

## TWO DYNAMICS OF EUROPEANIZATION: THE CASE OF CROATIA AND SLOVAKIA

*Horvátország és Szlovákia utóbbi két évtizede igen eltérő európaizációs dinamikát mutat. Horvátország belekeveredett a jugoszláv háborúba és két EU-bővítési kört is kihagyott. Szlovákia néhány „elvesztegetett év” után felzárkózott a visegrádi országokhoz és elsőként vezette be közülük az eurót. A két ország kezdeti feltételeiben számos hasonlóság mutatkozik. A két eset összehasonlítása rávilágít arra, hogy milyen feltételek mellett valószínűbb, hogy egy ország európaizál és egyes kormányok miért tesznek intézkedéseket az EU elvárásainak teljesítése érdekében, míg mások nem.*

*Croatia and Slovakia show two very different dynamics of Europeanization in the past two decades. Croatia got involved into the Yugoslav war of succession and missed two rounds of EU enlargements. After some “wasted years”, Slovakia caught up with the Visegrád countries and became the first country to introduce the Euro among them. The initial conditions of the two countries are similar from number of aspects. The comparison of the two cases highlight under what conditions is a country more likely to Europeanize than the other and why do governments implement measures in order to fulfil EU requirements and why others do not.*

Some years ago one would have predicted very different scenarios for Slovakia and Croatia. The difference was twofold. On the one hand, both countries have taken paths significantly different from the previous expectations. On the other hand, the paths of the two have been very different from each other, although the initial conditions seem to be more highly similar.

### 1. INTRODUCTION

Both Slovakia and Croatia have moved towards market economy and their political system has moved from nationalist to consolidated democracy i.e., both countries have converged to the “European model”<sup>1</sup>. The question arises how much of the changes has been the consequence of the EU-impact. The tool with which the answer to this question can be found is the framework of Europeanization. The theory of Europeanization tends to explore how European factors influence domestic structures. However, this task is far from being unambiguous. As Haughton [2007:2] notes, social scientists do not have the luxury to isolate individual factors

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<sup>1</sup> Here I refer to “European model” as functioning market economy and pluralist democracy.

and then re-run control-experiments to see if the result changes. As a consequence, demonstrating chains of causation is extremely difficult, if not impossible. The conclusions of the argumentation are often vague and less than robust: it is not clear whether the development of a country makes it ready for EU accession or the development itself is the impact of the EU. Haverland [2006] shows the methodological difficulties of case selection and the establishment of causal effect or relative importance of the EU. The author shows also evidence for biases towards EU-level explanations.

## 2. EUROPEANIZATION: THE THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The definition of Europeanization is a rather debated issue in the international literature. The concept itself comes from the field of political science and European studies and the majority of authors agree that Europeanization occurs when something in the domestic political or economic system is affected by “something European” [Vink 2002:1]. The term “European” most usually refers to the European Union, therefore Europeanization very often examines the influence of the European integration.

Europeanization can be interpreted both as internal and external impact. The internal point of view reflects on the internal process of change in the European Community and the adaptation capacity of the member states. The “outward looking” perception of Europeanization allows the conceptualization of Europeanization as an external (mostly EU-led) process guiding applicant countries' complex domestic economic, social and political transformations [Demetropoulou 2004:6]. The external Europeanization process differs from the interaction between the EU and its member states: it is not mutual but unilateral acceptance instead [Csaba 2005a:48].

Whichever definition of Europeanization we consider, there are three conditions<sup>2</sup> that make it possible to talk about Europeanization. First, there must be a misfit or incompatibility between domestic and European institutions, policies or processes. Second, this misfit should generate adaptation pressure. We argue that the adaptation pressure only show up when the misfit is perceived. The presence of a misfit can be described more or less objectively but whether it creates adaptation pressure depend on more objective factors. As a general rule, the lower the compatibility between European and domestic institutions, policies or processes, the higher the adaptation pressure. The adaptation pressure is necessary but not sufficient for changes. The third condition is the existence of domestic factors (actors or institutions) that foster a respond to the adaptation pressure.

