THE INFLUENCE OF EU ACCESSION ON MINORITIES' STATUS IN EAST CENTRAL EUROPE

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Abstract

The comparative report analyses the individual cases which constituted the EUROREG project with the aims of: enhancing the existing knowledge on the nature of regional development, mobilization, ethnic minority politicization, and how these are reconfigured by European integration processes; examining how EU regional economic policies in EU member states affect patterns of political participation and economic activity of ethnic minorities, as well as their relations with national majorities, political parties and state administration; examining the ways in which human rights and minority protection policies in CESE accession states alter patterns of local political participation and regional economic activity of ethnic minorities, their relations with national majorities and political parties and state administration and compare the ways in which EU integration affects the regional mobilization and political representation of minorities and majorities, as well as national-ethnic identities and conceptions of 'Europe' in member states and CESE accession countries.

Key words

minorities, EU accession, regional development, minority-majority relations

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1. Aim of this paper

The aim of this paper is to compare EU accession countries involved in the EUROREG research, following the original objectives set out by the project:

1. To enhance and revise existing knowledge on the nature of regional development, mobilization, ethnic minority politicization, and how these are reconfigured by European integration processes.

2. To examine how EU regional economic policies in EU member states affect patterns of political participation and economic activity of ethnic minorities, as well as their relations with national majorities, political parties and state administration. We also seek to examine how minorities and majorities in regional-local institutions and development projects view their identification with a national or ethnic community, their rights and obligations as citizens of a state, and how they conceptualize 'Europe.'

3. To examine the ways in which *human rights and minority protection policies in CESE accession states* alter patterns of local political participation and regional economic activity of ethnic minorities, their relations with national majorities and political parties and state administration. We also seek to assess their identification with a national or ethnic community, their rights and obligations as citizens of a state, as well as how they conceptualize 'Europe.'

4. To compare the ways in which EU integration affects the regional mobilization and political representation of minorities and majorities, as well as national-ethnic identities and conceptions of 'Europe' in member states and CESE accession countries.

These objectives were detailed after a first round of case studies, leading to the main research aims of studying the political and economical effects of European accession on:

1. Minority group identity and mobilization, both at elite and group level

2. Political and economical status of minority groups under study.

3. Minority-majority relations, operationalized as patterns of cooperation, competition and cohabitation.

As this paper draws on previous work within this project on these cases, it will not reiterate the evidence presented in individual case studies, but further build on it. This paper draws on three kinds of sources for its data:

1. Qualitative research presented in individual case studies by Euroreg authors;

2. National and regional official statistics;

3. Quantitative analysis of public opinion data by the author, using accession countries' Eurobarometer 2003 information, and a Freedom House-Romanian Academic Society 2000 survey.

2. The cases

The original selection of Romania, Bulgaria and Slovakia was based on the good comparability of these countries, particularly that each hosts an important indigenous minority. The European Union invited all three to join only in the second wave of enlargement, at the 1999 Helsinki summit, after considering them politically and economically unfit for the first wave. Furthermore, they share a similar development pattern. For Romania, Bulgaria and Slovakia, parting with the heritage of their respective communist systems was more difficult than elsewhere in the region, mostly because they shared the features of late urbanization and recent Communist heavy industrialization.

In short, all three countries combine an old tradition of rural underdeveloped societies with a recent tradition of high Communist socioeconomic interventionism (the former causing the latter to a large extent). Their traditional political cultures can be qualified as "peasant" of the dependent or parochial

type, and by no means autonomous and "urban" – a feature they share with the rest of Eastern Europe[1]. Nevertheless, they were considered more "rural" and "backward" even before the advent of Communism. Slovakia, unlike the other two Orthodox countries, is mostly Catholic, and its pre-1914 history belongs with the Habsburg, not the Ottoman Empire. However, its postcommunist transition shared many patterns with the two Eastern Balkans countries, with the salience of nationalism as an electoral campaign theme and of populist economic and social policies. These countries were dominated by leaders such as Ion Iliescu and Vladimir Meciar, seen as authoritarian by the West but were quite popular in their respective countries, and have succeeded their first swings in government later than Central European 'Vishegrad' countries.

The challengers to these populists were center-right governments quite similar in terms of ideology and background, which can be described as liberal anti-Communist governments, leaning to some extent also towards Christian Democracy in Slovakia and Romania. These center-right governments, however, produced different outcomes. The Slovak government has been spectacularly successful in catching up with the first wave of EU applicants by closing most of the negotiation chapters with the EU in record time, and as such, Slovakia became a full EU member in 2004 while Romania and Bulgaria will only become full members in 2007. Still, all three remain strikingly similar on a variety of issues, most notably with regards to administrative corruption and performance of the judiciary, seen as serious obstacles hindering EU integration in all three countries. Differences in economic performance are striking and obviously rooted in a legacy of development. Slovakia's GDP is higher than both Romania's and Bulgaria's, but the foreign direct investment per capita after a decade of transition places it as low along with the other two countries.

The three minority inhabited regions compared have also important similarities. The main one is that they are units part of a unitary, not a federal state. Although the three countries can be, by the year of this study, considered consolidated democracies, they have all chosen the unitary, not the federal constitutional arrangement.

