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**European Integration and Social Policy from an East Central European  
Perspective**

in Arnd Bauerkämper und Hartmut Kaelble, Hrsg., Gesellschaften in der  
europäischen Integration seit den 1950er Jahren. Migration – Konsum –

Sozialpolitik – Repräsentationen

Stuttgart: Franz Steiner Verlag, 2012, 123-132.

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# **Gesellschaft in der europäischen Integration seit den 1950er Jahren**

Migration – Konsum – Sozialpolitik –  
Repräsentationen

Geschichte

*SGEI – SHEI – EHIE*

Franz Steiner Verlag



## EUROPEAN INTEGRATION AND SOCIAL POLICY FROM AN EAST CENTRAL EUROPEAN PERSPECTIVE

BÉLA TOMKA

The role of the European Union in the social sphere and the prospects of a European social policy have become a matter for intensive academic debates.<sup>1</sup> According to the pessimistic view, social policy has always been a handmaiden to economic objectives in the European Union and its predecessors, and emerging EU-level social policy was a spillover from economic policies. Within the EU social matters are still primarily national responsibilities. Even nowadays, there exists no EU social law on the basis of which citizens could receive benefits from the EU; accordingly, there exists no taxation or social security contributions to the EU in order to finance welfare schemes; even welfare bureaucracy is largely nonexistent in Brussels. In short, the EU has hardly any means to legislate and implement social policies without the active role of the member states.

On the other hand, it has been argued that the role of the EU is primarily regulative. In this respect European social policy has been extended and differentiated considerably over time, in fact, it is the dynamics of this process that was really remarkable. The last two decades were by far the most active period in terms of both the treaty based extension of the range of competences of the EU and the number of social directives. As far as the prospects are concerned, the European Court of Justice has already significantly broadened the range of EU social law, in addition, further development can be anticipated in that direction. Besides, the EU has increasing resources available for welfare purposes: the budget of the European Social Fund has considerably grown and it has a real impact on employment projects in member states. In sum, several experts argue plausibly that the status of the national welfare states is affected by this process of European social policy integration, that is, both the sovereignty and the autonomy of member states are influenced in social policy matters to a large extent.

The two views can easily be compromised. Although national social policies are steadily becoming more and more European, the actual size of this "European share" is still undoubtedly modest. However, if we accept the suggestion that the role of the EU is primarily regulative, there arises a need to include national welfare states in the welfare history of the EU. In that way the perspective on European social policy becomes much broader: the problematique of convergence versus divergence between the welfare states in Europe, the existence of

1 Leibfried, Stephan/Pierson, Paul (eds.), *European Social Policy: Between Fragmentation and Integration*. Washington, DC 1995; Leibfried/Pierson, *Prospects for Social Europe*, in: *POLITICS AND SOCIETY* 20 (1992), p. 333-366; Rhodes, Martin/Mény, Yves, *Europe's Social Contract under Stress*, in: Martin Rhodes/Yves Mény, *The Future of European Welfare. A New Social Contract?*, Basingstoke 1998, p. 1-19; Ferrera, Maurizio./Hemerijck, Anton/Rhodes, Martin, *The Future of the European Social Model in the Global Economy*, in: *JOURNAL OF COMPARATIVE POLICY ANALYSIS* 3/2 (2001), p. 163-190; Falkner, Gerda, *EU Social Policy in the 1990s: Towards a Corporatist Policy Community*, London 1998; Scharpf, Fritz W., *Governing Europe: Effective and Democratic?*, Oxford 1999.



the European Social Model, and even the social integration of Europe are perceived in a more general sense.<sup>2</sup> Obviously, this is not the place to discuss such complex issues. We can only refer to results published by H. Kaelble, F. Castles and others claiming that – at least in the 1970s and the 1980s – a convergence took place between Western European welfare states in important areas of welfare policy and even the use of the concept of European Social (Policy) Model can be justified.<sup>3</sup> Others have argued that this convergence resulted in a kind of merge between the corporatist and the social democratic welfare regimes.<sup>4</sup> This is a fortunate development if the reduction of poverty and inequality constitutes a priority, since according to recent results by W. Korpi and J. Palme, the combination of earnings related benefits and universalism appears to serve best the reduction of inequality.<sup>5</sup>