The final outcome of Europeanization is always the result of an interaction between the external pressure and domestic respond. The EU provides the impetus to change, but it is only necessary but not sufficient for Europeanization. When the internal factors respond to the external ones, the outcome depends on their inter-

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<sup>2</sup> Based on Börzel-Risse [2000:5] who identify two conditions.

play. In the context of transition countries the interplay is seen successful when the EU serves as anchor during the transition process. The EU offered clearly better solutions for transition than any home-made solutions on any transition country. The EU anchor impressively contributed to the success of the transition countries in CEE [Csaba 2007:374, Åslund 2007:3].

### 3. THE PUZZLE OF CROATIA

According to the concept of transition countries at the beginning of the 1990', Croatia was an expectant of a quick and successful Europeanization process and EU membership.

To support this statement we argue the following. First, during the socialist times Yugoslavia (and especially its two most developed republics, Slovenia and Croatia) was a frontrunner in reforming and softening the socialist system. In Yugoslavia the Croatian elite belonged to the pro-Europe group. Second, Germany and Italy were in favour of the independent Croatia and early membership. According to the expectations, with the end of the war Croatia would have joined the EU immediately – as the previous example of Greece showed. Third, Croatians have never felt themselves a Balkan country but they have had a strong Central European identity that would show the way to Europeanization.

In less than ten years Croatia has moved from one of the post-communist states most likely to join Europe to a place at the end of the queue. When Croatia seceded from the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia in 1991, Croats were optimistic about their newly independent country. They had two hopes. First, Croatia would become a sovereign state. Second, side by side with the newly gained independence, Croatia would (re)join Europe and (re)appropriate the standards of civil society and the economic prosperity, which they felt that they had been denied as part of Yugoslavia [Lindstrom-Razsa 1999:3]. This latter period was considered as “short Balkan episode” in Croatia's history compared to the centuries when it belonged to the “West” [Tudjman 1997]. That is why the prefix “re” is very important as it symbolises the Croatian attitude towards Europe and European identity. These hopes were not unrealistic; moreover Croatia had promising prospects to realize it.

Contrary to the expectations, Croatia was not eager to join the EU as soon as possible. Moreover, Croatia has missed two rounds of EU enlargements, one in 2004 and the other in 2007. The surrounding countries with similar (or even lower) levels of economic development have already joined the EU. Croatia is the only country in the region, i.e. the transition countries of Central and Eastern Europe and South Eastern Europe that even though could be ready for EU-entry, is still out of the club.

Thus the question arises why it is so. Was it a conscious decision to stay out or rather the consequence of several external factors? The second question is whether the delay from the mainstream Europeanization process (i.e. with the 2004 or 2007 round) was/is advantageous or rather disadvantageous for Croatia. Has Croatia won with the years out of EU or not?

#### 4. WHY COMPARE WITH SLOVAKIA?

Slovakia is a similar case from more aspects. Slovakia was part of Czechoslovakia and previously Hungary and the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy. The country emerged in 1993 as a brand new state without almost any experience of independence. As part of Czechoslovakia, Slovakia belonged to the Visegrád three, that is, to the group of most promising transition countries, although Slovakia was regarded as the weaker part of Czechoslovakia. When Czechoslovakia disunited, the newly independent country did not follow the path of the other Visegrád countries. The new government of Vladimir Mečiar established a rather authoritarian, nationalistic and contra-EU regime that also meant a third way concept of the Slovak foreign policy and ambitions of cooperation with Russia and the EU at the same time.

The structural backwardness together with the lack of willingness of fulfilling EU-conditions made Slovakia less and less attractive in the eyes of the West. Referring to the categorization of transition countries<sup>3</sup>, Slovakia belonged to the "second best" group. Although the Slovak national identity has been Central European, which would pave the way to Europeanization, the newly independent Slovak nation first in its history had more ambitions to step on its own way without following anyone else's will. That was regarded as the interest of the nation.