There are three major Muslim minorities in Bulgaria: Turks, Muslim Bulgarians (Pomaks) and Roma Muslims. The Bulgarian case study focused on two compact Muslim groups: Turks living in the Kardzhali district, and Muslim Bulgarians (Pomaks) inhabiting the Smolyan district. Both areas are located in the South-Central Region of Bulgaria near the border of the Republic of Greece. Turks are the largest group in Kardzhali district, representing 61.7% of its population. In several other districts, including Shuman, Turgovishte, Silistra and Razgrad--all located in Northern Bulgaria--Turks represent a sizeable minority and form between 30% and 45% of the population. Small but compact groups of Turks also live in Ruse and Dobrich districts in Northern Bulgaria, Burgas district (along the Black Sea coast), Haskovo district (SE Bulgaria), and Blagoevgrad district (SW Bulgaria). 90 per cent of the Muslim Bulgarians live in the Rhodope Mountains along the Bulgarian-Greek border, while a small number of Pomaks live in several villages around the town of Lovech in Northern Bulgaria. According to the 2001 census, the population of Kardzhali district numbered 164 019 people, of which 101 116 were Turks. As the census did not include a separate category for Muslim Bulgarians, it is a bit difficult to determine the accurate number of Muslim Bulgarians living in the Smolyan district. The total population of Smolyan district is 140 066, of which 122 806 are Bulgarians. Here, Christian Bulgarians number 41 792, people who did not declare their religious affiliation are 39 000, while Muslims in the district number 58 758 people (which includes over 6000 Turks). The number of Muslim Bulgarians can thus be estimated to be between 45 000 and 50 000.

The border region of Košice in the southeast part of Slovakia is home to the most numerous and politically significant minority population of about 85,415 ethnic Hungarians, who inhabiting the region together with a Slovak majority[2]. The Košice self-governing region (*Košický samosprávny kraj*) is one of the eight self-governing regions in Slovakia, and consists of 439 self-governing communities (*obec*) from which 17 have the status of town. Due to the dual model of the territorial administration in Slovakia, the same

[1] Schopflin, G. "The Political Tradition of Eastern Europe," pp. 59-93 in Steven R. Graubard, ed., Eastern Europe…Central Europe…Europe Boulder, CO: Westview, 1978

[2] The overall population of Košice region is 766, 020. According to the last popular census (2001) the overall population of Hungarian minority in Slovakia is about 521, 807 (9,7% of overall population of the Slovak Republic). Source: Statistical Office of the Slovak Republic.

area is also a state administration unit – Košice region (*Košický kraj*) and consists of six territorial districts (*Košice, Košice – okolie, Michalovce, Rožňava, Spišská Nová Ves* and *Trebišov*). The precise area inhabited by the Hungarian minority forms about 50 km broad strip along the state's border with Hungary. This is a territory with a troubled history[3], and which has fuelled many nationalistic passions. The Romanian case study focuses on the Hungarian minority from the Central development region (DR 7)[4] of Romania. The surface of this region is 34,099.4 square km, or 14.3% of the territory of the country, and its total population is 2,523,021. Its location is between Transylvanian Alps, Eastern Carpathians and the Apuseni Mountains. The region covers the main part of historical Transylvania and comprises 6 counties with different ethnic composition (Harghita, Covasna, Brasov, Sibiu, Alba and Mures). The minorities represent 35% of the whole population in the region. However, Hungarians represent the majority in Harghita and Covasna counties (85% respectively 74%). The study focused on the three counties with the largest Hungarian population: Mures, Harghita and Covasna.

3. The national level. Power-sharing within unitary states

The comparison of the minorities' status at the national level reveals important similarities in terms of the outcome of these countries' transitions, their structural legacies and transitions' histories. As all three are successful EU candidates, this is not surprising: it means that all three satisfy the Copenhagen political criteria, which included democracy and fair treatment of ethnic minorities. Leaving the outcome aside, the structural characteristics are also very similar.

a. Except for the Pomaks in Bulgaria, the main minority groups in the three countries share the trait of 'imperial' minorities. That is, indigenous minorities belonging to the same ethnic and/or religious dominant group of the former imperial power from the time the current territory was not a national state, but rather was a part of the Empire (Austria-Hungary for Slovakia and Romania, Ottoman for Bulgaria). As such, they are part of a tradition of being the majority and having dominant power--a tradition that ended only at the end of the First World War. This explains the important patterns of mobilization seen in all three cases. We are dealing with politically self-assertive groups, with a tradition not just of organization as a minority, but also of participating to government.

b. All three countries are unitary states. Of the three countries, Romania has the longest tradition of independent statehood. Romania and Bulgaria gained their independence more than one hundred years ago, while Slovakia has been a federal unit in united Czechoslovakia, only became independent in 1993. These countries have never been ethnically homogenous, and their borders were disputed by neighbor countries. Fear of minority irredentism led to interwar policies of control rather than assimilation. Communism brought a more liberal period, instituting various forms of affirmative action and granting funds for securing minorities cultural rights. However, after some unsuccessful attempts, this did not encourage the territorialization of minorities, preferring, unlike in former Yugoslavia, a clear unitary design with some demographic control through avoidance of larger administrative units dominated by the minority population. This was not possible everywhere, but the creation of an administrative embryo which could become a separate state, like the Yugoslav federal units Republic, was carefully avoided.

c. All three regions inhabited by minorities lack clear demarcation areas between the majority and minority. The borders are fuzzy, with populations mixing frequently, especially in the urban areas, making an eventual border difficult if not impossible.

The transition histories of these three countries are also fairly similar. Following the fall of Communism, minorities in all three countries emancipated and attempted to become politically organized. In Slovakia and Romania they were able to organize parties that ran in elections and won an important number of seats. While the Bulgarian constitution prohibits the formation of ethnic parties, the Bulgarian Turks mobilized

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[3] The inhabitants of this territory were citizens of different states six times without moving.
[4] The development regions were set on basis of the Law 151/1998 and correspond to the European NUTS II level. They represent the framework for implementing regional development policy.

and in 1990 a political party representing their interests was formed: Movement for Rights and Freedoms (MRF). The Bulgarian Socialist Party (BSP) questioned the legitimacy of MRF (1990–1991) on the grounds that it violated the Constitution (Art.11.4), and in 1992 the Constitutional Court ruled that MRF was not unconstitutional and could function as a normal party. The increasing political assertiveness of minorities was met with distrust and frustration by successor communist parties in Romania and Bulgaria, as well as by Vladimir Meciar's regime in Slovakia .