These debates and developments constitute the context of the paper. It may be of interest to see how the prospects and the process of the accession of East Central European states influenced the social dimension of the EU, and the welfare states in Western Europe and in East Central Europe (ECE). What response, if any, did this process induce from the EU and the member states as far as social policy is concerned? Did it strengthen convergence or divergence between the member states and the prospective members? How do the new members affect the perspectives of social convergence in the EU? These are some of the relevant and important questions to be answered. However, the goal of the paper is a more moderate one: it aims at exploring one aspect of these issues, that is, East Central European welfare development in relation to the European (social policy) integration. More precisely, the impact of the East Central European candidates and members on the EU's social dimension and the welfare sector of the Western European member states are issues we cannot deal with here.

Thus, focusing on the experience of Hungary, the Czech Republic, Slovakia and Poland, the paper will discuss whether East Central European states adopted any of the existing Western European welfare models/regimes after the collapse of communism. It will also consider the major determinants of welfare development and, among these factors, the role of the European Union in shaping the welfare landscape in ECE. At the beginning of the "triple" transformation in East Central Europe, there were diverse expectations by observers regarding the possible future of the region's welfare systems.<sup>6</sup> Nevertheless, most experts, includ-

2 Bouget, Denis, *Convergence in Social Welfare Systems: from evidence to explanations*, in: Hantrais, Linda (ed.), *Researching the European Social Model from a Comparative Perspective*. CROSS-NATIONAL RESEARCH PAPERS 7 (2003):1, 42-54; Tomka, Béla, *Western European Welfare States in the 20th Century: Convergences and Divergences in a Long-Run Perspective*, in: INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF SOCIAL WELFARE 12/4 (2003), p. 249-260.

3 Kaelble, Hartmut, *A Social History of Western Europe, 1880-1980*, Dublin 1990; Kaelble, Wie kam es zum Europäischen Sozialmodell?, in: JAHRBUCH FÜR EUROPA- UND NORDAMERIKA-STUDIEN 4 (2000), p. 39-53; Castles, Francis G., *The European Social Policy Model: Progress since the Early 1980s*, in: EUROPEAN JOURNAL OF SOCIAL SECURITY 3/4 (2002), p. 312-313.

4 Kosonen, Pekka Kosonen, *European Welfare State Models: Converging Trends*, in: International JOURNAL OF SOCIOLOGY 4 (1995), p. 81-110.

5 Korpi, Walter/Palme, Joakim, *Robin Hood, St Matthew, or simple egalitarian strategies of equality in welfare states*, in: Kennett, Patricia (ed.), *A Handbook of Comparative Social Policy*, Cheltenham 2004, p. 153-179.

6 Deacon, Bob, *Developments in East European social policy*, in: Jones, Catherine (ed.): *New perspectives on the welfare state in Europe*, London/New York 1993, p. 196.



ing G. Esping-Andersen, predicted the dominance of liberal regimes in East Central Europe in the near future.<sup>7</sup> If we look around in ECE now, we can see that the liberal scenarios had not been realized. Rather, mixed or hybrid welfare systems emerged with a high degree of volatility.<sup>8</sup>

The new systems were based on the interplay between diverse factors originating from the communist past. First of all, the legacy of communism in terms of welfare institutions was favourable for the emergence of hybrid systems. In post-Second World War East Central Europe a peculiar mix of welfare arrangements developed, that consisted not only of specific communist characteristics, but also features found in other – conservative and social democratic – regimes. As to the communist peculiarities, full-employment – in fact, a compulsory or forced employed status of the working-age population – was the basic institution of social welfare, even if it did not entirely prevail. Other important aspects of communist welfare included price subsidies for basic goods and services, and the system of social benefits offered by companies (fringe benefits) – both with altering significance over time and in space. However, Hungary and other countries of the region equally adopted the Bismarckian principles of social security at an early stage. Bismarckian traditions found their ways to the new welfare systems of the communist countries since they were consistent with important goals of the regimes, such as the mobilization of the labour force and the creation of work incentives. While these features had parallels in the conservative welfare regimes, the growing significance of the solidarity principle of the 1960s and 1970s in the area of qualifying conditions, paired with the rapid increase of the coverage, can be regarded as moves towards universality – a major feature of social democratic welfare regimes.<sup>9</sup>

This legacy had an impact on East Central Europe in the course of the transformation of the 1990s. The welfare system retained its mixed character but with a different composition. The communist features disappeared quickly and the mix of social democratic and conservative principles has prevailed.

