



**The impact of the European Union on foreign policy-making in
Hungary, Romania and Slovakia: institutional adaptation, learning
and socialization**

Sorin Stefan Denca
PhD candidate
European Research Institute
University of Birmingham

This article discusses the influence of the process of European integration on the foreign policy-making in the new member states from Central and Eastern Europe, using as case-studies Hungary, Romania and Slovakia. The impact of the integration process is examined from an institutionalist perspective. The paper is especially interested in the institutional change of the coordination of foreign policy-making at both national and European levels, and on the process of learning and socialization of national representatives participating and interacting with the EU system of foreign policy.

1. Introduction

The study of foreign policy Europeanization has become increasingly popular during the last decade. Anticipating and following the EU's Eastern enlargement, several authors commenced exploring the impact of European integration on candidates and latter on new members from Central and Eastern Europe (CEE) (for a review, see Sedelmeier, 2006). This paper attempts to contribute to this burgeoning literature by providing evidences with regard to the influence of European integration on foreign policy-making in three CEE countries, namely Hungary, Romania, and Slovakia.

As already well documented in the literature, the adaptive pressures for CEE applicants during the integration process went far beyond demands of any other international organization (Grabbe, 2003: 303). The adaptation for EU membership took place at two levels. One refers to the 'hard' notion of institution, namely institutions as state organs or agencies, and the way they perform their functional tasks. The process of European integration required a high level of adaptation of new organizational structures and coordination mechanisms both at domestic and European level (Lippert et al., 2001: 983). In fact, the administrative capacity to apply the EU aquis (communautaire and political) was a formal criteria for accession. The second layer is a by-product of participation in the EU foreign policy-making and it refers to procedural adaptation to new norms and rules of cooperation, consensus-seeking, and avoidance of hard-bargaining (Smith, 2004a: 190). This is the distinction

between a structural view of institutions and institutionalization as a process, or between formal organization and informal socialization (see Guy Peters, 2000).

Contrary to the view that convergence of procedures is a superficial outcome of the Europeanization (Tsardanidis and Stavridis, 2005 in Wong, 2007: 324), I uphold the view that the adoption of and adaptation to new procedural norms and rules may lead to an increase sensitiveness and receptiveness with regard to the balance between what it is perceived as national and European interest (Øhrgaard, 2004, Smith, 2004a). The norms of a problem-solving culture as opposed to traditional bargaining decision-making style are influencing the way specific foreign policy issues are handled by national capitals (Smith, 2004b:741). The expected outcome is a more flexible approach, a tendency towards compromise and avoidance of hard bargaining even with regard to the '*domaines réservés*'.

The internalization of new norms and rules does not affect to the same extent all national actors responsible for foreign policy-making. I focus here on the Permanent Representations to the EU of Hungary, Romania and Slovakia. I examine institutional change in respect to both organizational and functional aspects, and procedural adaptation to EU foreign policy. While the former is based on a mixture of emulation of new institutional models and adaptation of existing organizational structures, the second follows the socialization path. At both levels, a process of change affects the national system of foreign policy-making.

The following section extends on the argument. The second part examines how the three countries have designed their national coordination systems for European integration. The setting up of proper mechanisms for dealing with EU foreign policy is only a component of the overall conception of how the administrative capacity had to be reorganized in view of accession. Therefore, the question of what impact did Europeanization have on national foreign policy-making should be addressed in the broader context of how the coordination of European affairs had been adapted and who the most important institutional actors were. The focus of this paper is on the organizational adaptation of foreign policy-making systems. After briefly describing the extent of change within foreign affairs ministries, I focus on the structural and functional transformation of the permanent representations to the EU; also, I examine the adaptation to the new diplomatic environment and its influence on the traditional style of foreign policy making. The concluding part sums up empirical findings.

I use both primary and secondary sources. As primary material, I rely on in-depth interviews within permanent representations in Brussels, the study of national regulations, policy papers, EU opinions and regular reports, organizational charts, media statements, and information on relevant websites. In addition, I include participant observation of meetings at level of EU Council. This was an internship to the Romanian Mission to the European Union in November – December 2005, at a stage when Hungary and Slovakia were

already full member states and Romania active observer, pending the ratification of the Accession Treaty by the EU member states.

The research framework is based on multiple case-study design, which consist of a comparison of few countries and a collection of data using a qualitative strategy (Bryman, 2001: 53). The usage of multiple case-study approach has the advantage of providing more comprehensive evidences for answering the research questions (Yin, 2003: 46). The aim of multiple case-study design is to identify regular and understandable patterns and explanations of foreign policy (Kaarbo, 2002: 5)