The first part of the transition was dominated by the Council of Europe approach. As all three countries wanted to be accepted as members of this organization, they had to undertake a number of legal steps, adopting legislation concerning minorities, which in some cases is not even adopted or applied in some EU member states. The implementation of this legislation received an important stimulus due to NATO accession, as the political conditions required by NATO included both a fair treatment of minorities and the absence of any border disputes. In December 1993, the Copenhagen European Council specified the conditions under which the EU would open its door for the candidate countries from Central and Eastern Europe. This set the stage for conditionality to be applied later in the pre-accession process. The basic conditions for new members established by the declaration of the June 1993 Copenhagen Council (the 'Copenhagen criteria') borrowed from the existing OSCE norms on the need for democratic states to guarantee human rights and protect minorities. The tension between the liberal individualist norms (and the 'persons' formula) and communitarian norms (and the denominator 'groups') in relation to minority protection is confirmed in the development of the EU treaty law in the Treaty of Amsterdam (1997) (TEU) and the Treaty on the European Communities (1997) (TEC). Where the TEU expressed the 'common values' of member states, it incorporated all of the values set out by the EU in the first Copenhagen criterion, which are defined in Article 6 (1) as "liberty, democracy, respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms and the rule of law", but expressly excluded "respect for and protection of minorities"5.

The EU did not measure the candidates' aptitude to fulfill the democracy, market economy, and acquis criteria until July 1997 when the European Commission issued its opinion on each country's application for membership. By then, all countries from the region had officially submitted a membership application, and in the first assessment the Commission acknowledged that their minority issue was not an impediment to joining for any of the three countries. The only moment when EU had to display strong conditionality was when Vladimir Meciar's party threatened to return to government when it came in first in the 2002 Slovak 2002. As Meciar had insufficient votes to form a government, EU and NATO pressure isolated Meciar and stimulated the creation of a counter-coalition. This remains to-date the strongest intervention by the EU in the domestic affairs of a candidate country. Even the return to power by Iliescu in Romania in 2000 did not endanger accession in any way. By that time the socialists had converted to the goal of EU integration. Slovakia progressed the most of the three countries in improving after the start of negotiations, followed by Bulgaria and Romania. While the Nations in Transit Freedom House scores do not separately measure the treatment of minorities, they include issues of human rights and political representation of minorities in nearly every category. These three 'laggard' countries have recorded more progress than anyone else in the region, as durig negotiations the region as a whole stagnated on democracy and human rights. Table 1 shows the progress recorded by these three countries compared to the average for all ten accession postcommunist countries, including Romania and Bulgaria. Although progress is not so great (0.25 is considered a minimal gain in these scores), they did struggle to catch up with Central Europe, so the effect on conditionality is sizeable here, while it is missing in the Central European states.

Table 1. Progress on democracy during the negotiations process with EU

Countries	Average change	Electoral process	Civil society	Independent media	Governance	Judiciary
Bulgaria	0.40	0.50	1.00	0	0.25	0.25
Romania	0.15	0	0.75	-0.5	0.25	0.25

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5 Hughes, J. and G. Sasse. "Monitoring the Monitors: EU Enlargement Conditionality and Minority Protection in the CEECs" Issue 1/2003. EUROPEAN CENTRE FOR MINORITY ISSUES (ECMI) , http://www.ecmi.de

Countries	Average change	Electoral process	Civil society	Independent media	Governance	Judiciary
Slovakia	0.65	1.00	1.00	0	0.75	0.50
Average by category, ten ECE accession countries	---	0.13	0.43	-0.20	-0.08	0.05

Source: Freedom House Nations in Transit, www.freedomhouse.org/nit/
Figures represent progress on NIT 1 to 7 democracy scores during the years between receiving invitation to join and signing of the accession treaty.

The 'conditionality story' should, however, be seen only as a complement to the parallel organic developments. Due mostly to the structure of constituencies and the voting systems, at some point anticommunists in all three countries needed the support of minority parties to form a government. On the other hand, in the early years of transition Socialist parties in Romania and Bulgaria had earned a reputation for nationalism and a poor record on human rights, and as such, needed to appease the EU on their return to power. Keeping the minorities' parties in some form of alliance certainly fitted the bill. Thus, minorities parties' gained significantly in terms of political positions appointed by the central government and administration. If their regional and local shares of political offices did not change much, being strictly proportional to their numbers of voters, they increased their participation in central governments. In Bulgaria and Slovakia they gained key positions in the disbursal of European funds. In Romania and Bulgaria they managed to secure appointments for the top non-elected regional positions, which are as a rule are decided by the central government.

Table 2. Political status of minorities' parties

Indicators	Romania	Bulgaria	Slovakia
No years in central government of minority party by 2005 (support pacts not included)	6	5	8
Share of seats in legislative elections, best results, coalitions excluded	7.6	7.6	11.6
Top central government positions	4 Ministers, 8 deputy ministers, 1 in control of EU funds 4 county prefects	3 Ministers, 2 in charge of EU funds, 16 deputy ministers, 5 district governors	11 key govt jobs, of which 4 in control of EU funds

These three cases are a clear illustration of a specific and clear pattern of post communist nation and state building. So far, only unitary states have succeeded in the European integration project. After the first eight Central European countries became EU members in 2004 (Slovakia and the Baltics with important minorities), Romania, Bulgaria and Croatia--the next three entrants--kept the same profile. As EU avoided candidates with nation building problems, it contributed itself to the selection. However, from the data at hand it is clear that the states that succeeded were those who were able to give a clear and undisputed answer – or perhaps just slightly disputed — to the fundamental question of who was to become a member of the political community in the new postcommunist state. In all these cases the unambiguous answer was that individuals, not communities, make the state. A specific group of individuals can be represented by a political party, and ethnic parties thus emerged as a preferred alternative to any other constitutional arrangement that granted special status to minority-inhabited regions or ethno-federalism, and in time these ethnic parties managed to become permanent and unquestioned features of political life in their respective countries.