Contrary to the image of a nationalist and lagging-behind country, Slovakia became the "Slavic Tiger" in some years. Quick and attractive measures were needed to convince the international community and the EU about the determination of the government. By May 2004 the country joined the European Union with a consolidated democracy and well-functioning market economy. The reorientation and policy measures of the two Dzurinda governments between 1998 and 2006 were able to change the image of Slovakia and place the country among the frontrunners of Europeanization. Nowadays Slovakia is among the most reform-minded member states of the EU and it became the member of the European Monetary System in autumn 2005. By January 2009 Slovakia introduced the Euro, first among the Visegrád states.

The question arises what the origin of Slovakia's willingness to turn to Europeanization was and not just fulfil the requirements but over fulfil them and go beyond them in reforming the state. Was it purely the fear of lagging behind?

#### 5. CROSS-ROADS IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE TWO COUNTRIES

In this section we attempt to highlight what the distinctive factors of the paths of the two countries are. Our assumption is that the two countries' initial conditions at the time of the regime changes are similar from a number of aspects that makes the comparison reasonable.

In the following we highlight the crucial points of the transformation paths in the two countries that led to the different outcomes.

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<sup>3</sup> See e.g.: Csaba [2000:338].

1. In both countries the end of the nationalistic regime occurred due to the victory of the opposition (1998 in Slovakia and 2000 in Croatia). In Slovakia, although there were frictions, the governing coalition stayed together, and could stay in power for two terms. The elite consensus was present about the future of the country and the population was ready to accept the reform measures<sup>4</sup>. In Croatia, the reforming coalition was not strong enough and could not stay in power for one whole term, partly because of inner disputes but also because of the public opposition towards reforms. After the elections the HDZ got back to power, however, in a restructured form.
2. In both countries the political obstacles to EU integration were stronger than the economic obstacles. In Slovakia, the political orientation changed dramatically with the Dzurinda regime. In Croatia, the political orientation also changed after 2000, but the situation was more complicated than the abolition of the nationalistic ruling system. Thus the turn was not sharp enough, although the expectations from the side of international actors were huge. Slovakia could manage its nationalistic heritage more easily because it was not complicated by the legacy of war that also burdened quick political change. The nationalist period seems to be only a detour in Slovakia because they were able to change rather quickly and deeply. In Croatia the roots of nationalistic, inward-looking policy making both in economic and foreign policy seem to have deeper roots, rooted in both the war of the Yugoslavian succession and in the legacy of the Yugoslavian times.
3. In Slovakia the political change was followed by radical reform in the country's economic system, the size of the state was reduced dramatically. In Croatia, the restructuring process was burdened by continuous delay. The system of crony capitalism was not abolished with the changes in foreign policy orientation. The size of the state remained huge and the role of the state in the economy remained dominant.
4. Although authoritarianism was discredited in both countries, the attitude of the population differed. In Slovakia, the majority of the people have been pro-EU and ready to accept reform measures initiated by the EU. The attitude of the population about being "European" in Slovakia was one of the driving forces of the quick reorientation and European integration. "Europeanness" in Slovakia has been more equivalent to the EU. At the same time, the level of Euroscepticism in Croatia has been very high. Being "European" in Croatia does not equal the EU by all means. The armed conflict resulted in a different approach to "national interest" and "national unity" than in Slovakia. As a result, the battle between "nationalists" and "Europeanists" [Fisher 2006] had different conditions in the two countries. The rise of the Europeanists in Croatia was significantly slower and more painful than it was in Slovakia. The society was more divided concerning their attitude towards "Europe".
5. The tourism sector and its revenues have created tempting opportunities to delay crucial restructuring decisions in Croatia. It may help to close the loop-

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<sup>4</sup> However, the Slovak people seemed to have ran out of "reform appetite" by 2006.



hole which would otherwise emerge in the current account of Croatia due to its trade balance deficit and slow export growth. In Slovakia there was no opportunity for such an “alternative way”.

