

# POLITICKÉ VEDY / POLITICAL SCIENCES

Journal for Political Sciences, Modern History, International Relations, security studies / Časopis pre politológiu, najnovšie dejiny, medzinárodné vzťahy, bezpečnostné štúdiá

URL of the journal / URL časopisu: <http://www.politickevedy.fpvmv.umb.sk>

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**Article / Článok:** Book Review: Europeanisation Revisited: Central and Eastern Europe in the European Union / Knižná recenzia: Revízia europeizácie: Stredná a Východná Európa v Európskej Únii  
**Publisher / Vydavateľ:** Faculty of Political Sciences and International Relations – MBU Banská Bystrica / Fakulta politických vied a medzinárodných vzťahov – UMB Banská Bystrica  
**DOI:** <http://doi.org/10.24040/politickevedy.2019.22.2.195-198>

**Recommended form for quotation of the article / Odporúčaná forma citácie článku:**

HLOUŠEK, V. 2019. Book Review: Europeanisation Revisited: Central and Eastern Europe in the European Union. In *Politické vedy*. [online]. Vol. 22, No. 2, 2019. ISSN 1335 – 2741, pp.195-198. Available at: <http://doi.org/10.24040/politickevedy.2019.22.2.195-198>

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## **BOOK REVIEW: EUROPEANISATION REVISITED: CENTRAL AND EASTERN EUROPE IN THE EUROPEAN UNION**

**Vít Hloušek\***

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MATLAK, M. - SCHIMMELFENNIG, F. - WÓZNIAKOWSKI, T. P. (eds.): *Europeanisation Revisited: Central and Eastern Europe in the European Union*. Florence: European University Institute, 2018. 155 p. ISBN 978-92-9084-707-6.

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The topic of Europeanisation of Central and Eastern European countries has seemed to lose prominence since the days of “Eastern Enlargement” in 2004/2007. The reviewed volume however shows that the developments of the last 15 years provide a large set of empirical arguments for reconsiderations of assumptions drawn from the pre-accession period when the main driver of Europeanisation was mainly top-down imposed conditionality.

The volume offers introduction discussing changing models of Europeanisation following change of the structure of external incentives as well as the internal domestic political structures and eight papers devoted to particular issues relevant to the research of Europeanisation of Central and Eastern European members of the EU and remaining Balkan candidate countries. The tenor of the discussion is based on evaluation of how the recent multiple crisis changed patterns of Europeanisation in the region. In particular, the authors discuss issues such as determination of the EU to foster the rule of law enforcement, Europeanisation of developmental strategies, implementation of the EU cohesion policy, Europeanisation of developmental state capacities, or adoption of the euro. In this respect, the volume is not genuinely coherent, yet the shared basic theoretical framework mainstreams it. For a reader who would like to get the most recent survey on the areas that shall matter in Europeanisation research of Central and Eastern European countries, such a broad variety of topics might be even attractive.

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DOI: <http://doi.org/10.24040/politickevedy.2019.22.2.195-198>

The same applies to the scope of the authors who came both from Western as well as Central Eastern Europe and who, being all experts in their fields of interests, mix well senior and emerging researchers and scholars. The unifying pattern of the volume, safe from already commented shared basic theoretical perspective, was the participation at the projects and discussions sponsored by the European University Institute. It means that there is a long-term research interest behind the collection of papers, which leads to combination of theorizing and analysing of empirical facts in most of the contributions to the volume. The fact that the volume was published as an e-book which is freely available, will surely increase its availability and help to increase its reception by the international scholar community. On the other hand, a critical reviewer has to admit that the more careful editorial work would be welcomed.

The quality of the content is, however, more important criterion for evaluation of the presented volume. In this respect, the book contributes a lot to the debate on Europeanisation as well as to debate on the Central and Eastern European politics of which the EU-related dimension is the very important part. The ambition to revise the conceptual background and to present new theoretical arguments was successfully accomplished by the papers many of which are connecting very well theoretical considerations with the empirical evidence going well beyond what a reader would expect of a “*collection of working papers*” (p. 6).