These patterns were deeply rooted not only in the institutional framework of welfare services, but also in public attitudes. Recent empirical research on welfare preferences found that attitudes towards the welfare state are fairly similar across Europe, especially when we discuss state responsibility for social welfare.<sup>10</sup> In the realm of welfare spending, post-communist societies, on average,

7 Esping-Andersen, Gosta, *After the Golden Age? Welfare State Dilemmas in a Global Economy*, in: Esping-Andersen (ed.), *Welfare States in Transition. National Adaptations in Global Economies*, London 1996, p. 1-31; Ferge, Zsuzsa, *Social Policy Regimes and Social Structure*, in: Zsuzsa Ferge/Jon Eivind Kolberg (eds.), *Social Policy in a Changing Europe* Frankfurt/M. 1992, p. 220.

8 Lelkes, Orsolya, *A great leap towards liberalism? The Hungarian Welfare State*, in: INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF SOCIAL WELFARE 9 (2000), p. 94; Tomka, Béla, *The Politics of Institutionalized Volatility: Lessons from East Central European Welfare Reforms*, in: Inglot, Tomasz (ed.), *Fighting Poverty and Reforming Social Security: What Can Post-Soviet States Learn from New Democracies in Central Europe?* Washington, DC. 2007, 67-85; Tomka, *East Central Europe and the European Social Policy Model: A Long-Term View*, in: EAST EUROPEAN QUARTERLY 40 (2006), pp. 135-159.

9 Tomka, *Welfare in East and West: Hungarian Social Security in an International Comparison, 1918-1990*, Berlin 2004.

10 Ferge, Zsuzsa, *Social Policy Regimes and Social Structure*, in: Ferge, Zsuzsa/Kolberg, Jon Eivind (eds.), *Social Policy in a Changing Europe*, Frankfurt/M. 1992, p. 220; Ferge, *Is there a specific East-Central European welfare culture?*, in: van Oorschot, Wim/Opielka, Michael/Pfau-Effinger, Birgit (eds.), *Culture and Welfare State: Values of Social Policy from a Comparative Perspective*,



have a belief pattern of supporting expansion in welfare spending – even more than Western European societies. This approval is, of course, not independent of self-interest and socio-economic position, and varies according to different types of welfare programmes. The higher up the income scale the respondent is, the less likely he/she is to support extending welfare benefits. In spite of these peculiarities, polls say that the clear majority of the electorate in East Central Europe has favoured a combination of universalistic social welfare arrangements (especially in health care) and work-related benefits (cash benefits).

Notwithstanding the considerable path-dependency on welfare institutions and public attitudes supporting full-scale welfare state, liberal reforms and tendencies challenged the welfare status quo and led to a significant degree of volatility of the system. For example, the year 1995 in Hungary marked a watershed in the social welfare system when – as part of an austerity program – a significant curtailment of social benefits was carried out by the ex-communist (socialist/liberal) government followed by similar measures in the next years. However, there was no consensus about the direction of welfare reforms in the political elites. After the 1998 elections, the new government abolished several aspects of the liberal measures and reintroduced solidaristic principles and universal entitlements. In 2006, during the old-new government led by the ex-communist Hungarian Socialist Party, the pendulum swung again to the neoliberal direction generating massive public unrest. We can see similar developments in Slovakia including the abolition of the recently introduced co-payment in health-care and the partial reversal of the privatization of health-care institutions.<sup>11</sup>