6. Slovakia could succeed from Czechoslovakia without border disputes. Beyond the war with Serbia and Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia has a further border dispute with Slovenia that have not been solved to this day. This dispute (together with the argument on the frozen deposits) overshadowed the relation of the two countries and they became enemies rather than allies in the integration process of Croatia.
7. The Yugoslav war proved to be a unique and crucial factor in Croatia's transition process. The cooperation commitment with the ICTY was also the result of the war. This cooperation proved to be overall important and was burdened by public opposition that made the governments hesitate. The mixed feelings of the society towards the ICTY and the indicted generals excluded the possibility of consensus on society level. Such a commitment was not present in the EU-Slovakia relations. In Croatia the war caused path dependency and higher social cost of Europeanization.

## 6. EXTERNAL FACTORS - THE COMPARISON OF THE ASSOCIATION AGREEMENTS

The outcome of the Europeanization process is explained by the “concerted action” of the internal and external factors. The external factors come from the EU and create adaptation pressure. It is worth examining whether they were different in Croatia and Slovakia. Did the EU “send the same signals” to the two countries? In other words, was the EU-pressure the same in the two cases? This is important to examine because if the two were not the same, we could not expect the same outcome.

When Slovakia became the partner of the EU in its own right, it did not follow the path of a “frontrunner Visegrád” country. However, Slovakia was the subject of Europe Agreements. At the same time, as a consequence of the war Croatia did not participate in the Europe Agreements but became the subject of the next “version” of associations. The SAAs meant a new initiative in the line of association agreements of the EC/EU and were devised for the countries of the Western Balkan in 1999. They were fashioned after the Europe Agreements in terms of integration and harmonisation and the SAAs offered the perspective of EU membership to the countries. The EU intended the same purpose for the SAAs as the Europe Agreements: the formal mechanisms and agreed benchmarks which allow the EU to work with each country to bring them closer to the standards which apply in the EU [Gligorov 2004:4-5].

The comparison of the two types of association agreements shows that trade, agriculture and labour market provisions are highly similar. The architecture of institutions is the same. One of the main differences is the post-war “stabilization” dimension that is, as a matter of course, missing from the Europe Agreements. The context is another difference. The Europe Agreement with Slovakia was signed in 1993 while the Stabilisation and Association Agreement with Croatia was signed in

2001. During the eight years that passed between the two EU enlargement policy changed as well. The package of conditions concerning Croatia has been more demanding than it was in the case of Slovakia and the other CEE countries. First, the later the candidate arrives, the longer the integration agenda is. Second, beyond the Copenhagen criteria and the Stabilisation and Association Agreement there have also been conditions of peace agreements. In other words, beyond the “usual” agenda of economic transition and political democratization, in Croatia the EU agenda also includes security, post-war reconstruction, border questions and peace-building issues [Anastasakis 2005:84].

The signing dates of the two agreements highlight that Slovakia had contractual relations from the very beginning. The independent Slovak Republic came into existence in 1993 and in the same year it signed the association agreement with the EC that came into force in 1995 (together with the Czech Republic!). Croatia was recognized by the EC in 1991 but it signed the association agreement only ten years later in 2001. Moreover, the agreement finally came into force in 2005. The “nationalist” period passed in Slovakia with an association agreement in the background. At the same time Croatia was disengaged during its “nationalist” period, which indicates larger distance from the EU and from its impact. The association relation was established only after the changes in 2000. In case of Slovakia, the pre-accession process started in December 1999 while in Croatia in June 2004. These details lead on to the responding capacity of the countries, i.e. how the external EU factor realized in each of the countries.

We conclude that the attitude of the EU towards the countries in effect was never the same. As a matter of fact it does not purely spring from the EU but it always contains reaction to the countries' acts. However, the original intent of the EU can be considered the same towards the two countries, which make the comparison reasonable.