Several factors justify the selection of Hungary, Romania and Slovakia as the three case studies. Firstly, they have different integration records. Hungary was considered the frontrunner of integration process, invited in 1998, acceding in 2004. Slovakia's invitation had been postponed in 1998, but the country was able to catch up with the Helsinki group of five and to join the EU in 2004. Romania had been invited to join the EU in the second wave, as well as Slovakia, but was not able or willing to become a member before 2007. The assumption is that the cross-national variation in the accession paths might provide useful insights for explaining differences in the organization of national foreign policies. Secondly, these countries have different types of political regimes. The type of executive – legislative relations is assumed to have an impact on the organization of policy-making systems. Thirdly, all three are connected historically and geographically. The process of socialization is assumed to challenge the existing identities and interests of national officials,

their conceptions of statehood, and relationships between national and supranational. Slovakia is a new state, emerging after the split of Czechoslovakia. Hungary has an imperial past and suffered important losses of territories and people in favour of neighbouring countries Romania and Slovakia, among others. On the other hand, numerous analyses of foreign policy Europeanization have been focused on single countries (see for instance Economides, 2005, Miskimmon, 2007, Pomorska, 2007, Rieker, 2006, Torreblanca, 2001, Tsardanidis and Stavridis, 2005, Wong, 2006). Instead, a three case-study approach is expected to provide a solid basis for understanding better why similar Europeanization pressures cause different responses across candidate countries.

2. Conceptual framework

2.1. Foreign policy Europeanization: between International Relations and European Integration

The enhanced pace and deepening of economic integration following the Single European Act and Maastricht Treaty led to an increased attention to the processes whereby EU impacts upon the member states. For instance, a survey of one hundred sixteen academic articles published between 1980 and 2001 has shown a spectacular increase of the 'Europeanization' approach during 1990s in contrast with the scarce use throughout 1980s (Featherstone, 2003: 4). This trend is confirmed by updated data from the last six years. Between 2002 and 2007 (inclusive), the number of academic articles on this topic has grown from one hundred-thirteen to two hundreds fifty-two, an

average of forty-two articles published every year, compared with only nine per year for the decade preceding 2001 (own assessment based on ISI Web of Knowledge's data for the period 1980-2007).

The ever growing use of the term '*Europeanization*' came to signify a new stage in the development of integration theory. According to this view, the classical theories of European integration, such as neofunctionalism or intergovernmentalism, became increasingly unable to describe and explain the shift from a decentralized system of balance of power to a proto-European polity. What the concept of Europeanization brought about was a change in the analytical focus from member states seen as sources of power delegation to the EU, to a reverse relationship. It asks how the European polity and integration impact upon the very nature of participant member states (Caporaso, 2007: 24-6).

While foreign policy has not been from the very beginning targeted by the Europeanization research, it soon became a source of conceptualization and quest for empirical evidences. Due to the intergovernmental design of the Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP), the study of the Europeanization of national foreign policy included several conceptual dimensions. The intergovernmental and rationalist approaches assume that the foreign policy of the EU is the result of bargaining of competing national interests at the level of different Council's working groups. Following the neorealist logic, the strongest influence on CFSP belongs to major powers. The contribution that the

Europeanization approach brought about was that the bottom-up projection of national interests stands for the Europeanization of this interest. The national interest is no longer only national, but EU's interest as well. Moreover, due to the complex nature of the EU polity and policy-making, not only major states, but also small states in terms of size and resources may upload and therefore Europeanize their own foreign policy priorities.

The opposite mechanism is that of transformation of member states' foreign policies according to the needs and requirements of EU membership (Wong, 2007). Since the top-down impact of European integration on domestic polity, politics, and policy is the main thrust of Europeanization agenda (see Börzel and Risse, 2003: 60, Caporaso, 2007: 27), the study of foreign policy became also concerned with the manner in which EU influences national foreign policies. Once the EU Council adopts a specific initiative, member states, that have previously agreed the content of this initiative, should implement it. This is the starting point for the top-down approach, namely from the moment the initiative is defined until the observable change of the national foreign policy. A potential flaw of this approach is that it resembles a zero-sum game in which only A affects B. The current policy practice provides in fact for greater more complexity. One may argue that within EU framework, national and European foreign policies are interconnected and mutually reinforcing each other.

The top-down Europeanization approach resembles the regimes theory of international relations. The focus is similarly on the impact an international

framework of cooperation has upon policy processes at domestic level. However, at least two aspects differ. The first is the predominantly rationalist explanatory model used by the scholars of international regimes. By contrast, the Europeanization of foreign policy has a broader coverage, employing both rationalist and constructivist perspectives. Moreover, the study of European foreign policy itself started from the assumption that the rationalist, neorealist or neoliberal theories of international relations, predominantly north-American theories, are not suitable enough to describe accurately the nature and dynamic of European foreign policy (Manners and Whitman, 2000). The second is the nature of the international framework of cooperation itself. Any other international organization fades in contrast to the complex nature of the EU. Also, no other international organization attempts to develop a common foreign policy.

2.2. Europeanization: socialization of foreign policy norms and rules

In the absence of material or formal constraints, specific for instance to the first pillar's policies, an important question is related to how the EU influences domestic process or which intervening variables determine domestic change (Smith, 2000: 614). The Europeanization literature identifies cognitive and normative structures alongside public policies or domestic legal and political configurations as domains of EU's influence (Radaelli, 2003: 35-36). The cognitive and normative domains seem particularly relevant to applying

Europeanization to the study of foreign policy, due to the voluntary nature of this intergovernmental policy.

