

Governance in Central and Eastern Europe: A cross-sectional perspective.
How the EU accession broke institutional path dependencies in post-communist regimes

by

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Abstract

Has the EU accession strategy been effective in breaking the institutional path dependencies of public administrations in the new and acceding EU-member states with a communist past? Applying the results from a survey of high ranking civil servants and politicians in 15 post-communist countries, the present paper first demonstrates that institutional path dependencies in public administrations persist. There are, across the subset of countries, significant differences between how 5 types of public administrations relate to peak organisations in society, their degree of internal administrative autonomy and in the scope and character of obstacles they face during policy implementation. Second, when the subset of countries is divided into those who have acceded (or are acceding) to the EU and those who do not have such a prospect, the survey results indicate that the EU acceding countries are in the process of breaking the bonds of the past: Their numerous interactions with organizations in society are less institutionalized, departments have less autonomy, reflecting the existence of (stronger) coordination units within government, and they face a larger number of complex implementation issues because they have launched new policies and procedures. The results indicate that the EU strategy of 'soft' conditionality is effective in promoting administrative change in the new and prospective member states.

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Task dependencies

The DEMSTAR¹ survey of core national administrative elites in 15 post-communist countries exhibits apparent sectoral differences of governance in how central administrations relate to peak organizations in society, the autonomy of separate types of administration, and in the character of obstacles faced during policy implementation. Furthermore, observed national differences do, of course, demonstrate that post-communist regimes are not uniform and insulated institutions designing and implementing blueprint policies of whatever sort. If this was the case we would not expect the systematic differences between countries that we have observed. Nor are post-communist governments passive reflections of vectors in the societal context within which they are located, be it interests, cultures or personalities. If this were so we would not find systematic similarities and differences between policy sectors across countries. The observed patterns on the contrary demonstrate that central administrations and the tasks they perform (even in the statistical sense of the word) are also to a significant extent formed by the nature of tasks they are performing, replicating what Page and Goldsmith (1987, quoted in Peters, 1996) found when they showed 'that particular policies administered in different countries were more similar than different policies administered in the same country; policy rather than country was the better predictor' (Peters, 1996, p. 27). This 'task-dependency' however raises new questions. First, how do we establish a typology of administrations that renders comparisons between administrative and policy sectors feasible and meaningful? Second, what explains the observed differences between administrative sectors, i.e. treating the differences as the dependent variable? Third, considering that a prime goal for a number of the post-communist countries has been to accede to the European Union, which in turn imposed conditionalities upon them, to what extent does capacity building to manage the process and the general modernization of the administration to adapt to EU-standards, that is the task of European integration, imply systematic differences between EU-acceding and non-acceding countries?

This paper takes a first step in solving these puzzles by focusing on two sets of differences (between administrative sectors and between acceding and non-acceding countries) on three dimensions; (1) the way central administrations relate to peak organisations, (2) the autonomy of government institutions and (3) the character of the obstacles faced during policy implementation. This journey into unknown territory begins with a brief discussion and identification of typologies, concepts and theories that may be applied to a comparison of public administration sectors in post-communist regimes. Section two presents the survey methodology and findings of sectoral differences along the three dimensions. In section three we test the flip side of the data: the EU perspective, whether demands of the EU (Europeanization) have been able to break the institutional path dependencies of past practises in acceding countries on the three dimensions. In the final, concluding section we discuss the politico-strategic implications of the findings. The paper shows that while communist regimes have left a discernible legacy of how the central government works, the EU accession conditionality has been effective in breaking institutional path-dependencies.

The survey: theory and methodology

'Science depends on its concepts. These are the ideas which receive names. They determine the questions one asks, and the answers one gets. They are more fundamental than theories which are stated in terms of them (Thompson, 1961, p. 4). This observation, phrased more than forty years ago, is equally important when trying to understand puzzling data. Defining typologies that group

phenomena across countries and time in comparable categories is what makes meaningful comparison possible. Further, 'systematic comparison makes use of comparable, or at least functionally equivalent, units of analysis?' (Rose, 1991, p. 448). In this perspective, the establishment of theoretically meaningful classification schemes is, as in any other part of comparative politics, an important aspect of the empirical and theoretical development in comparative public administration (Peters, 1988: 7-8). A typology is more than a question of measurement and systematic comparison, however. The categories we establish reflect the questions we want to ask, and the question we ask are again based on our ex ante expectations. In this sense a typology is 'the initial stage of a theory of politics' (ibid., p. 95).