As popular attitudes favour an extensive welfare state in the East Central European countries, liberal reforms and tendencies call for some clarification. Since Janos Kornai's dictum on the "premature welfare states" in East Central Europe, it has become customary to attribute economic difficulties in the transition states to the high level of welfare expenditures. As the argument goes, neoliberal reforms of the welfare sector (introduction of means-testing, privatization of services, etc.) are necessary to achieve a favourable growth record.<sup>12</sup> However, it is doubtful whether if the level of welfare expenditures were really high in East Central Europe compared to Western European countries. The relative size of the welfare states in the region can be classified as medium, and without the distorting effect of the massive informal economy, expenditures were even more moderate as percentage of the GDP. Besides, what is even more important, as

Cheltenham 2008, p. 156.

11 Inglot, Tomasz, *Historical Legacies, Institutions, and the Politics of Social Policy in Hungary and Poland, 1989-1999*, in: Ekiert, Grzegorz/Hanson, Stephen E. (eds.), *Capitalism and Democracy in Central and Eastern Europe. Assessing the Legacy of Communist Rule*, Cambridge 2003, p. 243; Förster, Michael F./Tóth, István György, *Családi támogatások és gyermekszegénység a kilencvenes években Csehországban, Magyarországon és Lengyelországban*, Budapest 1999, p. 26; Gábos, András, *Családok helyzete és családtámogatások a kilencvenes években*, in: Kolosi, Tamás/Tóth, István György/Vukovich, György (eds.), *Társadalmi Riport 2000*, Budapest 2000, p. 107-112; Deacon, Bob, *Eastern European welfare states: the impact of the politics of globalization*, in: JOURNAL OF EUROPEAN SOCIAL POLICY 10/2 (2000), p. 151; Müller, Katharina, *From the State to the Market? Pension Reform Paths in Central-Eastern Europe and the Former Soviet Union*, in: SOCIAL POLICY AND ADMINISTRATION 36/2 (2002), p. 159.

12 Kornai, János, *Reform of the welfare sector in the post-communist countries: a normative approach*, in: Nelson, Joan M./Tilly, Charles/Walker, Lee (eds.), *Transforming Post-Communist Political Economies*. Washington, D.C. 1997, pp. 272-298.



recent studies demonstrated, there is no necessary contradiction between extensive state welfare and economic development.<sup>13</sup> There are ample examples to prove the implausibility of this simple, economy-centred causal explanation in the post-communist world as well: on the one hand, Slovenia was able to combine relatively generous welfare provisions with a smooth and successful economic transition; on the other hand, Ukraine's growth performance was poor, despite the very low relative level of social expenditures. Even World Bank experts acknowledged retrospectively that the success of transition economies was not determined by their commitment to the Washington Consensus. Neoliberal reforms in the welfare sphere cannot be regarded as a precondition for successful economic transition.

Liberal welfare reforms are often attributed to real or perceived pressures coming from the international economy. Because of low labour costs the region has benefited from the growing internationalization of the economy so far. As a result, globalization cannot be considered as a major explanatory variable either.

The pressures of international agencies with a liberal agenda (IMF, World Bank) constitute a third major type of interpretation.<sup>14</sup> These pressures, however, offer only partial explanations, since the activity and influence of these institutions, especially from the mid-1990s on, have considerably declined over time in the region.<sup>15</sup>

At that point the role of the EU needs to be addressed in somewhat more detail. The direct impact of the EU on East Central European welfare started, for obvious reasons, at the beginning of the 1990s. In this decade the EU's social policy competence was extended and the EU's official communication emphasized that solidarity and cohesion belonged to the core values of the Union. In 1997, for example, the Commission declared that the European social model "is valued and should be consolidated. This model is based both on common values and the understanding that social policy and economic performance are not contradictory but mutually reinforcing. Highly developed social protection systems are a major component of this social model".<sup>16</sup>

Nevertheless, during the accession process the candidate countries had to conform to specific conditions defined by the so called "Copenhagen Criteria" (1993) that did not include social welfare issues. The social legislation to be adopted was specified by the Chapter on social policy of a White Paper issued by the Commission in 1995. The requirements fall within what is called labour law at the national level, and not within the field of social security: the main areas included health and safety at work, other working conditions, equality between

13 Lindert, Peter H., *Growing Public. Social Spending and Economic Growth Since the Eighteenth Century*. Vol. 1-2. Cambridge 2004; Lindert, *The Rise of Social Spending, 1880-1930*, in: *EXPLORATIONS IN ECONOMIC HISTORY* 31 (1994), pp. 1-37; Lindert, *What Limits Social Spending?*, in: *EXPLORATIONS IN ECONOMIC HISTORY* 33 (1996), pp. 1-34.