While national political elites were chiefly responsible for the emergence of these models, considerable international assistance and intervention in constitutional matters also played a role in post communist Europe. In the cases at hand this was due to American influence (directly and through NATO's push to conclude bilateral treaties) combined with European influence (mostly through the Council of Europe, including its Venice commission). In none of these cases did Europe and America ask for a reorganization of the state (as federal) in order to ensure the protection of various cultural groups rights. State consolidation

and the enforcement of minority rights were seen as being two overlapping, but not contradictory, processes--an approach that has worked fairly well in the end. These successful formulas included conditions to make these unitary states more decentralized, inclusive, and accountable through the adoption of international legal standards on minorities, strong external conditionality to ensure that these laws are implemented, and discrete encouragement of national cooperative politics.

Experience in this region also shows another important lesson: any institution that emerges out of local bargaining seems to work better than artificially created or imported institutions. As power-sharing was mostly an organic development driven by domestic political reasons rather than by external conditionality, this helped turn interethnic bargaining into a permanent component of the political process. In Romania, Bulgaria and Slovakia, this installed minorities in the kingmaker's seat. Gains for minorities in such countries may seem minor compared to what Albanians in Macedonia won in one rebellion, but unlike in Macedonia, such gains are completely accepted by the society, and are therefore more sustainable.

The European influence in these countries was less direct than it is actually believed. In all three cases the Council of Europe pushed harder- and achieved less- in the first years of the transition when nationalists ruled in all three countries (with the exception of a short UDF intermezzo in Bulgaria). When the positive developments finally arrived, they were more due to domestic factors than to international pressure. Anticommunists in Romania, for instance, first announced their wish to form an alliance with the Hungarians in 1990, and during the 1992 elections already announced that a government coalition will be formed. It was largely due to their commitment to their Hungarian allies that they lost those elections to a savage national-communist campaign ran against them by Ion Iliescu. In Bulgaria, from the very beginning UDF proclaimed that democratization meant a liberal stand on the minorities' issues. Local elites, especially minorities and their political allies on the majority, did take advantage of the European discourse on minorities, decentralization and human rights, but it was their agency which brought about positive developments. When elites that did not agree with this framework were in power the situation was bad--bordering on dangerous--and in Romania and Bulgaria it changed only when nationalists lost elections). It was this organic model of power-sharing within the unitary state, rather than European direct action of any kind, which facilitated the development of this particular model of political mobilization and power sharing in Romania, Bulgaria and Slovakia. The EU is therefore influential mostly through empowerment of political and societal groups benefiting from Europeanization (Keating 2003, Grabbe 2003, 2006; Schimmelfennig and Sedelmeier 2005).

4.   The regional level. The unfinished struggle for self-government

Romania, Bulgaria and Slovakia came into their present borders due to a mix of factors in their modern history, among which irredentism from the Habsburg, Ottoman and Czarist Empires featured prominently. As such, their borders continued to be disputed by successor countries of these empires between the two World Wars. Despite some Communist attempts to promote fairness towards minority cultures, nationalism of all kinds soon came to be seen as a danger to the regime of brotherhood among peoples. Internal administrative borders were thus crafted so as not to coincide with ethnic borders (which contributed later to the disaster of post communist Yugoslavia), and administrative structures were designed to reinforce the territorial unity of the states with strong centers and weak peripheries. In all three countries, decentralization was initiated, according to the EUROREG research, as a part of the overall transformation attempt in early transition. USAID was a prominent donor in this respect. Only after the invitations to join were issued at Helsinki did the European Commission concern itself with the administrative division of the candidate countries. It then became that clear their structures had to be adjusted to facilitate spending of structural funds.

EU Regional policy is an area with particularly strong conditionality and thin acquis. Despite the accession negotiations envelope of accepting 'differentiation', a trend for uniformity in EU policy was established

early on[6]. At the Madrid European Council in December 1995, the existing EU member states grappled with the implications of enlargement for the allocation of structural funds, and instructed the Commission to draft 'opinions' evaluating each applicant country separately. The opinions of 1997 identified for the first time weak 'regional administrative capacity' as a key problem for enlargement (European Commission, 1997a, 1997b, 1997c, 1997d, 1997e). In these Opinions, and thereafter in the Regular Reports, the problems of weak or inadequate 'administrative capacity' at the regional level have often been invoked by the Commission. It appears that from very early stages competing views developed within the Commission over whether chapter twenty-one of the acquis entailed a 'model of regionalisation' and how it should be implemented by the CEECs[7].