Turning to the data at hand, a meaningful typology related to our first set of research questions should therefore reflect our initial expectations about what influences or determines the position of the administration between the political and the societal level. In particular, we should define categories along the anticipated causal mechanisms that form the (central) administration's exposure to peak organisations in society, its autonomy and the scope and character of obstacles it faces during implementation of its decisions. Dealing here with administrations that are the outcome of transformations from incumbent communist systems, we may expect that habituated patterns of behaviour formed by the functional needs of the old regime to have survived as concluded, for example, by Nunberg (2000, p. 254), who states that 'In the main, administrative practice from the communist era has survived remarkably undisturbed, though, by and large, in a de-ideologized form'. Hence, our assumption of a certain path dependency leads us to apply a functional perspective, similar to Jrisat's (2002, p. 18) in his identification of '... comparative studies [that] establish patterns of functional administrative processes. These efforts focus on one or more aspects of management in several cultural settings'.

The homeostasis² of the incumbent politico-administrative communist systems implies that the patterns of governance under communism have to various degrees reproduced themselves in the changed context, as observed by Nunberg. Hence, the authoritarian meso-corporatist (Bunce, 1983) or network (Stark and Bruszt, 1998) system born under the old regime will, to varying degrees have survived in individual countries, constraining (and enabling!) the choices of present reformers. As formulated by Stark and Bruszt (ibid., p. 83), this implies that:

'Actors who seek to move in new directions find that their choices are constrained by the existing set of institutional resources. Institutions limit the field of action, preclude some directions, and constrain certain courses. But institutions also favour the perception and selection of some strategies over others. Actors who seek to introduce change require resources to overcome obstacles to change'.

Proceeding from the understanding of communist politico-administrative systems of governance as a blend of (authoritarian) meso-corporatism or network systems, evidence of path dependencies requires that we establish a typology that features the properties of the incumbent system. In particular, a typology must discriminate between the positions of functional units in relation to society, in the degree of autonomy in the decision making process and the constraints involved when implementing their assigned tasks. One such typology based on the functions performed by the administrations was proposed by Christensen (1984, p. 314). In this typology he distinguishes between administrations with production functions and those with regulatory functions. The

regulatory administrations are again divided according to general, sectoral and internal regulatory tasks. In the following we will apply this typology with one important addition: the presidential administration. Under communism the central committees of the Communist parties had extensive controlling and supervisory tasks, in effect functioning as a sort of general (political) regulatory and supervisory agency. There are clear indications that this function has been adopted by a number of presidential administrations, where the change of name has been the most important reform. Presidential administrations are therefore separated out as a distinct category. The selected typology is illustrated in Fig. 1, establishing 5 types of central administrations and examples.

Fig. 1. A functional typology of central administrations in post-communist regimes.

	Regulatory functions	Production functions
General	Type 3: ministries or departments of justice, environment, tax etc	
Sectoral	Type 1: ministries or departments of agriculture, trade, industry, trade etc.	Type 2: ministries or departments of e.g. welfare, health, education but also ministries responsible for production of goods, where state production enterprises remain
Internal	Type 4: the foreign ministry, prime minister's office, ministry of finance etc.	
Presidential administration	Type 5	

Based on the hypothesized survival of past practices we would ex ante expect the following patterns to apply to our data on the position of the different types of administrations between society and politicians.

I. On the exposure to demands from peak organizations:

1. Ministries with sectoral regulatory functions (branch ministries or departments) (type 1 administrations) or with production functions (type 2 administrations) are more exposed to interactions with peak organizations than are
2. Ministries with general regulatory tasks (type 3 administrations) or ministries with regulating or coordinating tasks inside government (type 4 administrations);
3. Presidential administrations are in many of these countries the institutional leftovers of the central committees of the Communist parties (type 5 administrations). In general we would expect these to be close to general coordinating institutions with limited external connections.

II. On the autonomy of the administration:

1. Ministries with sectoral regulatory functions and production functions (type 1 and 2 administrations) should, because of the specialist nature of their tasks, be less exposed to external interference from other government agencies than type 3 and 4 administrations;
2. To the extent that past practises have survived in presidential administrations (where they exist) they will have a major effect in all types of administrations;

III. On the scope and nature of implementation problems

1. Ministries with sectoral regulatory functions and production functions (type 1 and 2) face the whole range of obstacles commonly discussed within the literature.
2. Ministries with general regulatory tasks and ministries with coordinating tasks (type 3 and 4) face a number of implementation problems typically related to oversight, coordination and evaluation.
3. Presidential administrations face fewer obstacles as these are the farthest away from actual implementation. However, we still expect presidential administrations to face a considerable number of obstacles in line with communist practices of meddling in the affairs of the implementing agencies.

These questions were tested on the data collected in a survey of ministers (former and current) and central government officials in 15 post-communist countries.³ The ambition in all the country surveys was to reach a subset of executive officials placed as high as possible in the administrative hierarchies in core agencies. This strategy produced some differences concerning what kinds of executives we actually reached, depending of the country's openness and constitutional structure. The surveys were conducted on the basis of a standardized questionnaire supplemented by a number of open questions subsequently reported to us by the interviewers and, in some cases, validated by a limited number of in-depth interviews.