## **7. INTERNAL FACTORS - THE RESPONSE TO THE EUROPEANIZATION PRESSURE**

The outcome of the Europeanization process is explained by the “concerted action” of the internal and external factors. As we have highlighted, the external factors were present in both countries and can be considered as similar factors. The domestic factors are responsible for the perception of the misfit and for the presence of the responding factors. How did the two countries respond to the impetus coming from the EU? What were the factors that hindered or fostered Europeanization? As we demonstrate, the internal factors were quite similar in the “nationalist” phase and they have been rather different in the “Europeanist” period in the two countries.

### **7.1. INITIAL CONDITIONS**

The Europeanization process, in the sense of an impact parallel to the transition process, reached both our case study countries when they were not independent countries. Croatia started as a member state of Yugoslavia, while Slovakia was part

of Czechoslovakia. Thus the early stage of their Europeanization was not an “independent” choice in these countries but a result of a collective action. In both cases the early stages possessed favourable EU relations. Yugoslavia's special status with the European Communities was enviable among the CEEs during the Cold War. This preferential status disappeared with the outbreak of the war. The first stabilization program in Croatia was introduced in 1990 (still as a part of Yugoslavia). The program did not have an explicit European dimension and due to this deficiency, only a partial break was made with legacies of self-management, and the credibility of commitment towards the European model was very low [Bićanić-Franičević 2003:6]. Czechoslovakia was among the first countries that started the negotiations about EC association agreements (Europe Agreements) in December 1990. Czechoslovakia has been among the Visegrád states that were the frontrunners in transition.

The status of the countries changed profoundly when they became independent.

## 7.2. TWO COUNTRIES – FOUR CASES

In order to detect the key factors of Europeanization in the two countries, we examine them in three periods (Table 1). We start with the initial conditions. Then we turn to the period that was marked by nationalism and we call it “nationalist” period. We consider the next period from the time when opposition governments got into power and call it “Europeanist” period. The turning point is 1998 in Slovakia and 2000 in Croatia. The three key words of Europeanization (misfit, adaptation pressure and responding factors) are examined in all cases. We also examine in the following cases whether the EU anchored the transition of the counties.

**Table 1: Realization of Europeanization in Croatia and Slovakia: overview**

	Croatia	Slovakia
initial conditions	yes	yes
“nationalist” era	no	no
“Europeanist” era	partly	yes

The countries vary how they respond to EU adaption pressure. We examine first the possible theoretical explanation that Vachudova [2005:72-79] outlines. The geographical proximity does not explain the willingness of the two countries to participate in EU integration: although both are in the direct neighbourhood of the EU, the countries tried to ignore the influence of the EU during the 1990s. On the logic of initial economic conditions, both Yugoslavia and Czechoslovakia should perform well since they were relatively rich. Some of the successor states performed well but some not. The initial economic conditions are surely important but not all: one has to take into consideration the political, historical and sociological initial conditions as well.

Turning to the next explaining factor, did the EU dislike any of the countries? Czechoslovakia (both part of it) belonged to the Visegrád countries, which were



considered as the most favoured group of transition countries. Yugoslavia was in a special relationship with the EC until its disintegration that meant preferential treatment compared to the other communist countries. On the whole, both countries had at least not bad or even good reputation in the eyes of the EC at the beginning. However, the dissolutions changed the picture. Where pro-EC governments got to power in the successor states, the good relations were sustained. At the same time, where the nationalist powers got to the government, it changed the attitude of the EU as well. In this latter period the EU “disliked” those countries, but this was not unilateral.

None of Vachudova's factors explain the different outcome of Europeanization process in Croatia and Slovakia. We argue that the self-interpretation and scope for action of the political elite matters. This elite dynamic roots in the cultural and historical heritage of the country. Since the Europeanization process depends primarily on policy decision, the attitude of the political elite is essentially important. In the following we attempt to highlight the different dynamics of Europeanization and their determinant factors.