The issue was political as well as technical. All countries involved were unitary states, many of them with historical ethnic minorities. Was regionalization to be political or statistical? As a preliminary step, the European Commission's 'nomenclature of territorial units for statistics' (NUTS) was used to draw the region. This was created by the European Office for Statistics (Eurostat) in order to create a single and coherent structure of territorial distribution, and has been used in the Community legislation pertaining to the Structural Funds since 1988. The current nomenclature subdivides the fifteen old Member States of the EU into: a small amount of NUTS level 1 territorial units; NUTS level 2 territorial units which include the autonomous regions of Spain, French regions, Italian regions, the Austrian Länder, and the regions of Rumania and Bulgaria; and the most numerous NUTS level 3 territorial units, which include the Nomoi in Greece, the French departments, and the Spanish and Italian provinces. This process involves creating regions out of statistical clusters of smaller units, counties, districts or municipalities, which led to the creation of 'development' regions. What drove regionalization was the EC need to impose a model that it thought would facilitate the effective absorption of regional funds, with no consideration on how this would impact the national political systems. Romania created eight statistical regions, which did not overlap with the three historical regions that had created the modern state by emancipating themselves from either Ottomans or Habsburgs, and which include 41 counties, each with its own legislative assembly. Slovakia revised its already existing system of 'political' regions, endowing its regions with legislative assemblies and making their head directly elected. Legislation to regulate regions, as well as to propose development plans and create a decision making mechanism for spending regional funds, was also created in all the cases.

In the early nineties, when Hungary had a nationalist government, a policy paper was disseminated at all European decision making levels. It was authored by Ferenc Glatz, then the President of the Hungarian Academy of Science, and aimed to find a solution to the Hungarian diasporas in neighbouring countries[8]. It argued that territorial autonomy should be granted wherever possible, but for circumventing situations where minorities did not have a local majority--or were poorly concentrated in a given territory--the paper advocated the creation of extra-territorial administrative bodies for the whole minority group in order to grant as much self-government as possible. The struggle for self-government in this formula became the program of Hungarian political organizations in Slovakia, Romania and Serbia's autonomous region of Vojvodina, with uneven results.

Regionalism as a political project can be found especially in the cases of Romania and Slovakia. Historically, both Hungarian leaders and some Romanian ones wanted Transylvania to keep keep some special administrative status after joining Romania in 1918. The majority of Romanian political elites, however, were in favour of a unitary state on the French model. Eventually a strongly centralized unitary state was created. The interwar times were plagued by Hungarian irredentism, which in the end led to the Hitler-Mussolini Vienna arbitrage Where half of Transylvania was granted to Hungary. At the end of Second World War, the Soviets had to arbitrate this border dispute, and they solved it by returning most of the territory to Romanian, but also imposing territorial autonomy for Szeklerland, the region where the Hungarian population was densely concentrated. The region lasted through Romanian Stalinist years, but Ceausescu put an end to it after his arrival to power in 1964, claiming Hungarian nationalism within party

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[6] Based on Hughes, J., G. Sasse, and C. Gordon (2003), "EU Enlargement and Power Asymmetries: Conditionality and the Commission"s Role in Regionalisation in Central and Eastern Europe". London, London School of Economics & Political Science March 2003, Working Paper.

[7] Idem note 6

[8] Glatz, F, Minorities in East Central Europe , Principles for a Code of Conduct, Budapest, 1993.

ranks--a claim particularly credible in the aftermath of the Hungarian 1956 Revolution.

In Romania, in 1995 the Hungarian alliance developed an 'internal parliament' for the Hungarian community where all elected local and central office holders met, and created a number of other self-government bodies. During this same year the claim was made by Hungarian politicians that the three Szeklers' counties, where a little less than half the Hungarians in Romania live and where they enjoyed an overwhelming majority, should be turned into a special status region in the model of South Tyrol. The Hungarians themselves are divided in a self-ascribed more radical wing and a self-ascribed more moderate one. The moderates have strict control of the party, and they have been associated with the government of both the left and right since 1996. Despite gaining various cultural and language rights, they were not granted territorial autonomy or special status they sought by either of their allies. Their Minorities Status project was stalled in 2006 in the Romanian Parliament due to the creation of administrative structures parallel to the official ones, and due to its Article 2 claim-- which is seen as unconstitutional by Romanian parties--that communities, not individuals, form the Romanian state. The radicals, who have won some local offices in the Szeklers' counties, have made their own separate attempts to push territorial autonomy, and have called for a referendum on this issue.

The Romanian-Hungarian politicians' appeal to Europe and European authorities to promote their cause has been constant and professional. Starting with the Council of Europe, Romania's Hungarian politicians worked their way up each and every European body. Since the signing of the bilateral treaty between Romania and Hungary in 1996, grassroots nationalism on the Romanian side decreased, as Hungary for the first time after Trianon acknowledged Romanian borders. Also, it became increasingly difficult for Hungarians to convince Europeans that they were persecuted when they were associated to government and enjoyed positions as ministers. Radical Hungarians actually denounced moderates and accused them of having been co-opted by Romanian politicians. In the April 2005 resolution approving Romania's accession treaty, the European Parliament, pushed by right wing representatives from Hungary, included a catch-phrase saying that despite the situation of the Hungarian minority being very good, some of their aspirations to subsidiarity had not yet been satisfied. This passage became the flag Hungarians raised when promoting a minority status law in May 2005, which was basically patterned after the first autonomy manifesto they produced ten years earlier. Also, when they switched their support from socialists to anticommunists after postcommunists lost elections in December 2004, they asked that the NUTS II regions be redesigned so that the central region should have a Hungarian majority. This desiderate is included in the program of the coalition government which came to power in 2004.