The use of responses from the surveys is based on three assumptions:

1. Our choice of high ranking officials (department heads) in core administrations is based on the assumption that they are in a relatively more privileged position to understand structures, processes and power in government. Nevertheless, we are of course mindful of the pitfalls associated with selecting by position and asking reputation related questions.⁴
2. We assume that our respondents are telling the truth (about how 'things really are') or that there is a systematic deviation from the truth among all sectors and countries.⁵
3. We also assume that the subset of respondents (or the answers they provided) represents a critical case subset (and not a sample) of the answers we would have obtain if we had asked the total population of government officials.

Sectoral Governance

Below we report the results of the survey as it relates to sectoral differences. First, we look into the exposure of different types of administrations to the perceived peak organizations in society and to international actors. Second, we explore the autonomy of the different types of administrations in relation to their political and administrative superiors. Third, we look into the kinds of obstacles the administrations face when implementing policies.

Exposure to demands from peak organizations.

Table 1 reports the activity of organizations in society vis-à-vis state administrations, as experienced by the ministries. Following the OECD classification, we distinguish between three sets of state society relations: information (a one-way relationship where government provide information to society), consultation (a two-way relation in which society provides feedback to government, but where government sets the agenda), and participation (partnership and policy dialogue) (OECD,

2001). Below we consider and merge the two latter categories because of the inability in the present survey to distinguish empirically between cases of consultation and participation. Providing a valid measurement of the ‘organized interests’ or ‘interests’ in society, we are obviously very much dependent upon how this term, in different translations and national institutional contexts, was understood by our respondents. Referring to Jones’ (2000) classification in his treatise on organized interests in post-soviet Georgia, interest groups, as we intended, essentially were perceived as either legitimate organizations or indigenous or transnational non-governmental organizations. Amorphous interest groups, exposed by individual grievances or patronage networks, were not perceived as belonging to these categories.

Table 1: Pressure from outside actors by sectoral type (Percent).

	Sectoral regulatory functions (Type 1)	Production functions (Type 2)	General regulatory functions (Type 3)	Intra-government coordination functions (Type 4)	Presidential administration (Type 5)
Often	17,4	11,0	12,3	16,9	5,9
Sometimes ¹	34,8	28,2	29,7	34,7	20,7
Rarely or never	47,8	60,8	58,1	48,4	73,4
Total (percent)	100	100	100	100	100
Total (N)	161	209	155	213	203

1. Answers to the category; “Often, but only concerning really important issues” are included in the category “Sometimes”

*The observed significance level for the Pearsons Chi-square value of 37, 608 is 0,000 (2-sided).

* 14 missing cases distributed evenly among the ministries/departments.

Responses to question 24: “Have you ever felt under pressure from outside actors (non-state organizations , peak level business etc.) to change the existing new legislation?”

As seen from Table 1 it would be a mistake to generally describe society as docile. In addition, the results confirm our expectation that type 1 ministries (with sectoral regulatory functions) are prime targets. It is however surprising that type 4 ministries (with intra-government coordination functions) come second. Actors in society seem to reach high in the administrative hierarchy when attempting to influence decision-making.

Table 2 reports experienced pressure from international actors. The sectoral ministries demonstrate the same tendencies as domestic actors do: executives in type 1 and type 4 ministries feel most exposed to pressures from international actors. Hence old habits not only survive in the domestic context but also among international actors!

Table 2. Frequency of contacts with interest organizations by sectoral type (Percent).

	Sectoral regulatory functions (Type 1)	Production functions (Type 2)	General regulatory functions (Type 3)	Intra-government coordination functions (Type 4)	Presidential administration (Type 5)
Yes	41.6	31.1	41.7	39.7	19.6
No	58.4	68.9	58.3	60.3	80.4
Total (N)	161	209	156	214	204
Total (Percent)	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

Responses to question 22: “During your time in government, did foreign actors try to influence policy and regulations in your ministry?”

The clearest indication that consultation and participation are not unknown concepts in the post-communist world comes from table 3 reporting the frequency of contacts with interest organizations. First, nearly all countries report a very high interaction rate with organized institutions, although the average rate is highest in Central Europe, and Central Asia is higher than The Baltics and Caucasus. The interaction differentiated by type of ministries indicate the expected picture with types 1 and 2 ministries being closer to organizations than types 3 and 4, although differences are not significant. The presidential administrations are close to the type 4 administrations.

Table 3. Contact with outside actors by sectoral type (Percent).

	Sectoral regulatory functions (Type 1)	Production functions (Type 2)	General regulatory functions (Type 3)	Intra-government coordination functions (Type 4)	Presidential administration (Type 5)
Yes, most of the time	55,7	47,1	43,1	44,9	42,8
Yes, on important issues	35,4	45,6	41,8	42,0	42,8
No	8,9	7,4	15,0	13,2	14,4
Total (percent)	100	100	100	100	100
Total (N)	158	204	153	205	201

* The observed Pearson Chi-square value of 13,725 is 0,089, which implies that we cannot reject the null hypothesis of independence at a 0,05 significance level.