### 7.3. CROATIA – THE TUDJMAN ERA

As outlined above, there are three conditions to be able to talk about Europeanization. Considering the development of Croatia during the 1990s, the misfit is undoubted. This misfit was perceived very differently in Croatia and in the EU. On the one hand, Croatia saw itself as an independent democratic state with a stable economy whose European integration process was hindered by other European states [Tudjman 1997]. On the other hand, from the side of the EU a large misfit was perceived and pronounced. The main elements of the misfit were the war, the undemocratic political style and abuse of minority rights. The outcome of the two perceptions scarcely overlapped. The difference in perception of the misfit - we argue - rooted in the different perception of the war: in the Croatian reading it was the Homeland war and Croatia was the victim of the Serbian aggression. However, the EU and most of the international community blamed the country because of its ambitions against Bosnia and Herzegovina. As a result, the perception of the misfit was wrapped into the national interest of Croatia as an independent country and nation.

The existence of responding factors were almost missing during the Tudjman regime in Croatia. The country was isolated from the EU (less economically and more politically). The governing party (HDZ) responded rather defensively than cooperatively to make Croatia EU-conform. In fact, the need of being EU-conform did not arise. Instead, the pressure of the EU was seen as a danger to the national interest. As a result, there were no or little efforts made in order to meet the EU requirements and European integration had a very low priority. Croatia did not become a Europe Agreement country and as a result EU membership was less than real prospect. The role of the EU in the transformation process was minor.

According to the above, can we talk about Europeanization during this period in Croatia? The evidence shows that the three conditions did not realize. Thus the EU

did not play the role of anchor in the Croatian transition process; it rather went on its own way dictated by “national interest”. The Croatian system proved to be EU-resistant. However, this does not mean that the EU was not present in Croatia's life. The presence of EU-pressure had an impact on the country's life even if not towards the direction of Europeanization.

#### 7.4. CROATIA – AFTER TUJMAN

The misfit was obviously still present when the opposition won the elections in 2000. But this misfit was perceived differently by the new government than the previous one. The new conception was more close to the perception of the EU although not the same. The idea of national interest changed somewhat. However, key components of the misfit, namely the war (and its consequences) and the abuses of minority rights remained on the agenda and were attached to real or putative national interest. The existence of responding factors changed after 2000. Following the elections the opposition gained power and the orientation of the external relations turned to the EU. The EU integration became a pronounced political priority.

Since 2000 the dynamics of Europeanization are visible. During the period of the opposition and also later when the renewed HDZ regained power, the EU was always a high priority in the government's rhetoric and it presented ambitious integration schedules from time to time. Willingness for responding to the adaptation pressure strengthened significantly. The responding capacity was much stronger in rhetoric than in practice. The political goal of EU membership was also maintained after the change of government following the November 2003 parliamentary elections when the renewed HDZ won. The return of the HDZ highlights two issues: the infirmness of the coalition that gave chance to the early elections and the will of the electorate. The return did not go along with nationalistic rule, inter alia because the emblematic leader of the HDZ, Franjo Tuđman died in 1999. Stipe Mesić, president of Croatia said in 2000 that he hoped Croatia would have earned EU membership before his terms ended in early 2005. However, Croatia applied for EU membership in February 2003 and became a candidate country in June 2004 and the negotiations could only start in 2005, mainly because of the delay in cooperation with the ICTY. The aim of Croatian membership was still overwritten by national interest that was threatened by The Hague. The unexampled high level of Euroscepticism in Croatia has also burdened the integration process and the response to adaptation pressure.

The main mechanism of Europeanization did not change in Croatia with the political turn. The dominant mechanism was coercion. The Croatian experience showed that the mainly negative conditionality of the EU and also other international actors played a highly important role in several crucial steps in Croatian policy.

The hint of Schimmelfennig and Sedelmeier [2004:670] that the presence of conditionality does not necessarily cause successful rule transfer is particularly relevant in Croatia. In many cases EU-conditionality proved to be ineffective, although the EU's bargaining strategy was connected to positive and negative sanctions. On the

one hand, an example of the negative sanction was the suspension of assistance to Croatia under the PHARE program. It was suspended on 7 August 1995 when Croatia mounted a military offensive in Krajina. Until November 1999, Croatia was excluded from the PHARE programme because of its failure to strengthen its democratic institutions (e.g. reforming the electoral law, decentralising the media, respect for minorities and the return of refugees). Another negative sanction was that the postponement of the accession negotiations because Croatia did not cooperate fully with the ICTY. On the other hand, as an example of a positive sanction, following a positive assessment from the ICTY Chief Prosecutor, the Council concluded immediately that Croatia had met the crucial condition and the negotiations could be opened on 3 October 2005.