Participation in the EU foreign policy framework may lead to adoption of a specific set of norms and rules of foreign policy. I do not discuss how the norms and rules characterizing EU foreign policy cooperation have developed in time. This paper draws from previous studies which agree that the emergence of procedural norms of EU foreign policy have been created and institutionalized through constant interaction, debate and trial-and error learning (Smith, 2004a: 134). Lewis (2000: 261) identified these procedural norms and rules as diffuse reciprocity, thick trust, mutual responsiveness, consensus-reflex; altogether creating a 'culture of compromise'. Similarly, (Smith, 2004a: 122) mapped out the norms of confidentiality, consensus, consultation, respect for other member states' 'domaines réservés', and the prohibition against hard bargaining. Also, some authors have remarked that a diplomatic coordination reflex grew up as a reciprocal disposition of national representatives participating in EU foreign policy cooperation (see Glarbo, 1999: 644, Nuttall, 1992).

There are also substantive norms and rules guiding EU foreign policy action, such as the rule of law, human rights, or democracy; these are collective standards of proper behaviour defining the identity of a specific community (Schimmelfennig et al., 2006: 22). In a similar manner, Smith (2004a: 136-7) associates substantive norms with broad themes and common values such as interdependence, representative democracy, rule of law, social justice, and

human rights, but he extends this list to include aspects like defensive measures to protect the European Community and the preference for conflict resolution rather than crisis management. Building on the concept of a 'normative power' Europe, Ian Manners (Manners, 2002) identified the five core norms as the centrality of peace, the idea of liberty, democracy, rule of law, respect for human rights, and fundamental freedoms.

March and Olsen (1998, 2004) have argued that action within an institutional setting is driven either by a logic of anticipated consequences and previously defined preferences, or by a logic of appropriateness and a sense of identity. While the former is based on rational-choices models and emphasizes the egoistic and self-interested nature of human agents, the latter argues that the norms and rules of a given community are followed because they are considered right and legitimate (March and Olsen, 1998: 951). However, March and Olsen themselves (March and Olsen, 1998: 952, 2004) have accepted that in reality the logic of action within an international organization is rather blurred, mixing both types of logic.

The EU foreign policy-making is a highly normative institutionalized international setting, characterized by various procedural norms and rules that have a constraining effect on rational behaviour of member states. Within this setting, the new member states behave as rational actors conforming to these norms and rules in order to avoid the costs of illegitimate action, while calculating when conformity is worth the cost of complying and when not (Schimmelfennig,

2000). This approach explains why cooperation works in the absence of formal mechanisms of enforcement and often against national interest of member states. At the same time, it allows for explaining defection; why cooperation is not always a certain result. If the material or ideational costs associated with conforming to the EU is too high, the rational option is to avoid meeting the requirements even if state agents play along with the rules of the game.

At minimum, the adoption of procedural norms and rules by the new member states is expected to facilitate a more balanced and flexible approach in their foreign policy actions within the EU framework. Apparently, all member states upheld the EU's substantive norms. However, these norms have to be similarly interpreted by the member states in order to achieve the objective of common action. Wiener and Puetter (2007) have argued that in spite of the assumptions about shared norms and community of values, in situations of external crises the normative divergences among the member states lead often to contradictions and divergences as regard the appropriate policy responses.

3. European integration and institutional change in Hungary, Romania and Slovakia

In the first place, this section maps the major institutional changes in the foreign policy coordination and organization in Hungary, Romania, and Slovakia, at domestic and European level; secondly, it examines the impact of the participation in EU's working groups and committees on the national representatives.

3.1. Institutional change: domestic and European levels

The domestic institutional transformation for European integration has been initiated once the Association Agreements, better known as Europe Agreements, came into force. The Europe Agreements have been concluded initially with Czechoslovakia, Hungary, and Poland, in December 1991, followed by Romania and Bulgaria in February and March 1993, the Baltic states in June 1995, and Slovenia in June 1996. The institutional structure created by Europe Agreements is based on Association Council at ministerial level, Association Committee at civil service high-level and Joint Parliamentary Council. There is a reach scholarship on the EU enlargement process, including depiction of the institutional provisions of the Europe Agreements (see for instance Cottey, 1995, Henderson, 1999, Mayhew, 1998).

New organizational structures and coordination mechanisms have been created from mid 1990s and subsequently modified according to the pace and requirements of the integration process (Dimitrova and Toshkov, 2007). The nature of the relations between the EU and Hungary, Romania, and Slovakia until the formal applications for accession, during 1994-1995, has been seen as primarily external relations matters. Therefore, the institutional actor best placed to deal with it was the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA). Following the opening of the accession talks in 1997 with Hungary and 1999 with Romania and Slovakia, the technical and complex nature of individual chapters of negotiation challenged the role of the MFA. In Hungary, this led to the transfer of European

coordination from the MFA to the Prime-Minister Office in 2005. This was not solution was not a effective one; hence, in 2006 the European coordination return to the MFA. In Slovakia, the responsibility for EU affairs is shared between the MFA and the government office (Dimitrova and Toshkov, 2007: 975); in fact, the role of the MFA is the most important. In Romania, the role of the MFA has been limited from the very beginning and centred on the government. Between the years 2000 and 2007, the integration process has been handled by a special created Ministry of European Integration. However, after accession this has been transformed into a ministry for regional development, while the responsibilities for EU coordination have been allocated to a newly created department within the Prime Minister Office. However, the management of foreign policy remains the responsibility of the MFA in all three countries. Besides, due to the development of the European Security and Defence Policy (ESDP), the MFA began to coordinate more with the ministries of defence for matters related to the participation in EU military crises management operations, as well as with interior and justice ministries for civilian missions.

