective identity in the countries of the region means more than providing a "safety anchor." At the same time, a convincing policy of Europeanisation means – and that is what enlargement towards the east is all about – to invest into the cultural and identity-providing foundations of a united Europe.

<sup>24</sup> Fritz W. Scharf (1996), Politische Optionen im vollendeten Binnenmarkt (Political options in the finalised Single Market), in: Markus Jachtenruchs/Beate Köhler-Koch (eds.) (1996), Europäische Integration, Opladen, Leske und Budrich, pp. 109–140.