

Overcoming dysfunctional integration through domestic administrative capacity building: a new approach to Europeanization

Abstract

Following the collapse of the communist regime in the Central and Eastern European (CEE) countries, the European Union (EU) has engaged in supporting administrative reforms and administrative capacity-building to assist the CEE countries 'catch-up' with the more developed Western countries. Considering the administrative discrepancies between the Western and Eastern models of administration, how are the Western-inspired principles of administration received by the post-communist administrations and societies? How does that shape the relations between Western and Eastern countries, both at an intergovernmental and supranational level? If successful, the EU's actions of domestic capacity-building can lead to an 'ever closer union' that would share common values, norms and standards. This vision of 'more integration, more federation' could bring about functional integration, could make the union resilient in times of crises and could bring the European peoples to a common ground of shared values and principles. Despite the Commission's active role in this field, which is traditionally so important to state sovereignty, there is a paucity of academic literature in this area, which I seek to address through this research. Based on preliminary findings, I argue that the Commission is deploying a 'convergence toolkit' in the new EU member states, candidate states and Eastern neighbourhood states, in order to reform them to a level that is in accordance with the European principles of public administration. Assessing the reception of the 'convergence toolkit' at the domestic level will give an understanding of the degree of 'receptivity' and 'permeability' of the domestic administrative systems to the norms, standards and practices that are advanced by the Commission. The ultimate goal of this research project is to grasp the implications that the Commission's actions with respect to public administration reform can have both at the domestic and supranational levels, both within and without the EU's borders. This will eventually provide a snapshot of how the EU can today wield power and achieve institutional change in subtle, but far-reaching ways, and of the very real impact that the bloc can have on the lives of millions of both EU and non-EU citizens.