The organization of foreign ministries has been modified accordingly through the creation of adequate structures. The first step in institutionalization of the political dialogue in foreign policy matters between the EU and CEE countries has also been made once the Europe Agreements came into force. While primarily devised to create a free-trade area, the agreements had also laid down the legal framework towards greater political convergence, including on

international issues (Mayhew, 1998: 48, Rupp, 1999: 93, Smith, 1999: 99). The first instance when foreign ministers from CEE countries have attended a meeting of the European Community counterparts was in October 1992, but the institutionalization of regular political dialogue at high level has been introduced only since 1994 (Rupp, 1999: 94). The political dialogue in foreign policy matters included the setting up of meetings at political directors, shadow European correspondents, and policy planners' levels as well as mechanisms to allow associate countries to align their national positions to relevant CFSP actions (European Commission, 1994). Regular meetings on security, terrorism and human rights, cooperation in international conferences and joint foreign policy actions have become part of the institutional framework of cooperation (Cottey, 1995: 138).

Certainly, the current design of the departments of EU affairs within foreign ministries in Hungary, Romania and Slovakia is more complex than one decade ago, due to accession, as well as because of the ever growing scope of EU foreign, security and defence policy. The CFSP related issues are dealt with in the Hungarian MFA by the Department of European Foreign and Security Policy under the political guidance of a political director with a rank of secretary of state. Three-subordinated sections within this department are responsible for EU Association and Partnership relations, EU External Relations and Crisis situations, and Regional cooperation. The responsibility for EU CFSP within the Slovak MFA belongs to the Directorate General for Political Affairs, which includes CFSP and Security Policy Departments, as well as territorial

departments. The sub-units of the CFSP Department are CFSP, Political and Security Committee (PSC), European Correspondent, European Neighbourhood Policy, and Stabilization Instrument. The Security Policy Department deals with Euro-Atlantic security, NATO, Permanent Delegation to NATO, European Security and Defence Policy (ESDP), Western European Union (WEU), and crises management. Within Romanian MFA, the General Directorate EU that provides specific expertise for CFSP matters through the External Relations (Relex) and Development Assistance Directorate assist a State Secretary for European Affairs.

The general structure and coordination mechanisms of EU CFSP within foreign ministries in all three countries reflect common functional needs to provide policy and geographical expertise, both within EU's institutional framework and with the member and candidate states. This tendency is even more visible when looking at the connection between MFA and national diplomatic missions to the EU, the layer of national representation and influence at European level.

The formal title of a diplomatic representation of a third state to the EU is 'Permanent Mission'. Once it becomes a full member, the title change to 'Permanent Representation'. Until the opening of accession talks, the permanent missions of CEE countries in Brussels have performed a traditional diplomatic role of representation and channel of communications. However, the permanent missions have undergone far-reaching transformations during transition period from accession to full-membership. The transformation is

reflected in the numerical augmentation of personnel, increase of organizational complexity, and functional diversification.

The setting-up of diplomatic offices of CEE countries to the European Community countries followed the establishment of diplomatic relations in late 1980s and early 1990s. They began planning the transformation of diplomatic missions into Permanent Representations (henceforth PermReps) in the years before finalizing the accession talks. Both the problem of size and of internal organizational structure came up. The main criteria for deciding the number of staff in the PermReps has been the compatibility with the structure of Council's working groups and committees (interview, Romanian PermRep, 2007). Practically, in deciding the size they have also drawn lessons from other member states similar in demographic terms. Currently, Hungarian PermRep inspired by the Austrian and Finnish models, relies on 60 diplomats or policy experts in contrast to 20 personnel in 2003 and even fewer before closing the accession talks and getting observer status to the EU (interview, Hungarian PermRep, 2007). Slovakia, with 50 experts has a similar number of diplomats to the Finnish PermRep. Romania looked at the Polish model in order to decide that it needs around 70 diplomats and policy experts (interview, Rom PermRep, 2007). However, if the demographic size has been a criteria for emulating other countries' models, it is not very clear why Romania did look at Poland and not Netherlands; Romania is a 22 million people country, Netherlands is 16 million, and Poland is 38 million. Obviously, the demographic difference between Romania and Netherlands of 8 million people is less important than that

between Romania and Poland, which is 16 million. It seems that Romania's self-perception of being the country with the seventh largest population among EU member states has played an important role (interview, Rom PermRep, 2007).