*Note: 34 missing cases distributed evenly among the ministries.

Responses to question 26: ‘Do civil servants in your ministry have close working relationships with major interest organizations within the ministry’s resort?’

Also the reasons given in response to open questions in relation to close interaction reveal a picture similar to what we may hear from Western officials: functional need for additional information and perspectives and better prospects for implementation if concerned interests are involved in the policy stage; political need to ‘appease social unrests’ (Polish respondent) and communicate policies to the public.

On the mode of state-society interaction (Table 4) institutionalized interaction is most prevalent in ministries with sectoral regulatory functions. For the presidential administrations the picture is more complex. In the more liberal systems (Kyrgyzstan, Mongolia and Georgia) 56, 82 and 46 percent of respondents in presidential administrations claim that institutional fora exist for

interaction with organization, while none reported this form of interaction in Armenia and Azerbaijan. In general, presidential administrations place greater emphasis on informal networks.

Table 4. State-society interaction by sectoral type (Percent).

	Sectoral regulatory functions (Type 1)	Production functions (Type 2)	General regulatory functions (Type 3)	Intra-government coordination functions (Type 4)	Presidential administration (Type 5)
Institutional forum for discussion and cooperation	42,0	34,3	29,9	31,6	31,2
Institutional forums on ad hoc basis	37,8	35,4	29,9	29,3	12,2
Informal forums depending on character of the case	20,2	30,4	40,2	39,1	56,6
Total (percent)	100	100	100	100	100
Total (N)	119	181	127	133	189

* The observed significance level for the Pearson Chi-square value of 58,002 is 0,000 (2-sided),

*102 missing cases of which the type of ministry/department Intra-government coordination functions has 39 missing Responses to question 28a: *“In which form is/was the concerned interests incorporated or consulted in the process of formulation?”*

In conclusion, our initial expectation was that line ministries with sectoral regulatory or production functions would be more exposed to demands and influence from peak organizations than ministries with general or internal regulatory functions – including presidential administrations. The picture presented by the data, however, deviates from these expectations. While the high exposure of the sectoral regulatory ministries (type 1 administrations) is in accordance with our expectations, it is surprising that also type 4 and type 5 administrations (internal regulatory and presidential administrations) score relatively high. A first explanation could be that we here witness the expected institutional path dependency: the attempt by external actors to reach high in the administrative hierarchy when they advocate their cause is a legacy of the incumbent centralized communist systems.

Administrative autonomy

Table 5 illustrates the perceived institutional autonomy of the sectoral administrations. Autonomy was calculated as the percentage of respondents within the administration who referred to their own minister as the most important decision-maker for activities – in contrast to those who named either other institutions or political actors. The table shows the autonomy of presidential administrations – but also that administrations with production functions continue the established practice of relative autonomy from outside interference.

Table 5. Institutional autonomy by sectoral type (Percent).

	Sectoral regulatory functions (Type 1)	Production functions (Type 2)	General regulatory functions (Type 3)	Intra-government coordination functions (Type 4)	Presidential administration (Type 5)
No autonomy	41.6	31.1	41.7	39.7	19.6
Autonomy	58.4	68.9	58.3	60.3	80.4
Total (N)	161	209	156	214	204
Total (Percent)	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

* The observed significance level for the Pearson Chi-square value of 30,926 is 0,000 (2-sided),

Recoding of question 29.1: “Who is the most important formal decisionmaker affecting decisions in your ministry?”.

Implementation

It would be an understatement to describe implementation as 'difficult'. In our survey we confronted the interviewees with 8 implementation problems commonly discussed within the literature (Hogwood and Gunn, 1984). Of the 888 interviewees that responded to these questions only 0.7 percent did not recognize any of the problems, while 2.3 percent of respondents were familiar with the full range of problems associated with making policy work on the ground. On average, 3 problems were recognized.

These results are listed in Table 6, which shows the distribution on the number of problems recognized by country subset. The table also is also evidence that total number and average number of implementation problems reported vary from country to country. Implementation thus appears to run more smoothly in Armenia with an average of 1.6 than in the Czech Republic, where the administration is in severe distress, reporting an average of 4.8 problems.

Table 6. Number of implementation problems by country.