#### 7.5. SLOVAKIA – THE MEČIAR YEARS

The misfit between the domestic and the European institutions, policies or processes was present in Slovakia undoubtedly. However, the misfit was partly perceived. On the one hand, the Slovak government saw the country as a newly independent democratic state that may serve as a bridge between the West and the East. The misfit was not regarded as some kind of deficiency but rather the national interest of Slovakia as an independent country and nation. The perception of the misfit was different from the side of the EU, which expressed its aversion even in form of demarches. The main elements of the misfit were the undemocratic political style, the instability of Slovakia's institutions and abuse of minority rights.

The existence of responding factors to the adaptation pressure were almost missing in Mečiar's Slovakia. The country was officially in favour of the EU and it made an application for EU membership in June 1995. At the same time, in practice it rather isolated itself from the EU. The governing party (HZDS) followed nationalistic principles and stayed resistant to EU-pressure.

The dominant mechanism of Europeanization was coercion. The control with negative and positive sanctions played an important role during the Mečiar years. The most apparent example was the decision itself on the candidate status. The shortcomings regarding the political criteria were sanctioned with the delay of the start of negotiations. Slovakia stayed out of the first wave (the Luxembourg group) of EU-candidate countries, while the neighbouring countries (Czech Republic, Hungary and Poland) could join the Luxembourg group and get along with their integration process.

#### 7.6. SLOVAKIA – AFTER THE TURNING POINT

The misfit continued to be present in Slovakia when the new government won the elections in 1998. At the same time, the perception of the misfit changed dramatically. The new government detected the lag in the country's integration process and thus in adopting EU-style institutions, policies and structures of the country compared to the other Visegrád states. This lag was considered as undesir-

able not only for the government but for the population as well. In other words, they felt the misfit.

The willingness for responding to the adaptation pressure strengthened significantly. The possibility of being excluded from the first round of enlargement made a large impression on the population. The political goal of EU membership was maintained with the use of every means. The national interest changed compared to the previous era. The new interest was to catch up with peer countries and join the EU together with them. The first Dzurinda government had to face the scepticism of the international community. Accordingly, the reform process had to be quick and effective in order to start negotiations on Slovakia's entry into the EU. The reform process was driven by the promise of international integration and by international pressure. The promise of integration served as a unifying factor that made possible for the left-right coalition to stay in power for the full term. From 2002, the second Dzurinda government continued the reform process in order to complete Slovakia's integration into the EU [Mathernová-Renčko 2006:638].

In order to change the image of Slovakia that was created under Mečiar and gain credibility to the measures, the Dzurinda governments were ready to over fulfil the EU-requirements. In Slovakia the EU integration proved to be a strong anchor.

The mechanism of coercion and the instrument of conditionality were obviously present during the accession process as in case of every candidate country. However, this stage of Slovakia's Europeanization process was more driven by the mimicry mechanism. The EU served as a clear point of reference and destination as well. The integration process was the aim of a major part of the population and of the ruling government. They both consented to the EU integration and were ready to make efforts in favour of this aim. However, reform measures both in economic and political fields were necessary regardless of the EU membership and the conditions of the EU. The attitude of the Visegrád countries and other transition countries had a crucial impact on Slovakia's attitude and worked as a contagion effect. Slovakia did not want to act differently because it would have been more costly for the country. The social cost of Europeanization was significantly lower than in Croatia.

Examining the policy turn in Slovakia, Fisher, Gould and Haughton [2007:996] describe what the most commonly accepted view about Slovakia is: "While international pressures certainly played a role as well, they were less important than domestic political factors". "Less important" definitely does not mean "not important" though.