The positive correlation between the number of staff and the demographic size of the country has been highlighted in some previous studies (Kassim and Peters, 2001: 300-1); the figures presented here provide additional support for this observation. Though, the PermRep of Greece contradicts this trend by having one of the most numerous staff among other representations in Brussels. However

The size of the permanent representations reflects both the need to answer the requirements of participating in the EU working groups and committees and the reality of a country's physical characteristics. The experience of other member was a source of inspiration in deciding the appropriate design. In all cases, the number of staff has been gradually but significantly increased during the period spent as active observer when the organizational structures have been adapted to the anticipated needs arising from membership. As a general feature, the initial nucleus of people working in the diplomatic missions in Brussels came from the MFA, but with the increase in number of staff, experts from all other ministries have been seconded in the permanent representations. However, the MFA maintains its key role in CFSP and external relations matters. Except the military staff representing national positions in the EU Military Committee, and

one-two staff from ministries of defence participating in the Political and Military Group, all other personnel involved in foreign and security policy matters comes from ministries of foreign affairs. The ratio of CFSP staff is similar across permanent representations, around a quarter of the total. Even if the absolute figures differ, the relative similar percentage of people assigned for foreign and security policy matters reflects a need to balance between the effective functioning within EU working groups and committees and existing resources.

The organizational structure of foreign and security policy mirrors the vertical and horizontal configuration of the EU Council. The representative in the COREPER II is the head of the representation in all three situations having the highest diplomatic rank. Down the hierarchical line come the representatives in the Political and Security Committee (PSC), having high diplomatic rank as well. They get expert support from specialized units from within the representations. While these units should perform similar tasks, they are organized in different ways. In the Hungarian PermRep an external policy unit is responsible for territorial groups and control of armaments related matters; also, a security and defence unit deals with political and military aspects of military and civilian crises management, capabilities development, NATO-EU relations, as well as with African geographical group. The Romanian PermRep has two different units as well, though having different functional responsibilities. The political affairs unit includes geographical, non-proliferation, and arms control tasks (like in the Hungarian case), but also relations with the European Parliament, human rights issues, and Enlargement (these aspects are dealt with separate in both

Hungarian and Slovak Permrep). The ESDP unit has a similar scope as the one in the Hungarian PermRep. There also differences as regard the hierarchical chain of command. The external affairs and ESDP divisions have different heads of unit in the Hungarian PermRep, both answering to the PSC ambassador; instead, the same diplomat is the is the head of both units in the Romanian PermRep. The organization of the Slovak PermRep differs in the sense that both the External Relations and the Security divisions belong to the same functional unit, answerable to the PSC ambassador. In all three cases, the unit of military representatives is distinct in the structure of the permanent representations. They participate in the military working groups and committees of the EU Council and provide military advices and recommendations to the PSC ambassadors.

The three permanent representations examined here show how similar functional requirements are served by different organizational configurations. This is hardly a surprise given the diversity of national organizational arrangements in place at European level. It reflects neither simply convergence to a unique model or continued divergence (Kassim and Peters, 2001: 325), but the logic of institutional reasoning. There are inherent differences because of the absence of a unique European administrative model, and administrative idiosyncrasies or domestic political interests. For instance, in contrast to other CEE candidates yet similar to Bulgaria the institutional transformation in Romania witnessed the highest frequency of changes and tendency to constantly introduce new organizations to the existing ones (Dimitrova and

Toshkov, 2007: 962). According to some views, the influence of the strong presidential institution in the Romanian system is reflected in the greater fragmentation of top level of the executive and the existence of two ministries dealing with European affairs, one apparently defending the president's views and interests (Dimitrova and Toshkov, 2007: 978).

3.2. Learning and Socialization of national representatives

The permanent representations of the new member states are the youngest in the EU, due to the date of accession. However, the chronological age is less important than the extent of institutionalization associated with it (Kassim, 2001: 32). Despite the fact that for CEE countries the process of institutionalization of formal and informal organizational routines and internal organizational cultures is of recent date, the adaptation to the norms and rules of EU foreign policy was fast. The adaptation of foreign policy is more sudden for new member states than for old members (Manners and Whitman, 2000: 7). The newcomers have to reorient rapidly part of their external relations with third states or international organizations in order to reflect their new acquired status and to comply with EU's demands.

A direct consequence of accession, as shown above, was the need to transform the diplomatic mission to the EU into permanent representations and to increase the number of staff. For both the diplomats who were already in Brussels before accession and the new arrivals, the EU foreign policy

framework was something new. There is still the first generation of diplomats participating directly in the EU foreign policy-making process. While for the old member states, cooperation in foreign policy matters has been a process institutionalized during decades, for the new member states was a *fait-accompli*. When they joined, the norms, rules and procedures of cooperation in foreign and security policy field were already in place. They had to adopt them as they were, even if they may contribute to their development in time.

I have illustrated in the previous section what types of norms are considered procedural in the literature, namely the norms of trust, reciprocity, mutual responsiveness (Lewis, 2000), consultation, consensus, and respect for other member states' '*domaines réservés*' (Smith, 2004a: 122). The main mechanism of embracing these norms is social learning, defined here as the adaptation to the environment and capacity to adjust to external stimuli. In this view, social learning means structural change and its result is successful evolution (Gherandi, 2002).