Number of problems	Estonia	Lithuania	Hungary	Kazakhstan	Kyrgyzstan	Mongolian	Poland	Georgia	Armenia	Azerbaijan	Moldova	Slovenia	Czech Republic	Bulgaria	Total
0			6.3						1.0		2.5	2.0			0.7
1	6.0	7.5	6.3	13.3	19.4	13.7	5.6	28.0	58.0	28.0	16.5	3.9	2.3	7.9	19.4
2	26.0	13.2	9.4	20.0	13.9	27.5	11.1	24.0	30.0	32.0	17.7	13.7	4.7	27.6	22.1
3	24.0	17.0	21.9	30.0	44.4	32.4	22.2	23.0	7.0	35.0	31.6	15.7	16.3	27.6	24.8
4	12.0	22.6	28.1	20.0	5.6	11.8	41.7	19.0	3.0	4.0	15.2	31.4	18.6	11.8	15.0
5	10.0	17.0	12.5	3.3	8.3	8.8	11.1	6.0	1.0	1.0	5.1	15.7	20.9	7.9	7.9
6	8.0	13.2	9.4	6.7	5.6	2.9	8.3				5.1	13.7	23.3	13.2	6.2
7	8.0	3.8	6.3			1.0					2.5	2.0	7.0	1.3	1.8
8	6.0	5.7		6.7	2.8	2.0					3.8	2.0	7.0	2.6	2.3
Total (N)	50	53	32	30	36	102	36	100	100	100	79	51	43	76	888
Total (Percent)	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
Mean	3.8	4.1	3.7	3.3	3.0	3.0	3.7	2.5	1.6	2.2	3.1	3.9	4.8	3.4	3.0

Recoding of 39.1-39.8 in to an additive index: “Have you experienced ... as an obstacle to having a policy implemented effectively in your ministry?”

Turning now to the type of administration, Table 7 shows less variation than expected. The differences between the types of administration unequivocally confirm our expectation that presidential administrations experience fewer obstacles than any other type of administration. However, with an average of 2.5 recognized obstacles the baseline is comparatively high. Agencies charged with sectoral regulations and those with production functions are above or at the overall mean. Thus, the deviance from the expectations is related to ministries that handle the internal coordination within governments.

Table 7. Number of implementation problems by country.

Number of problems	Sectoral regulatory functions (Type 1)	Production functions (Type 2)	General regulatory functions (Type 3)	Intra-government coordination functions (Type 4)	Presidential administration (Type 5)	Total
0		0.5	1.4	1.6		0.7
1	15.6	19.5	16.3	16.9	26.6	19.4
2	19.7	22.0	23.1	19.7	25.1	22.0
3	21.8	21.0	27.2	17.5	35.0	24.7
4	21.1	15.5	17.0	15.8	8.4	15.1
5	10.2	9.5	6.8	10.9	2.0	7.7
6	6.8	8.0	6.8	8.7	1.5	6.3
7	2.0	2.5		3.8	0.5	1.8
8	2.7	1.5	1.4	4.9	1.0	2.3
Total (N)	147	200	147	183	203	880
Total (Percent)	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
Mean	3.3	3.1	3.0	3.5	2.5	3.1

Recoding of 39.1-39.8 in to an additive index: “Have you experienced ... as an obstacle to having a policy implemented effectively in your ministry?”

A separate test in which the intra-governmental coordination units are narrowed down to the ECOFIN ministries, that is, the Ministry of Finance and the Ministry of Economics, shows that these alone have encountered an average of 3.6 problems.⁶ The ECOFIN ministries thus appear not only to be burdened but also to be a distinct group type among the ministries. It is quite understandable because ECOFIN ministries are typically responsible for administrative and budgetary oversight. Moreover, when respondents are asked to name a core agency within government, they very often name the Ministry of Finance.⁷ In addition to this explanation many of the implementation problems encountered deal with monitoring and evaluation, coordination and information and the perceived lack of understanding and agreement among the partners involved in implementing a policy. This is clearly reflected in Table 8 that reports the specific implementation problems mentioned.

Table 8. Type of implementation problem by sectoral type (Percent).

	Sectoral regulatory functions (Type 1)	Production functions (Type 2)	General regulatory functions (Type 3)	Intra-government coordination functions (Type 4)	Presidential administration (Type 5)	Total	Total (N)
Inadequate resources	86.9	89.6	83.1	80.4	84.7	85.0	889
Lack of understanding /agreement	38.4	36.0	26.4	32.1	24.1	31.3	886
Poor policy design	34.7	27.5	29.1	33.2	19.7	28.4	885
Lack of coordination and information	48.7	51.5	52.0	61.4	44.3	51.5	887
Lack of monitoring and evaluation	36.8	33.5	35.4	38.0	28.1	34.1	886
Insufficiently specified tasks	22.9	20.5	19.6	31.0	9.4	20.4	888
Interference from outside actors	28.1	19.0	15.5	31.1	8.9	20.2	887
Insufficient staff motivation	39.9	36.0	36.1	39.1	26.1	35.1	887

Responses to questions 39.1-39.8: *“Have you experienced any of the following as an obstacle to implementation?”*