14 Deacon, Bob/Hulse Michelle, *The Making of Post-communist Social Policy: The Role of International Agencies*, in: *JOURNAL OF SOCIAL POLICY* 26/1 (1997), p. 60; Deacon, Bob, *Eastern European welfare states: the impact of the politics of globalization*, in: *JOURNAL OF EUROPEAN SOCIAL POLICY* 10/2 (2000), p. 151.

15 Potucek, Martin, *Accession and social policy: the case of the Czech Republic*, *JOURNAL OF EUROPEAN SOCIAL POLICY* 14/3 (2004), p. 265.

16 Commission of the European Communities, *Modernising and Improving Social Protection in the European Union*, Brussels 1997, p. 1.



women and men in the workplace, and social security provisions for migrant workers. Since Hungary and the other ECE countries had already fulfilled most of these formal requirements (except social security for migrant workers), no major legislation was necessary in these fields.<sup>17</sup>

The Social Policy Agenda issued in 2000 expanded on some of these points. It also emphasized the need for monitoring the implementation of the social and employment *acquis* by the candidate countries. Although, there were some ad hoc reports on the progress of candidate countries, the annual Regular Reports continued to be the main mechanisms of evaluation. Social welfare issues appeared only in a subchapter on "Employment and social affairs" in the Reports, and the subchapter only dealt with some welfare issues, such as the rights of disabled people or the Roma population, and the rate of employment. Undoubtedly, it initiated some positive changes in these areas. However, they are of minor significance as compared to the aspects of social welfare that were altogether missing in the Reports.<sup>18</sup>

The Reports elaborated on requirements in conflict with extensive public welfare services and were concerned with financial stability of the budgets and of the economies in general. To achieve economic growth and financial stability, the EU recommended tough fiscal policy as a major instrument and the reduction of the scope of social welfare schemes. The propositions implicitly put forward the need for privatization of public welfare assets and services.

The EU played a more important role in shaping regulations in health and safety at work and in some other rules affecting working conditions. However, they are much more difficult to implement and monitor than social security laws, since employees have to claim their rights vis-à-vis their employers on a daily basis while in the case of social security, claimants are usually confronted with public authorities. As a result, many of the EU regulations in working conditions were formally adopted by East Central European countries, but the local authorities cannot ensure their proper implementation.<sup>19</sup>

All in all, we can see a tension between, on the one hand, the formal commitment of the EU to the European Social Model and to the promotion of convergence between the member states in social welfare, and on the other hand, the EU's fairly passive behaviour in social policy matters during the accession negotiations with East Central European countries.

It seems that since the accession of the ECE countries, the EU has even more focused on the macroeconomic goals associated with the monetary union at the expense of social rights. On the basis of this tendency, in some East Central European countries there is a clear propensity for using the EU for "blame avoidance", that is, as an excuse for neoliberal reforms of the welfare system. In Hungary that policy has decisively contributed recently to a historical low in the popular support for EU institutions.

We have tried to argue that some of the explanations put forward by mainstream research on the determinants of welfare in post-communist ECE are not

17 Ferge, Zsuzsa/Juhász, Gábor, *Accession and social policy: the case of Hungary*, in: *Journal of EUROPEAN SOCIAL POLICY* 14/3 (2004), p. 248.

18 Potucek, *Accession and social policy: the case of the Czech Republic*, p. 263.

19 Vaughan-Whitehead, Daniel C., *EU Enlargement versus Social Europe?*, Cheltenham 2003, pp. 88-92.



sufficient. Instead, we wish to emphasize other factors related to the weakness of welfare recipients vis-à-vis other groups interested in the retrenchment of the welfare state.