The story is not so much different in Slovakia[9]. The boundaries of the new republic of Czechoslovakia, established in 1920 by the Treaty of Trianon, encompassed areas where more than a half million Hungarians resided. The Treaty of Trianon included a section on the 'Protection of Minorities', which contained a series of provisions guaranteeing the rights of the minority populations in Hungary as well as in the neighboring countries. During the period between the two World Wars Hungarians laid revisionist political claims. The Hungarian nationalists requested the demarcation of the Hungarian territory according to demographic statistics from the 1910, a claim that, in essence, would cover two thirds of the territory of present-day Slovakia. In the post-World War II period, the application of the so-called "Soviet thesis"[10] aimed to achieve the national unification and centralization of the political power. After the 1948 Communist takeover in Prague, the Czechoslovak Socialist Republic recognized the rights of minority members, including the right to language, but refrained from giving official recognition to any 'collective' rights for fear of stimulating minority nationalism as in interwar times. However, on the model of the whole Soviet camp, high state support was granted for Hungarian minority culture and minority education, partly due to political pressure from the side of communist Hungary. At the same time, depicting the ethnic Hungarians as being hand-in-glove with Hungary, a danger to national unity and territorial integrity that had to be assimilated or defended against, became frequent nationalist themes.

The 'velvet divorce' of Czechs and Slovaks became a reality on January 1, 1993. Overnight, the minority-majority proportion underwent a dramatic change. While the Hungarian minority numbered

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[9] Based on EUROREG case study and policy report by Slovak team.
[10] The Soviet thesis on development and convergence of nations and nationalities assumed their final merge.

about 3% in former Czechoslovakia, in the Slovak Republic it made up 10% of the overall population. On the Slovak side, an anxiety developed over the southern border and an eventual Hungarian secessionist claim. The regionalization of the country was done with a special, even if not always explicit, attention to demographically control the Hungarian minority. The public administration reform of 1996 implemented by Mečiar's government (the leader of the strongest coalition party, Movement for Democratic Slovakia – HZDS), introduced a new state administration structure, which divided the country into eight regions (*kraj*) and 79 districts (*okres*). The model adopted was clearly unfavorable for the Hungarian minority, which cut its control of local administrative units even more than in interwar times. In 1994, the Hungarian political parties came up with proposal of the territorial-administrative division of the Slovak Republic of which the key component was the creation of three Hungarian dominated regions in the southern part of Slovakia. Later, during EU accession, the Party of Hungarian Coalition (SMK) asked for the creation of a new region, in an area populated mostly by the Hungarian, on ethnic criteria. In 2001, the Parliament established eight self-governing regions.

In Bulgaria, the EU regional policy was not as linked to territorial aspirations to create an ethno-federal unit. In 2000 the Council of Ministers (Decree No 145/27.07.2000) defined six planning regions consistent with the practice of EU regional policy (corresponding to the level NUTS II of the EU), as the basis for planning, executing and monitoring of regional interventions in the decentralized system. While the fight for local and regional offices is fierce among political clienteles, there was less linkage between regional development and self-government claims by the minority than in the two countries.

It is clear that the dominant regional issue in Romania and Slovakia is reuniting self-government with some form of territorial autonomy. So far, pre-structural funds were spent mostly on the basis of central government decisions, as it took time to organize decentralized decision mechanisms. Local officials interviewed by our teams have little planning experience, sketchy strategies to attract funds, tend to suspect that the other ethnic group stands to win more without any basis, and so forth. There is very little competence so far, and regionalism has been seen more as a vehicle to promote a political, rather than a developmental, agenda. There is no significant pattern that emerges from the disbursement of funds themselves. *It would be hard to find any such pattern, as the superposition of 'region' and 'minority' was purposefully avoided.* The regions that minorities are a part of grew in line with the performance of their national economies since 2000, significantly less than the most developed regions, such as state capitals and regions surrounding them, but similar to the average regions. Pessimism, however, is very high, and is grounded in the psychological feeling of 'periphery' that these regions have traditionally experienced. Both from the capital of their titular, as well as of their national countries, these regions are marginal and feel so.

5.   The individual level. The European ideal as an escape from the state of another nation

In postcommunist Europe, the degree of individual identification with Europe is on the average higher in every poll as compared to Western Europe--a fact explained by the longing for 'Europe' during the Communist years of freedom deprivation. Few surveys ask, however, for respondents to choose among identities, preferring to test each of the four identifications (neighborhood, region, country, Europe) separately. A 2000 survey organized by the Romanian Academic Society and Freedom House in Romania, Bulgaria and Slovakia found a very strong identification with neighborhood on one side, and country on another; when asked to choose, respondents dropped the regional and European identities to the bottom of the scale.

The most successful theory explaining the drive towards European Union is the cost-benefit one, the so-called 'utilitarianism' hypothesis (1). It argues that citizens of integrated Europe support the integration project to the extent that they benefit from it, as benefits are quite different for various social categories. It predicts, therefore, that support for Europe is associated with higher education and more sophisticated occupational skills. Most models include more than one variable measuring this factor, from individual skills to evaluations of national economy, household economy and perceived economic threats. Reviewing the evidence in 2000 on West European publics, Gabel found the most substantial support for utilitarianism

against every other hypothesis[11]. Evidence was also found in more recent work that included Eastern Europe as well[12]. There are solid grounds for that: part of the attraction of the West, visible mostly in the divided Berlin during the Cold War, was clearly material. The so-called 'demonstration' effect which led to the desertion of Communism even by its most staunch supporters refers to this materialist component: as the joke went during Communism, a person on welfare in West Germany was making more money than the richest worker of Eastern Europe. The European funds for agriculture and regional development were fought over fiercely during negotiations, especially by Poles, and thus became intensely publicized in all accession countries. Other EU benefits are fairly obvious, such as the freedom to travel or work in the European Union for East Europeans, who in their own countries make less than a third of the income of West Europeans. During the EUROREG field research most respondents in all the three countries saw the main benefit of Europe to be the freedom to travel without the restrictions imposed by the Schengen agreements. European funds were not yet perceived as a great benefit, as their history is simply too recent in these regions to have any serious impact.