At first glance it is not surprising that the most commonly mentioned obstacle across all types of administration is lack of adequate resources. This partly reflects the realities of transition and the dire state of the economies, and partly the automatic response of administrators and politicians when questioned about policy failures. However, as we expected, resources present a greater problem for agencies with production functions and for those charged with sectoral regulation than for other types of administration. A second glance reveals that there are both differences and similarities across the types of administration. For example, lack of coordination and information among agencies is the second most frequently identified obstacle, not only by all but also in each type of administration. However, stark contrasts can also be found. Lack of coordination and information are high on the agenda in the coordinating ministries. With more than 60 percent specifically mentioning this obstacle, there is almost a 10 point difference compared to the ministries responsible for general regulation. Since presidential administrations, in countries where such exist, are generally preoccupied with the higher echelons and grand designs of policy, it is not surprising that few identify insufficiently specified tasks as an obstacle. Not specifying tasks may even be a strategy that helps protect the administration in case of policy failure, in the sense that the ‘do-gooders’ in the administration simply have been let down by the agencies charged with realizing the plans.

In conclusion, the patterns described above demonstrate that not only is there a high degree of similarity in the problems across the type of administrations. There are also important differences that reflect the tasks associated with the type of administration. As expected, presidential administrations face fewer implementation problems than any other type of administration, but the number of implementation problems indicates that presidential administrations still meddle in

specific policies. Administrations with regulatory and production functions face numerous obstacles in implementation, but in particular the ECOFIN ministries deviate from the expected pattern. That is, the number of problems associated with administrative oversight and coordination, in effect setting up a core agency within government, is apparently not a smooth process. Resistance from other agencies that also complain about interference from outside and lack of coordination could be part of the explanation. Finally, there are differences among the countries with respect to the numbers of obstacles encountered in implementation. Whether, and if so, how these differences can be explained is explored in the next section.

EU-accession and governance

The starting point for the evaluation and the pressure to reform stems from the Copenhagen criteria for membership, which intertwine democracy and human rights with a functioning market economy and the ability to undertake the obligations of membership. The Madrid declaration (1995) took the requirements a step further by stipulating that the accession country must adjust its administrative structure not only to transpose community legislation but, even more importantly, to implement legislation effectively through appropriate administrative and judicial structures. As the enlargement came closer the European Commission have, however, become more concerned, reflecting that the European project might fail if common standards are not assured (Pedersen and Johannsen, forthcoming 2004) and they thus continuously monitored developments in order to press for change. The 2002 progress report (sec(2002)1400-1412) notes that progress in general has been made with respect to the education and status of civil servants and specifically in terms of separation of the political and administrative spheres of responsibility, transparency and access to public information.

However, and as Nunberg (2000, p. 68) makes clear, the European Commission has neither formulated standards, nor clarified the means by which they are to be attained. As the countries face a dual administrative challenge stemming from the need to manage the process of accession and to lift the general level of administrative capacity in order to enter on an 'equal footing' with the current members and the continuous monitoring from the Commission, there is good reason to believe that the process itself and the prospect of not passing the threshold have changed the administrative landscape in the accession-countries.

The different criteria nevertheless lead us to form expectations in relation to the administrations' relations to interests in society, the degree of autonomy perceived within the different departments and the implementation problems encountered. In doing so we are aware that correlation is not causation, and that the differences between acceding and non-acceding countries are partly due to the pre-selection of the European Union, that is, the acceding countries already possessed some characteristics (economically, socially, politically) that made them likely candidates. However, as demonstrated in the previous section, the flip side is that the task dependency among all post-communist countries remains high and hence neither national nor subgroup differences tell the whole story.

First, we expect that the administrations in the accession countries, if only to demonstrate consensus and consolidation of democracy, will develop numerous contact points with interests in society. Whether these contacts are institutionalized will depend more on national tradition and the legacy of communism than on the prospect of becoming a member of the European Union. Second, we expect the departments in the acceding countries to have less autonomy than those in the non-acceding countries as the demand to develop the capacity needed to steer the EU

integration process is in effect also a demand to strengthen intra-government coordination. Third, we expect that the number of implementation obstacles is significantly higher in the acceding countries than in the non-acceding countries. Not because the EU-Candidates are not as good at realizing policies on the ground as their compatriots further to the east, but simply because the project of European integration is more far reaching than any project found in the other countries. Moreover, given the emphasis on implementation capacity by the Commission one could also expect the acceding countries to espouse greater awareness about the actual obstacles.

Exposure

The administrators and ministers in the EU-accession countries to a greater extent feel the heat from non-state actors, be they domestic or foreign (Tables 9 and 10). Thus, 28 percent of the interviewees in the EU-accession countries respond that they have been pressed by outside actors to initiate new legislation, and more than 65 percent recognize that foreign actors have tried to influence policy and regulation. In comparison, less than 5 percent have felt under pressure from NGOs and (only) one third in the non-accession countries have experienced pressure from foreign actors.