Due to the lasting efforts of communist regimes to prevent the evolution of civil society and the persistence of traditional communities, institutions and values vital for the politics of social solidarity became weak – constituting one of the most significant social and cultural legacies of communism. Labour strength/weakness is a major relevant indicator here. The conventional proxies to measure labour strength are union density, strike rates, and the capacity of collective bargaining.<sup>20</sup>

Union membership was exceptionally high during communism, not as an expression of labour strength, but because trade unions functioned as “transmission belts” between communist parties and workers, and the party-state made membership practically compulsory and even attractive: several welfare programmes, such as summer holidays and social assistance, were administered by the trade unions. With the loss of these functions after the collapse of communism union coverage sharply declined. ILO-data are not reliable in this respect because they are based on self-reported figures of the trade unions, but there are survey-data available on unionization according to which the Western European average was 33.7% around 2000, while in Slovakia 27.9%, in the Czech Republic 24.1%, in Hungary 17.5%, in Poland 12.7% of the non-agricultural labour force belonged to trade unions (average 20.6%). The trend is falling in the region, and, in addition, the state sector is highly overrepresented in the membership. East Central European level of unionization has been not converging to, rather diverging from the Western European average in the last decade.<sup>21</sup>

Labour disputes – that is, strike intensity – constitute the next measure of labour strength. Comparative evidence is quite straightforward in that respect. The relative number of employees involved in strike activity is much lower in East Central Europe than in the Western part of the continent. The number of days not worked per thousand employees per year was around 11 in the four East Central European countries at the turn of the century, while in Western Europe it was around 100. It is true that low strike activity can reflect both labour strength with the ability of unions to secure material rewards for its members and the weakness of labour to be organized. Since real income fell sharply during the first

20 For these phenomena, see Pollert, Anna, *Labor and Trade Unions in the Czech Republic, 1989-2000*, in: Crowley, Stephen/Ost, David (eds.), *Workers after Worker's States. Labour and Politics in Postcommunist Eastern Europe*, Lanham 2001, pp. 13-36; Tóth, András, *The Failure of Social-Democratic Unionism in Hungary*, in: Crowley/Ost, *Workers after Worker's States*, pp. 37-58; Ost, David, *The Weakness of Symbolic Strength: Labor and Union Identity in Poland, 1989-2000*, in: Crowley/Ost, *Workers after Worker's States*, pp. 79-96; Ost, *The Weakness of Strong Social Movements: Models of Unionism in The East European Context*, in: *EUROPEAN JOURNAL OF INDUSTRIAL RELATIONS* 8/1 (2002), pp. 33-51; Frege, Carola M., *Understanding Union Effectiveness in Central Eastern Europe: Hungary and Slovenia*, in: *EUROPEAN JOURNAL OF INDUSTRIAL RELATIONS* 8/1 (2002), pp. 53-76.

21 Crowley, Stephen, *Explaining Labour Weakness in Post-Communist Europe*, in: *EAST EUROPEAN POLITICS AND SOCIETIES* 18/3 (2004), p. 400; Neumann, László, *Does Decentralized Collective Bargaining Have an Impact on the Labour Market in Hungary?*, in: *EUROPEAN JOURNAL OF INDUSTRIAL RELATIONS* 8/1 (2002), p. 12.



years of transition everywhere in ECE and relative income levels are still very low, the first line of argumentation seems to be implausible.<sup>22</sup>

The ratio of employees included in collective bargaining agreements was practically 100 per cent in communist times. These agreements were, however, formal. The coverage fell rapidly in the 1990s, well below the Western European level and amounted to some 43% as the average of three East Central European countries – we do not have data for Poland – while the comparable Western European ratio was 75%. Most of the agreements were reached not at the sectoral or at central, but at the company level, and are not negotiated, “but either defined unilaterally by employers or, following state socialist traditions, simply repeat the law.”<sup>23</sup> In addition, 37% of collective agreements in Hungary have no specifications of wages. The so-called wage premium for unionized workers, that is the wage margin these workers enjoy over their non-unionized fellow-workers, is 3 to 5%, almost negligible.<sup>24</sup>

All available information support the argument that labour is weak in East Central Europe. Labour weakness – coupled with the mixed features of welfare institutions – is a vital factor to explain why pressures for the residualization of the welfare state can persistently challenge the welfare status quo since 1990, resulting in considerable unsteadiness of the welfare arrangements.