More revealing for our work is the research linking support for European Union to identity in various forms (2).[13] Carey argues, for instance, that there is a dynamic on three levels: regional, national and European; those who are clearly identified as "English", the main nationality, are less pro-European than those primary identified with national minorities[14]. G. Marks and L. Hooghe see identity as the main mechanism driving public opinion on European integration, with national identity as an obstacle to the European one[15]. Social psychologists, on the other hand, have come up with evidence showing that European identity is not certain to be associated with less exclusivenesses, for examples, expressed in towards immigrants[16]. In a recent paper I argued that this confusion is due to conflating concepts such as national identity (identification with one's country), patriotism (pride and willingness to defend one's country) and nationalism, an exclusionary preference for one's ethnic group and culture. Also , as nationalism is seldom studied at the individual level, generalizations occur from an individual to a group, and from a small group to society that are the source of many apparent inconsistencies across various research projects.

In this context, it is very important to distinguish between national identities at the individual level, which many studies found to perfectly coexist with European individual identities[17], and nationalism. In my own work, I found that national pride is not a significant determinant of trust in Europe. Patriotism, using as proxy the willingness to fight for one's country, is positively associated with confidence in Europe. Nationalism, however, is negatively correlated. People who have territorial claims on neighboring countries and are paranoid about ethnic minorities tend to have less confidence in Europe. This is a robust finding, surfacing both in Romania and Bulgaria[18]. Eurobarometers, however, do not carry questions on territorial or cultural nationalism customarily, so it is not easy to check these hypotheses over a larger number of countries.

If we leave national identity aside, it is important to test again, in a EUROREG context, the importance of regional identity in the formation of a European one (3). Recent research by Olsson, on elections'

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[11] Gabel, Matthew, "Public Opinion and European Integration: An Empirical Test of Five Theories." Journal of Politics 60: 333-354, 1998.

[12] See Public Opinion , Party Competition, and the European Union in Post-Communist Europe, Edited by Robert Rohrschneider and Stephen Whitefield, London, Palgrave Macmillan, 2006

[13] Hooghe, Liesbet and Gary Marks, "Calculation, Community, and Cues: Public Opinion on European Integration" Paper presented at Conference Redefining the European Project Halki – Greece, June 23-27, 2004; Carey, S. "Undivided Loyalties: Is National Identity an Obstacle to European Integration?" European Union Politics 3, no. 4, 2002; Van Kersbergen, Kees, "Political Allegiance and European Integration." European Journal of Political Research 37: 1-17, 2002.

[14] See Carey, idem note 13.

[15] See Hooghe and Marks, idem note 13.

[16] See Klandermans, Bert, Jose Manuel Sabucedo and Mauro Rodriguez. (2003.) "Inclusiveness of Identification among Farmers in the Netherlands and Galicia," unpublished ms. and Triandafyllidou, A. (1998). National Identity and the "Other". Ethnic and Racial Studies, 21, 593-612.

[17] See Risse, Thomas, "Nationalism and Collective Identities. Europe versus the Nation-State?" In Developments in West European Politics, edited by Paul Heywood, Eric Jones, and Martin Rhodes, London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003.

[18] See Mungiu-Pippidi, A., "East of Vienna, South of Drina. Explaining the constituencies for Europe in South-Eastern Europe". in Public Opinion , Party Competition, and the European Union in Post-Communist Europe, Edited by Robert Rohrschneider and Stephen Whitefield, Palgrave Macmillan, Sept 2006, pp 166-188.

data, found that linguistically distinct regions, regardless of whether they are politicized or not, tend to be more positive towards the EU[19]. Some Eurobarometers and the European values survey carry questions on attachment to the region. However, we do not know what respondents understand by 'region', while the meaning of 'neighborhood' and 'country' is clearly less ambiguous across countries. The European Regions' Assembly established that regions were entities immediately under the central state level, equipped with political representativity that is assured by the existence of a regional council or, if it's missed, by an association or organism set up in the regional level by the communities of the immediately inferior level. Keating proposed four types of regions, mainly, economic, cultural, and two types of political regions: official and defined by regionalist movements as the focus of people's aspirations for regional self-government[20]. In the context of our research countries, we have these types overlapping considerably, at least in Romania and Slovakia.

Table 3. WHAT IS YOUR NATIONALITY? Pooled sample

% of total	BULGARIAN	HUNGARIAN	ROMANIAN	SLOVAK	TURKISH	OTHER
BULGARIA	89				9	2
ROMANIA		7	92			1
SLOVAKIA		9,4		90		0,6

Source: *Eurobarometer 2003*

To test these hypotheses on Eurobarometer data I selected a 2003 survey on identity and support of EU institutions in accession countries, and isolated the three countries under study, creating a pooled sample of three countries with 3077 respondents, and a significant minority group of nearly 10 % (see Table 3). For the dependent variable, I used a scale asking respondents to choose between four types of identities they expect to have in the near future: just national, national and European, European and national, and just European. I summarized the hypotheses as follows:

1. *Expected benefit from EU integration.* As stipulated by the utilitarianism hypothesis, people who expect either themselves or the country to do better due to EU accession will tend to identify more with Europe. The questionnaire included both questions, but they were, predictably, strongly correlated (individuals who expect their country will benefit also expect benefit for themselves, and the other way around), so only one was used in the final model.

2. *Minority status.* Minorities frequently feel disadvantaged in their countries compared to the titular nation, either on objective or subjective grounds. They might also harbor feelings of attachment to their 'national' country, where their kin ethnic group lives. For all these reasons, it is reasonable to expect that minorities identify *less* with their titular country and *more* with Europe, a super-state where boundaries matter less and where they feel empowered. We expect people who belong to a titular ethnic group to identify less with Europe compared to those who belong to ethnic minorities, so we created a new variable in the pooled sample, aggregating the ethnic majority in each country in one group, as opposed to minorities.