Table 9. Pressure from outside actors in EU and Non-EU countries (Percent).

	EU	Non EU	Total
Often	28.2	4.8	12.7
Often, but not concerning really important issues	6.5	2.9	4.1
Sometimes	40.6	17.4	25.2
Rarely	13.6	17.7	16.3
Never	11.1	57.3	41.6
Total (N)	323	628	951
Total (Percent)	100.0	100.0	100.0

Responses to question 24: “Have you ever felt under pressure from outside actors (non-state organizations, peak level business etc.) to change the existing new legislation?”

Table 10. Frequency of contacts with interest organizations in EU and Non-EU countries (Percent).

	EU	Non EU	Total
Yes	65.6	33.4	43.1
No	34.4	66.6	56.9
Total (N)	270	628	898
Total (Percent)	100.0	100.0	100.0

Responses to question 22: “During your time in government, did foreign actors try to influence policy and regulations in your ministry?”

These figures imply that the much-talked-about civil society is indeed active and that the EU and other international actors have sought influence to a much greater extent in the EU-accession countries. This is to be expected as the accession process is, after all, not only integration but also adaptation to EU formulated and preset standards.

Proactive non-state actors in the accession countries have, however, been less successful in institutionalizing cooperation with the administration. Thus, there is little difference, and the margin of error is actually in favor of the non-accession countries when judging about

whether the administration have close working relationships with major interests organizations (Table 11) and whether this cooperation is institutionalized (Table 12).

Table 11. Contact with outside actors in EU and Non-EU countries (Percent).

	EU	Non EU	Total
Yes, most of the time	40.2	49.7	46.6
Yes, but only concerning important issues	43.5	40.6	41.5
No	16.3	9.7	11.9
Total (N)	306	626	932
Total (Percent)	100.0	100.0	100.0

Responses to question 26: *‘Do civil servants in your ministry have close working relationships with major interest organizations within the ministry’s resort?’*

Table 12. State-society interaction in EU and Non-EU countries (Percent).

	EU	Non EU	Total
Institutional forum for discussion and cooperation	32.2	34.7	34.1
Institutional forums on ad hoc basis	31.1	26.6	27.6
Informal forums depending on character of the case	36.7	38.7	38.2
Total (N)	177	579	756
Total (Percent)	100.0	100.0	100.0

Responses to question 28a: *‘In which form is/was the concerned interests incorporated or consulted in the process of formulation?’*

In sum, the administrations in EU accession countries are under increased pressure, not only from domestic but also foreign actors, but the channels and the routines that allow the administration to cope with such pressure are perhaps undeveloped. This pressure may hence contribute to creating a critical juncture where paths are broken.

Autonomy

As the communist party used to be the de facto coordinator of government, one challenge for the post-communist governments has been to create the necessary institutions at the centre of government to coordinate and formulate policy (Nunberg, 2000, p. 2). As pointed out by Johannsen (2004), the Ministry of Finance has in the EU-accession countries come to serve as a core ministry that frequently interferes in the work of other ministries. With the recreation of a coordinating unit of sufficient strength to overcome the segregation into various portfolios and chiefdoms and to generally oversee that the accession criteria are observed, including the ability to sustain a commitment for the political and economic union, it is quite understandable that the interviewees in the accession countries feel less autonomous than their colleagues further to east (Table 13).

Table 13. Institutional autonomy in EU and Non-EU countries (Percent).

	EU	Non EU	Total
No autonomy	43.4	29.0	33.9
Autonomy	56.6*	71.0*	66.1
Total (N)	325	630	955
Total (Percent)	100.0	100.0	100.0

*The proportion difference is significant at the 0.05 level.

Recoding of question 29.1: “Who is the most important formal decisionmaker affecting decisions in your ministry?”.

Implementation

The EU countries do feel the pressure for change. The number of obstacles experienced in the process of implementation in the accession countries is on averages 4.0 compared to 2.6 among the non-accession interviewees (Table 14), and as evident from Table 15, there is a significant difference on virtually all hindrances. The two Eastern Europes’ agree only with respect to the lack of resources, a fundamental problem.

Table 14. Number of implementation problems in EU and Non-EU countries.

Number of problems	EU	Non EU	Total
0	1.1	0.5	0.7
1	5.3	25.4	19.4
2	13.6	25.7	22.1
3	19.2	27.1	24.8
4	24.9	10.8	15.0
5	14.7	5.0	7.9
6	12.8	3.4	6.2
7	4.5	0.6	1.8
8	3.8	1.6	2.3
Total (N)	265	623	888
Total (Percent)	100.0	100.0	100.0
Mean	4.0*	2.6*	3.0

*The mean difference is significant at the 0.05 level.

Recoding of 39.1-39.8 in to an additive index: “Have you experienced ... as an obstacle to having a policy implemented effectively in your ministry?”