Among the causes of labour weakness in East Central Europe the institutional and ideological legacy of communism has undoubtedly a robust explanatory power. The major trade unions have been associated with ex-communist parties and discredited, but at the same time they have exercised a crowding out effect against new, more credible trade unions.

However, one and a half decades after the collapse of communism, institutional inertia alone cannot convincingly explain why new unions were not established, or, more exactly, why the emerging new unions remained marginal and were unable to emancipate themselves to the old one(s) as well as revive trade unionism. That is why those complementary explanations can be plausible which relate to the weakness of civil society and such cultural characteristics of the population in East Central Europe as the low level of interpersonal trust in social institutions in general, and the lack of social capabilities that allow effective cooperation among members of groups and society at large. Frameworks and even concepts to grasp these features of East Central European societies are in their infancies in social sciences. Nonetheless, we can plausibly assume that these characteristics contribute to the low level of social solidarity and to the inability of labour to cooperate effectively and form trade unions.<sup>25</sup>

22 Tomka, *Social Solidarity in East Central Europe: Strong Welfare and Weak Labour?*, in: Magnusson, Lars/Stråth, Bo (eds.), *European Solidarities: Tensions and Contentions of a Concept*, Brussels 2007, p. 186.

23 Neumann, *Does Decentralized Collective Bargaining Have an Impact*, p. 12.

24 Crowley, *Explaining Labour Weakness in Post-Communist Europe*, p. 400.

25 Howard, Marc Morje, *The Weakness of Civil Society in Post-Communist Europe*, Cambridge 2003; For a more optimistic assessment of the strength of some segments of civil society in East Central Europe, see Petrova, Tsveta/Tarrow, Sidney, *Transactional and Participatory Activism in the Emerging European Polity*, (Forthcoming). For social capital in East Central Europe, see Seligman, Adam B./Füzér, Katalin, *The problem of trust and the transition from state socialism*, in: *COMPARATIVE SOCIAL RESEARCH* 14 (1994), pp. 193-221; Jan Delhey and Kenneth Newton: *Who trusts? The origins of social trust in seven societies*, in: *EUROPEAN SOCIETIES* 2 (2003), p. 5; Uslander, Eric M., *Trust and civic engagement in East and West*, in: Badescu, Gabriel/Uslander, Eric M.



In conclusion, the negotiations of the East Central European countries for accession had a sizeable impact on the democratization process in the region. Although, signs of "cognitive Europeanization"<sup>26</sup> can be traced in social policy as well, the direct role of the EU in shaping the welfare transformation in East Central Europe has been fairly limited so far. We can attribute more significance to other international agencies, and, first of all, to the legacy of communism including welfare institutions and attitudes of the population.<sup>27</sup> The inconsistency of values and attitudes of the population after the collapse of communism institutionalized the volatility of social policies. On the one hand, we can see the high popular acceptance of the states' welfare activities. On the other hand, the institutions of transforming these popular preferences into political action are weak. Besides, among welfare recipients important values are missing altogether that were instrumental in the development of the advanced welfare state of the late 20<sup>th</sup> century Western Europe. Consequently, these groups cannot act effectively enough in the political arena and cannot form class alliances. Therefore, the instability of the post-communist welfare arrangements does not simply follow from an assumed transition from the communist to the liberal welfare system. The volatility can be rather regarded as an "institutionalized" characteristic. So we can expect the persistence of instability in post-communist welfare policies. As a result, the new East Central European members have not become close relatives of any of the existing welfare regimes in Western Europe. Thus, they will add a new, volatile dimension to the blend of welfare systems in the European Union.