3. *Regional identity.* Individuals who identify with their region, regardless of how specifically this is defined, should be, according to some previous research, higher on identification with Europe. As attempts to aggregate respondents on a scale going from local identification to European, or to create a factor score of just national and regional identities did not yield satisfactory results, I used the question asking for attachment to the region[21].

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[19] See Olsson, Anna. "Regional Minority Nationalist Attitudes towards European Integration Department of Government", American University, Prepared for presentation at the Fifteenth International Conference of the Council for European Studies, held in Chicago, March 29 - April 2, 2006.
[20] See Keating, M. The New Regionalism in Western Europe. Edward Elgar Publishing, 1998.
[21] As these identities are not mutually exclusive, attempts to create a hierarchy out of these four questions do not manage to make a solid underlying variable emerge. The alternative remains to put in surveys only one question, with exclusive answers, eventually twice, to measure "first" identification and "second" identification.

Table 4. Explaining Euro-identity versus national identity

Independent variables	Significance	Association	% variance explained
Basic model			
Income 4 categories	∨ ∨	+	
Age 4 age groups	N	+	
Education 4 steps	∨ ∨	+	
Rural residence dichotomous, 1 rural else 0	∨ ∨	--	
Media index with low consumption maximum score	∨ ∨	--	
Romanian citizenship 1, else 0	∨ ∨	++	
Slovakian citizenship 1, else 0	∨ ∨	++	10.6
Hypothesis one: expected benefits 1, else 0	∨ ∨	++	14
Hypothesis two: regional identity Very and fairly attached 1, else 0	Non-significant		10.6
Hypothesis three: minority-majority Majority ethnic group 1, else 0	∨ ∨	--	11
Complete model			14.2
N=3077			

Database. Eurobarometer 2003. Pooled sample Romania, Bulgaria and Slovakia. Dependent variable self-identification scale, with 1 national only, 4 European only, 2 national first, European, second and 3 European first, national second. Reference category for citizenship was Bulgarian.

The findings shown in Table 4 can be systematized as follows:

1. *Status elements.* People who are richer, better educated and higher on media consumption, tend, as in previous tests, to be more positive towards Europe. People who reside in rural areas identify less with Europe. Romanians and Slovakians identify more with Europe than compared to Bulgarians. *Expected benefits.* People who expect that Europe would benefit them directly, or their respective country, identify more with Europe. This subjective benefit expectation explains nearly all the variance of the final model by itself when added to the status model.

2. *Regional identity.* There is no significant association between either national or regional identification and identification with Europe versus national.

3. *Majority/minority status.* Members of ethnic majorities have less positive expectations towards European identification than do members of minorities, the latter of whom are more likely to identify with Europe. However, this predictor adds only little variance to the explanatory power of the status model.

6.   Conclusions and recommendations

The presence of the European Union, in all its forms, conditionality and funds, seems to have had more of a mediating effect, moderating or exacerbating preexisting tendencies, rather than a direct one. I would call this an 'enzymatic' effect. Enzymes are substances in the animal body that manage to decisively influence some physiological reaction between organic substances without being directly involved or transformed themselves in the process. This seems to have been largely the case with regards to the influence the EU had in these three countries on minorities and the minority-majority relation. On both the side of the majority and the minority, 'Europe' was equally invoked during accession years to advance their respective projects. The most important effects, as well as non-effects, are as follows:

1.   The European environment empowered local moderates and liberals both on the majority and the minority side, contributing, in a hard to determine extent, to the emergence of an organicly grown,

step-by-step negotiated power-sharing arrangement, which has proved sustainable through several electoral cycles. Even if minority parties might occasionally miss a government cycle, it is likely their participation will remain regular.

2. The European context has been used to further political mobilization by minority elites, as well as their designs for some form of territorially based self-government. Although these attempts did not meet much success, 'Europe' was rhetorically associated with such models.

3. The European identity offers an alternative 'cosmopolite' identity for minority members, who still reluctantly identify with their country. An 'ethnic' and a 'European' identity seem to coexist without any intermediation by a 'regional' identity.

4. Minorities do not feel empowered by European funds, even when their political representatives are in control of such funds. The reasons are related to the poor capacity of regional and local administration in these countries to design development strategies, attract and manage huge European funds, and the limited period of enjoying significant funds. Funds have no effect on the relation between majorities and minorities.

Two main recommendations arise from these findings:

1. As the model of majority-minority arrangements emerging from these three countries is original in a European context, but can be considered a fairly successful one, the European Commission should consider it best practice and encourage such developments in other neighborhood countries--for instance in Western Balkans--instead of promoting hard to sustain constitutional designs. I cannot help but support Martin Brusis, who, after reviewing also these three cases, came to the conclusion that 'consociational power-sharing arrangements are more compatible with liberal democratic principles than territorial autonomy arrangements. Ideas and norms supporting these arrangements could thus permeate into the minority protection policy of an enlarged EU'[22]

   and

2. Although European funds are not designed to address inter-ethnic problems, the risk that pushing region to accession countries might be used for nationalist mobilization can be controlled by introducing incentives for inter-ethnic cooperation in the evaluation process of such funds. In the same way that cross-border programs stimulate cooperation across borders, some of the new regions that have always experienced inter-ethnic tensions would greatly benefit from some cross-ethnic 'region-building', which would discourage parochialism and segregation along ethnic lines, and making sure at the same time that some affirmative action principles are respected.

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[22] See Brusis, M. "The European Union and Interethnic Power-sharing Arrangements in Accession Countries" Issue 1/2003, EU-ROPEAN CENTRE FOR MINORITY ISSUES (ECMI) http://www.ecmi.de