To learn these norms has been the way to fit into the game. I make the distinction between the period after signing the accession treaties, the so-called '*active observer*' period, and the full-membership. Hungary and Slovakia have been observers for one year, between April 2003 and May 2004. For Romania, this stage lasted one year and a half, between April 2005 and January 2007. As active observer, the soon-to-be members have had the right to participate in all working groups and committees at the EU Council level, to observe and

familiarize with working procedures. They were also allowed to express views and comments but have had no formal decisional right. This stage has been particularly useful for learning and accommodating with the new environment. In the words of a Slovak diplomat, “*after these three years is like you are achieving the degree at the university ... it is very helpful because you get the understanding of the European Union, of the influence of certain countries within ESDP, and how they are expressing their bilateral issues within multilateral fora*” (interview, Slovak PermRep, 2007). During the observer stage, due to the limited number of staff, national representatives have had to take on more tasks. As a Hungarian diplomat recalled, being one of the first to arrive in June 2003, he had to attend different geographical working groups, and only once some other colleagues have arrived from capital he was able to focus on specific issues (interview, Hungarian PermRep, 2007). The direct consequence of dealing with various groups was that the new representatives have grasped a better understanding of what the EU system of external relations stands for.

The high density of meetings at different levels has facilitated the process of learning. For instance, COREPER 2 meets regularly once a week, PSC holds meetings twice a week and many other working groups have similar frequency of meetings (for detailed accounts, see for instance (Hayes-Renshaw and Wallace, 2006, Nugent, 2006). To sit many hours in a multilateral-type of meeting, regularly, and to deal with the same counterparts create a very different atmosphere from the bilateral style of diplomacy (interview Hungarian Perm Rep, 2007), even a “*family atmosphere*” (interview, Romanian PermRep,

2007). The outcome is the increased level of mutual trust. In this context, mutual trust is not an absolute concept, it refers to the expectations that representatives of other member states play according to the same rules. As pointed out, this is the result of institutionalization of cooperation during decades.

To know what is the position of other member states on specific issues is directly connected to the process of consultation and of mutual responsiveness. Regular telephonic contacts with other national representatives in Brussels became part of the day-to-day working methods of new member states as well. The practical use of the norms of compromise and consensus seeking has been learnt by the new member states for instance in working group meetings discussing paragraph by paragraph various documents. The enlargement, bringing the number of participants at the working group, committee, or council levels from 15 to 27, plus the representatives of Commission and General Secretariat of the Council or some others, raised the problem of effectiveness. When and how to speak was a new informal rule that emerged in this context and the old *tour de table*, now too time-consuming and ineffective, has been replaced by the rule of speaking up only when one disagree or want to amend a proposal and to keep the time of intervention as short as possible.

To defend national position at expert working group level refers for instance to negotiate the content of a document that will be proposed for adoption by the General Affairs and External Relations Council and eventually endorsed by the

European Council. Usually, a document or proposal goes through hierarchical layers of expertise and decision and suffers the most intervention at a lower level. At working group level, the discussions have a technical character and revolved often around language, the way ideas are formulated. This is a time-consuming process, leading to many hours or repeated meetings dedicated to the same document. The document proposed by the Council General Secretariat for instance is read paragraph by paragraph, each member states expressing its view – or abstaining in case of agreement with the proposed formulation. This working style has surprised many representatives from the new member states. As a Hungarian diplomat summed up, *“we are working every day with such small details, invisible for normal citizens ... is complicated, insane ... we are discussing such small points that have no real influence to the real world and we don’t have time for philosophical discussion about the future of the European Union”* (interview, Hungarian PermRep, 2007). However unusual may look like, the implication of spending so many hours for discussing the formal language in a document is that once it is adopted by the Council it becomes *“agreed language”* and will be evoked when negotiating other documents or proposals at the working group level. Hence, the importance of acting at initial stages (Kassim and Peters, 2001: 314).

It is a common feature in the Council’s diplomacy that a member state attempts to secure the support of other countries in promoting its own position as expression of a common European interest (Windhoff-Heritier et al., 1996). New member states have soon been asked to give their support to different

initiatives or at least not to oppose them. The norm of respect for the “*domaines réservés*” of other member states is associated with a redefinition of what the national priorities are and what your position is as regard the concerns of other countries. The new representatives have had to learn both procedures and policies towards particular regions insofar the EU global ambitions go far beyond the traditional areas of interest of CEE countries. As a national representative highlighted, “*While Hungary has no particular interest in, let’s say, Burma, the United Kingdom is very much interested and involved. If you ask me whether the EU policy on Burma is now Hungary’s Burma policy, I’ll answer yes. But if you ask what our contribution was, I would say there was no contribution. But we are interested in the Western Balkans, and if you ask about our contribution I can tell you it was this and that*” (interview, Hungary PermRep, 2007). Therefore, the learning process involved the self-analysis of the country’s own priorities and positions within EU framework; also, what level of representations in terms of diplomatic rank and experience best serves the interests of the country across the priority areas.