## ZUSAMMENFASSUNG

Der Aufsatz verfolgt die Frage, ob sich die ostmitteleuropäischen Länder nach der Wende einem der Wohlfahrtsregime, die in Westeuropa charakteristisch sind, anschlossen und ob die Integration europäischer Sozialpolitik durch diesen Prozess gefördert wurde. Die Rolle der Europäischen Union in der Formierung der Wohlfahrtslandschaft ostmitteleuropäischer Länder wird auch analysiert, während sich der Aufsatz in erster Linie auf die Erfahrungen von Ungarn basiert. Nach dem Hauptargument wurde keines der westeuropäischen Wohlfahrtsregime in Ostmitteleuropa adoptiert, sondern die Länder dieser Region entwickelten eigenartige Wohlfahrtshybride, die verschiedene Eigenschaften der konservativen, liberalen und sozialdemokratischen Regimetypen vermischten, und gleichzeitig auch erhebliche Unbeständigkeit aufwiesen. Auf dieser Art sind die

(eds.), *Social Capital and the Transition to Democracy*, London 2003, pp. 81-94; Gabriel, Oscar W. et al., *Sozialkapital und Demokratie. Zivilgesellschaftliche Ressourcen im Vergleich*, Wien 2002, p. 58. The concept of organizational weakness appears in Offe, Claus, *The politics of social policy in Eastern European transition: antecedents, agents, and agenda of reform*, in: *SOCIAL RESEARCH* 60/4 (1993), pp. 649-685.

- 26 Guillén, Ana M./Álvarez, Santiago, *The EU's Impact on the Spanish Welfare State: the Role of Cognitive Europeanization*, in: *JOURNAL OF EUROPEAN SOCIAL POLICY* 14/3 (2004), pp. 285-299.
- 27 For the concept of institutional path dependency in welfare, see Korpi, Walter, *Contentious Institutions: an Augmented Rational-actor Analysis of the Origins and Path Dependency of Welfare State Institutions in the Western Countries*, SWEDISH INSTITUTE FOR SOCIAL RESEARCH, WORKING PAPER 4/2000, Stockholm 2000.



Sozialsysteme der neuen ostmitteleuropäischen Mitglieder keine näheren Verwandten der Wohlfahrtsregime in Westeuropa. Obwohl die Zeichen der „kognitiven Europäisierung“ können in der Sozialpolitik der Region ausgewiesen werden, die direkte Rolle der Europäischen Union in der Transformation der Wohlfahrtsregime war ziemlich begrenzt. In der Formierung der Sozialpolitik kann anderen internationalen Faktoren eine größere Bedeutung zugeschrieben werden, aber besonders die Erbe des Kommunismus muss betont werden, die nicht nur die Wohlfahrtsinstitutionen, aber auch *social capabilities* der Bevölkerung und öffentliche Attitüden gegenüber dem Staat und Redistribution gestaltete.

## RÉSUMÉ

Focusant sur les expériences de la Hongrie, le papier vise à discuter si les pays d'Europe du Centre-Est ont adopté quelconque des modèles/régimes providentiels existants de l'Europe de l'Ouest après la chute de communisme, c'est-à-dire si l'intégration européenne des politiques sociales ont développé à cet égard. Le rôle de l'Union Européenne dans la formation du paysage social en Europe du Centre-Est était aussi considéré. Le papier prouve que les pays d'Europe du Centre-Est n'ont pas adopté des modèles providentiels de l'Europe de l'Ouest, plutôt ils ont développé un mélange particulier des régimes avec une volatilité considérable. Par conséquent, les nouveaux membres de l'Europe du Centre-Est n'ont pas devenu des proches relatives de quelconque des régimes providentiels existants de l'Europe de l'Ouest. Malgré que les signes de l'eupéennisation cognitive peut être tracé dans la politique sociale, le rôle direct de l'Union Européenne dans la formation de la transformation sociale en Europe du Centre-Est soit assez limité jusqu'ici. Dans l'émergence des nouveaux systèmes sociaux, nous pouvons attribuer plus de signification aux autres agences européennes et en premier lieu à l'héritage du communisme, sous-entendu les institutions providentielles, la capacité sociale de la population et les attitudes publiques à l'égard de l'état et de la redistribution.