The differences can partly be explained by the progress already made by the EU-accession countries. The demand for change and the number of new (EU) policies are far greater in the accession countries. These countries have to a much higher degree had to introduce policies, regulations and institutions that have roots in neither their own societies, nor in their communist past but originate in the Western EU-countries. In this sense the numerous problems associated with implementation are to be expected, but they are probably also evidence of both progress and awareness. Ultimately, the implementation of the EU-policies provides a catalyst for reform and administrative capacity building, not only because of the scale of the project but also because the administration may easily be squeezed if it fails to deliver in the eyes of the two constituencies, the electorate and the monitoring eye of the Commission.

Table 15. Type of implementation problem in EU and Non-EU countries (Percent).

	EU	Non EU	Total	Total (N)
	239	524	763	897
Inadequate resources	88.2	83.7	85.1	
Lack of understanding /agreement	122 45.2*	160 25.6	282 31.5	894
Poor policy design	100 37.3*	153 24.5	253 28.3	893
Lack of coordination and information	174 64.4*	286 45.8	460 51.4	895
Lack of monitoring and evaluation	133 49.3*	172 27.6	305 34.1	894
Insufficiently specified tasks	89 32.8*	93 14.9	182 20.3	896
Interference from outside	102 37.8*	77 12.3	179 20.0	895
Insufficient staff motivation	127 47.0*	187 29.9	314 35.1	895

*The proportion difference between EU and non EU is significant at the 0.05 level.

Responses to questions 39.1-39.8: *“Have you experienced any of the following as an obstacle to implementation?”*

Conclusion

This paper addressed three issues about sectoral governance in post-communist countries. First, we developed a typology of central administration to make cross-sectional comparison across countries meaningful and feasible. Applying this typology, we asked whether different types of sectoral governance (what we term ‘task dependency’) developed under the incumbent regimes are still alive under the changed political and economic circumstances. Third, we asked if the EU accession strategy has been effective in breaking the path dependencies of public administrations in the new and acceding EU-member states with a communist past. Drawing on the results from a survey among high ranking civil servants and politicians in 15 post-communist, countries the paper first demonstrates that institutional path and task dependencies in public administrations persist. The subset of countries show significant differences between how 5 types of public administrations relate to peak organizations in society, in their degree of internal administrative autonomy and in the scope and character of the obstacles they face during policy implementation. Second, when the subset of countries is divided between those who have acceded (or are acceding) to the EU and those who do not have that prospect, the survey results indicate that the EU acceding countries are in the process of breaking the bonds of the past: they do have numerous interactions with organizations in society but not very institutionalized, departments have lesser autonomy, reflecting the existence of (stronger) coordinating units within government, and they are up against a greater number of complex implementation issues because they have launched new policies and procedures. The results indicate that the EU strategy of ‘soft’ conditionality is effective in promoting administrative change in the new and prospective member states.

Notes

1. The DEMSTAR Program, Democracy, the State, and Administrative Reform, was launched by the Danish Social Science Research Council under its priority area 'Democracy, Institutional Change and Political Regimes'. Research activities were initiated in the spring of 2000 and will run until 2005. The program is based at the Department of Political Science, University of Aarhus, Denmark. See website: www.demstar.dk.
2. Homeostasis is one of the most remarkable and most typical properties of highly complex open systems. A homeostatic system (an industrial firm, a large organization, a cell) is an open system that maintains its structure and functions by means of a multiplicity of dynamic equilibriums rigorously controlled by interdependent regulation mechanisms. Such a system reacts to every change in the environment, or to every random disturbance, through a series of modifications of equal size and opposite direction to those that created the disturbance. The goal of these modifications is to maintain the internal balances. (Principia Cybernetica Web: <http://pespmc1.vub.ac.be/HOMEOSTA.html>)
3. Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Moldova, The Czech Republic, Hungary, Slovenia, Bulgaria, Georgia, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Mongolia,
4. As summarized by Putnam (1976), such weaknesses may arise if the informants have no access to inside information, or if the knowledge is limited to a particular sphere of public affairs, because they may then 'innocently purvey a distorted picture of power relations. Moreover, informants are often more confused than social scientists about what power is and who has it. More cautious reputational analysts ask their informants only about influence relations they have personally witnessed, but the reconstruction of overall patterns of power from a myriad of such individual reports remains a terrifically complex task' (pp. 16-17).
5. We further assume that if they provide honest answers (compared to other sources of information) in relation to sensitive questions (for example corruption), they will also be honest in relation to less sensitive issues. When we compared the corruption estimate in our survey it correlates with the corruption estimate in the Nations in Transit Report. The ordinal correlation is 0.6, with a P-value of 0.009. Based on these criteria our responses seem, when Azerbaijan and Armenia are excluded, to be reliable.
6. N = 85.
7. See Johannsen (2004) for a calculation of the effective number of core agencies.

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