A by-product of the socialization process and procedural adaptation is a change of the role of permanent representations. Being placed at the interface between European and national policy-making the PermReps play a double role. They have to balance between the levels performing both upstream and downstream functions (for a detailed list of functions, see Kassim, 2001: 34-6). The upstream functions relate to defending the national interest at EU level. Upstream, a permanent representation may act as a postbox, an official point of

contact between government and EU institutions and other member states, a base for national negotiators, a provider of the main negotiators at working-group level, a source of information and an antenna, a mechanism for sensitizing of EU institutions to national policy stances. Other functions that PermReps may perform upstream are to interact directly with representations of other member states, to influence the EU policy agenda, to conduct negotiations in Council working groups and COREPER, to maintain contact with private interests, to maintain links with the press. The main downstream functions are to report back to the appropriate national bodies, to advise in the capital, and to participate in domestic co-ordination (all from Kassim, 2001: 34-6). I discuss here only the two functions of information and advice. Along these functions, the PermReps may exercise a great deal of influence on the national foreign policy-making. The fundamental lines of foreign policy continue to be defined in the country, but what PermReps do is to influence the day-to-day policy-making.

To report is to inform the national capital about what is happening in Council's working groups and committees, how different countries are positioned in respect to specific initiatives, what chances are for a proposal to go through. The main source for gathering information is through participation in meetings at various levels within the Council or affiliated bodies or in informal meetings with counterparts. A close interaction with other national representatives provides a valuable source of complementary information. The way to inform the capital is rather similar. Reports or telegrams are sent on paper format, via

courier, and electronically, via email, in the relevant departments of the MFA. The role of the PermRep is important in deciding what is relevant information to be sent back home (interview, Romanian PermRep). This is because the volume of information is too large to be sent unfiltered and the people in the relevant departments in the MFA are dealing with information coming from all over the world not only with CFSP as it is the case with national representatives in Brussels (interview, Slovak PermRep, 2007). Therefore, all documents, policy proposals, non-papers or other types of papers circulated are sent back home, but more important is the content of reports and telegrams, which present in a condensed manner a topic, the national positions associated with it, and suggestions and recommendation. Hence, the influence of representatives in Brussels is important because they point out to what is relevant. The filtering function grants them a great advantage.

To advise in the national capital is closely related to the function of information, because all reports and telegrams sent back home include suggestions and recommendations. Here, again, the similarity of procedures across the countries is due to the need to match the functioning of Council's parties. Experts in the capitals know in which days of the week and at what time they have to expect information following a meeting of a working group or committee and how do they have to react to them. The frequency of infos arriving in email inboxes during initial phases has been unexpectedly high and caused surprise and concerns (for a similar reaction in Poland, see Pomorska, 2007).

The advisory function of PermReps is of particular importance in policy formulation and definition of national position at two levels. On the one hand, it is directly related to suggestions and recommendations in reports and telegrams. These are taken into consideration by experts in the capital and used the basis for formulating the national mandates on specific topics. An important asset that national representatives in Brussels bring to the capital is that they have a broader picture of what is going on due their interaction with counterparts from other member states as well as officials from the General Secretariat of the Council and relevant general directorate of the European Commission. Hence, as a Slovak diplomat remarked, 'I would say that I am influencing a lot because I am pointing out some parts of the document, of course they are reading the document but they don't have the same reading as I do have from here, because I do have also discussions here and I do have in margins discussions with my colleagues and we are seeing in the document many other things' (interview, Slovak PermRep, 2007). On the other hand, it refers to direct communication. The telephonic contacts and emails are extensively used to clarify different aspects and to provide further information. An important influence of PermReps is that they know when a particular position is unsustainable and therefore to carry on with it would mean to end up being isolated in the Council. Therefore, they may convince colleagues back home that it is not realistic to go on and a change in position is required (interviews, Romanian and Slovak PermReps, 2007).

The perception of national representatives in Brussels with regard to their own influence on the domestic process of foreign policy-making differs. It seems that Slovak and Romanian representatives tend to think they have more influence on the process than Hungarian ones. The latter considers that they might have an influence on small issues and details but the important decisions are taken in the capital (interview, Hungarian PermRep, 2007). As a Hungarian diplomat explains, this is because the different roles assigned to the PermReps and the MFA. While the former provides the input for the CFSP matters alone, the latter process many other inputs from other policy and geographical areas in formulation of the national position, which is communicated back in Brussels as instructions to be followed (interview, Brussels, 2007).

Even if five and half years of participation in the EU foreign policy framework for Hungary and Slovakia and two and a half for Romania (including the observer stage) is a short period of time, the accommodation and familiarization of national representatives with the new norms and rules was a smooth and fast process. This happened because the inner nature of these procedural norms and rules. They represent new working methods and create a new working environment. They had to learn how to behave properly but this was not an identity challenge. The empirical evidences provided by other studies of socialization within international organizations show that it is difficult to prove a change of loyalties and the change of self-identification of national representatives. The aim of this paper was less ambitious anyhow. I have tried to provide some evidences on the fact that the adaptation of the diplomats from

three new member states to the policy-making and diplomatic style within EU framework may be explained as attempts to learn how to perform an effective role in a process. Procedural norms and rules, like a code of good manners, provide general and specific guidelines for proper behaviour within a community. In turn, their specific position within the policy-making system, at the interface between European and national levels, provides them with increased advantage to influence the formulation of foreign policy position. However, the perception of how much influence PermRep has in the use of these leverages differs across countries.