## 8. SOME CONCLUSIONS

The paths of the countries studied in this paper show some consequences about the dynamics of Europeanization.

1. In Slovakia the main mechanism of Europeanization changed after the end of the Mečiar regime. The Dzurinda era was more characterized by a mechanism of mimicry. The EU proved to be a strong anchor but the radical restructuring was less for the sake of the EU but more in the country's own interest. In

Croatia, the dominant mechanism (coercion) seems to be unchanged since the Tudjman era. Every important step in the integration process has been connected to a political condition. The economic restructuring has been also highly conditional on international actors.

2. Countries are fundamentally determined by their own (inner) factors. External factors, let it be Europeanization pressure, are able to play a secondary role only. On the one hand, both in our case studies the evidence is that internal factors show the way for policy makers. The outside pressure of the EU and other international organizations cannot induce deep reforms without the inside will of the political elite and the population, i.e. without sufficient responsive capacity. The external incentive may be necessary but not sufficient condition of changes. In other words changes do not appear automatically in the presence of external Europeanization pressure.
3. In the studied countries the intensity of responsiveness varied during time. The responsive capacity of a country depends on the will and determination of the political elite. "Real change comes from within" – from the political elite. As Dollar and Svensson [1998:4] point out, the governments willing to reform cannot be created but only identified. The determination of the elite depends highly on its latitude and social basis. The political elite will commit itself to changes only if its cost is lower than its benefits for the elite. However, this cost-benefit balance is often different than that of the whole economy and society.
4. The scope of action of decision-makers is not infinite but determined by deep identity questions, history and culture. These rather stable informal institutions cause path dependency and burden the scope of action of decision-makers. At the same time, the will of the political elite is able to overwrite path dependency and some disadvantageous initial conditions [see also Havrylyshyn–van Rooden 2000]. At the same time, in countries where the state is captured and vested interests block important reform steps, outside pressure is often the only chance to break this dead-lock. The impulse from outside is able to put domestic processes and structures into new context, and move them out from dead-lock.
5. Europeanization tends to explore how domestic structures are influenced by European pressure. The case studies have showed that both countries have been influenced. Europeanization pressure does not appear ineffective even in the absence of internal response. This indirect Europeanization impact possesses different degrees of efficiency, moreover different impact, sometimes even to opposite the intended impact. Anyhow, the presence of Europeanization impact is inevitable; the countries under Europeanization pressure have to count with it whether they choose positive or negative responses. As Vachudova [2005:5] points out, the fact that a country is a credible future member state of the EU makes the country subsequently exposed to the pressure of Europeanization. Probably that is why sooner or later most political actors see the benefits of moving their political agenda toward a direction that makes the country compatible with EU membership.
6. Europeanization does not only mean political decisions and that is why it does not only develop along politics. The logic and dynamics of market actors are



inevitable. Geographical proximity builds trade links well before politics or even against the will politics.

7. War matters. An armed conflict changes fundamental rules of the society; it creates special conditions, where the exception becomes the rule. The end of the war does not mean the end of this special period. First, it takes time to get back to "normal life" not only in economic but more in social and physiological terms. Second, the war influences the dynamics of interest groups. It serves as a basis of reference for several groups long after the end of the armed conflict and put nationalism in different costume. In other words, the war creates special path dependency.
8. Timing seems to be fundamentally important. The latest developments of the EU show that Slovakia changed "on time", could catch up with the Visegrád group and join the EU in 2004. In case of Croatia the "enlargement train has gone". The enlargement conditions of the EU changed considerably since the signing of the Nice Treaty, which created the framework for the enlargement rounds in 2004 and 2007. Croatia has already reached the point when the decision-makers see the benefits of turning towards EU membership. Even if Croatia fulfils the three Copenhagen criteria, the EU itself has to fulfil the fourth one. Without the EU's ability to receive a new member state, the preparedness of a candidate has no worth. Fulfillment of the fourth Copenhagen criteria became more fragile recently.

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