In the introduction, **Michał Matlak**, **Frank Schimmelfennig**, **Tomasz P. Wóznikowski** are expressing need to revise the concept of Europeanisation in Central and Eastern Europe for two reasons: Accession period was in many ways an exceptional one and after 2004/2007/2013 accessions, conditionality was replaced by legal enforcement. Second reason points to the fact that traditional research of Central and Eastern European Europeanisation focused too much on formal adoption of rules and far less on political (formal and informal) Europeanisation of the actors. The authors defined Europeanisation as “*a process of EU policy diffusion*” (p. 8) and offered a clear analytical distinction between Europeanisation as a process and as an outcome. This is a very apt conceptual differentiation indeed, although a reader might feel some doubts about making such differentiation in analysis of practical examples since the process and the outcome connect indispensably with each other as much as the sphere of policy relies on the sphere of politics. One has to assess nevertheless very positively the effort of the authors to bring the variable of domestic politics to the prominent place of any analysis of Europeanisation. The same applies to

the way the editors acknowledged the de-Europeanisation as a serious option. Everybody interested in theorizing the Europeanisation has to subscribe critical remark of the editors pertaining to the fact that the vast body of conceptual papers on Europeanisation of Central and Eastern Europe stems from the period around the turn of Millennium. These concepts are not able to explain the “pot-conditionality” mechanisms of Europeanisation turning more to legal enforcement via the Commission and the ECJ. Very important is the discussion on credibility of the EU as a trigger of Europeanisation too.

In the following paper, **Frank Schimmelfennig** and **Ulrich Sedelmeier** offer a critical reappraisal and an excellent update of their famous model of external incentives vis-à-vis the recent “new” member states and South Eastern European candidate countries. They discuss the Model of External Incentives in a refreshing way as a combination of changing rewards, conditions, credibility and costs. The reader will appreciate the way **Schimmelfennig** and **Sedelmeier** are differentiating between the realm of single-market compliance and political compliance to liberal democratic principles of governance. They discuss the “democratic backsliding” in a much nuanced way. For a reader having first-hand experience with Central European politics, the strong compliance to the single market *acquis* is not that surprising given the reward of being in and the potential costs of non-compliance. If we add the pro-market discourses favored even by most of the Central European soft Eurosceptics, the compliance is the most probable outcome. In terms of single-market benefits, I would not say the reward was already consumed because of ongoing inflow of FDIs and cohesion funds’ money fostering modernisation as well as interdependence and (as a product) compliance.

**Graeme Crouch** is discussing in his paper new ways of horizontal Europeanisation of the South Eastern European countries. The paper is more interesting as a conceptual piece since the evidence stems from just two examples of pre-accession Croatia. **Flavia Jurje** examined effects of Europeanisation on domestic political structures – horizontal division of power between the executive and the legislative body – tested empirically on Romania. The paper offers an inspiring methodological approach of structural network analysis too. The paper written by **Dimitry Kochenow** and **Petra Bárd** discusses in normative way the rule of law in “new” member countries of Central and Eastern Europe. It is an interesting account on illiberal trends in Hungary and Poland summarising very well the legal aspects of the problem the EU institutions have with these two member states. The authors showed not only

the fundamental breach of basic legal values of the EU by Hungary and Poland but discussed somewhat “powerless” position of the current EU (p. 81) unable to enforce the EU values and norms. This discussion is very interesting especially for the readers like me who are not experts in the EU law. Only the comparison with Austria in 2000 lacks deeper understanding of dramatically different political context compared to the situation almost two decades ago.

Last four papers are dealing with economical features of Europeanisation. **Dorothee Bohle** and Wade Jacoby are assessing Europeanisation of Central and Eastern European developmental strategies. **Gergö Medve-Bálint** deals with the cohesion policy and its implementation from the important yet under-evaluated point of view of quality of Central and Eastern European governance and government. **Visnja Vukov** focuses on the EU integration as a factor affecting strongly on developmental capacities of Eastern European countries demonstrating that the Europeanisation of state capacities in economics has a long-lasting positive effect. In a way, one can read Vukov’s paper as a complement to the general claim of **Schimmelfennig** and **Sedelmeier** that there is an intensive compliance in areas pertaining the single-market issues. Last chapter written by Amy Verdun analyses the policies of (non)adoption of the Euro currency. Verdun present a useful survey of and discussion on the patterns of Europeanisation in the sphere of monetary union. She focuses mainly on the top-down stream of Europeanisation underestimating somewhat the negative impact of domestic political debates undermining the efforts of pro-Euro actors and incentives, although she concludes that “*having a Eurosceptic government (or president) in place poses as a real obstacle to euro adoption*” (p. 154).

Although not fully coherent, the volume *Europeanisation Revisited: Central and Eastern Europe in the European Union* deserves full attention and wide readership coming both from the are specialists as well as from Europeanisation generalists. It offers very fresh and relevant impulses and insights into the debate on Europeanisation, which seems to be less fashionable than around 2004 but it is surely not less important for understanding the reality of Central and Eastern Europe in the EU context.