Conclusions

The main concern here was to highlight how the process of European integration caused change of the foreign policy-making in the new member states. To this aim, I have explored the way in which three new EU member states from CEE have adapted institutionally for the need to perform a new role in the EU CFSP. This is the role of the full member state as opposed to the role of associate or candidate country.

The institutionalist study of foreign policy highlights the role of institutions in shaping action. Even if the institutionalism is more comfortable in explaining continuity rather than change, two arguments have been put forward by the institutionalist literature on the possibility of institutional change. The external shock view argues that domestic processes of institutional reproduction resulting in institutional continuity may be disturbed by exogenous factors such

as international events. The external factors may break the institutional reproduction cycle and create opportunities for institutional transformation. A second argument is that institutional transformation takes place when institutions are dysfunctional and create sub-optimal outcomes and is the result of strategic decisions of political actors (all in Lecours, 2005: 12). Both accounts of institutional change help explaining the transformation of foreign policy systems in the new member states.

On the one hand, the European integration process is the external opportunity that created the incentive for internal transformation, including in foreign policy-making. The design of the national system of foreign policy was different, therefore not adequate for performing the role of a member state. Political and policy-makers leaders have had to work towards transforming the old institutional structures according to the requirements of the participation in the EU foreign policy. In the first instance, this has affected the domestic level but latter on the European level as well. In fact, the European level became an issue only when the accession process was almost completed. In this sense, one can speak about an instance of Europeanization of institutional system of foreign policy-making by creating the relevant departments and agencies, defining their functional tasks, and the appropriate coordination framework.

I have highlighted the institutional changes looking especially at the European level, but also at the domestic level. The adaptation of foreign policy-making systems to answer the functional requirements of European integration in the

three countries upholds what other studies have already found out. At a general level, Hungary, Romania, and Slovakia have created special departments within their MFAs to deal with CFSP matters, headed by state secretaries. The same positions of political director and European correspondent may be found everywhere. Yet, the convergence of organizational models within departments is limited, even if the main function of these departments is to provide expertise on EU foreign policy matters. At the European level, the PermReps were created mirroring the existing institutional arrangements of the Council's formations, as well as being inspired by the experience of some other member states. Again, differentiation in internal organization is visible but this does not hamper in any way the achievement of their functional tasks.

The second layer of change targeted by the institutionalist approach to change used here referred to institutionalization of new norms and rules. I have discussed how the national representatives from the new member states have learnt the informal norms of proper conduct. This process was fast for two reasons: firstly, due to the anticipative expectations associated with the integration process itself; secondly, because the procedural norms themselves posed no direct threat to fundamental values or beliefs held by the new national representatives.

The behaviour of national representatives in the new environment confirms the rationalist assumptions. In the initial stage, they have learnt the rule of the game. In the second stage, they have started playing the game, assessing the

implication of a particular position in the balance between the national and European interest. The traditional interest of Hungarian, Romanian, and Slovak foreign policies is chiefly regional in scope. However, they have adopted the EU policies towards remote parts of the world knowing that this is often the Europeanized foreign policy interest of other member states.

The European integration process has added also a new foreign policy actor in the configuration of domestic institutional actors dealing with foreign policy-making. Traditionally, the centrepiece of this system was the MFA closely connected with the prime minister office, as it is the case in Hungary and Slovakia. In the case of Romania, due to the different constitutional design, the presidential office also plays an important role in foreign policy, especially in formulation of the fundamental direction of foreign policy. This new actor is the PermRep. Even if formally subordinated to the MFA, the PermReps in Brussels have the potential to influence the routine foreign policy-making process by filtering information sent back in the capital as well as through their advisory functions. They are adopting more flexible stances on foreign policy matters, knowing that within EU framework a foreign policy position is formulated not in isolation but in consultation and cooperation with others. Because of that, in the relationship with the capital they are attempting to input a more Europeanized style or a greater awareness of the common framework in which the foreign policy is formulated.

The empirical findings presented here support the idea that the participation in the EU foreign policy-making framework is associated with both institutional adaptation and socialization of foreign policy elite. The Europeanization of foreign policy-making in the new member states is a process whereby the policy elite is more and more inclined to take into consideration how the policy is formulated within the EU level and to define their own role in this respect. A focus on PermReps in Brussels is arguably going to provide better evidences than if one looks at other actors responsible of foreign policy-making at national level. The experts and analysts from other departments in the MFAs, such as those dealing with United Nations, OSCE or NATO affairs, would be more tempted to define the policy response in more intergovernmental terms and stressing more the national interest. While this view might be seen as common sense, further empirical research will provide supplementary and detailed evidences on how the process of European integration is conducive to socialization of other actors involved in policy-making process and how this, in turn, determines the shape of foreign policy.

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