

# A CASE OF PARTIAL CONVERGENCE: THE EUROPEANIZATION OF CENTRAL GOVERNMENT IN CENTRAL AND EASTERN EUROPE

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This article compares the Europeanization of central government in four Central and Eastern European countries (CEECs): Estonia, Latvia, Poland, and Slovakia. Using a large N survey of ministerial civil servants, it finds that the Europeanization of central government is characterized by partial convergence. The scope of Europeanization is large and similar among CEECs, reaching widely and deeply into government ministries. Moreover, patterns of Europeanization are similar among CEECs: the same ministries form the 'inner core' and 'outer circle' of Europeanized ministries; only a small proportion of civil servants work full-time on EU issues and routinely engage in activities that 'project' national policies at EU level. Compared to old member states, patterns of Europeanization show signs of convergence, while the scope of Europeanization is larger in CEECs.

## INTRODUCTION

This article examines the Europeanization of central government in the new member states of Central and Eastern Europe (CEECs). Much of the debate on the Europeanization of central government has concentrated on the impact of EU conditionality on administrative capacity building before accession (Dimitrova 2005; Camyar 2010). More recently, the focus of study has shifted towards the development of public administration after the accession of CEECs to the EU. This research has found that the end of conditionality did not necessarily lead to reform backsliding. Instead, the CEECs have taken diverse pathways after becoming full members of the EU (Dimitrova 2010; Meyer-Sahling 2011).

The examination of the effectiveness of EU conditionality before and beyond the date of accession represents an angle of research that is specific to CEECs. Research that bridges the study of Europeanization in the East and West and hence the old and the new member states is much less common. An important exception concerns the study of EU coordination structures. Their emergence and effectiveness have been examined for the pre-accession period (Lippert *et al.* 2001; Zubek 2008). More recently, the adaptation of pre-accession institutional structures to post-accession realities has been subject to investigation, applying conceptual frameworks that were initially developed for the old member states (Dimitrova and Toshkov 2007; Zubek 2011; Batory 2012; Zubek and Staronova 2012).

In this article, we contribute to the emerging body of literature that seeks to bridge the study of Europeanization in old and new member states. The article has two major objectives. First, we apply the insights of studies of the Europeanization of central government in old member states and Western European non-member states to the new member states of Central and Eastern Europe. Specifically, we rely on and extend the framework that Mastenbroek and Princen (2010) applied to the Netherlands for the comparative analysis of CEECs. Second, we examine the Europeanization of central government in four CEECs – Estonia, Latvia, Poland, and Slovakia – comparing them first among each other

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and then to old member states from Western Europe to the extent that comparable empirical information is available.

In order to capture the Europeanization of central government, we examine the extent to which the EU affects (i) the structure and (ii) the culture of governmental organizations, and (iii) the activities of civil servants employed at central government level. For the comparison of CEECs among each other and with Western European member states, we further distinguish the *scope* of Europeanization and the *patterns* of Europeanization. The former refers to the *extent* to which the EU has been incorporated into the structure, culture, and activities of central government organizations and staff. The latter addresses the internal *ordering* of the three dimensions of Europeanization, such as the distinction of an 'inner core' and 'outer circle' of ministries dealing with EU affairs (Laffan 2006; Laffan and O'Mahoney 2007) and the relative importance of specific types of EU-related activities in the day-to-day work of civil servants, such as the distinction between 'projection-related' and 'reception-related' activities (Bulmer and Burch 2009).

The empirical analysis is based on individual-level data from a survey of civil servants employed in central government ministries. It presents five major findings. First, in CEECs, the EU reaches widely and deeply into central government, in that the day-to-day work of more than half of the civil servants is affected by EU issues. Second, the large scope of Europeanization is evident in all CEECs studied in this article. Third, patterns of Europeanization are also similar across the four CEECs. They indicate the 'two-sidedness' of Europeanization, in that a small group of officials work full-time on EU affairs, while the majority of officials spend a small part of their working week on EU issues. Two-sidedness is further evident in the distinction between an 'inner core' and an 'outer circle' of Europeanized ministries, and a distinction between officials who deal with 'projection-related EU activities' and a much larger group that deals primarily with 'reception-related EU activities'.

Fourth, significant differences between the CEECs are limited to the cultural dimension of Europeanization. Civil servants differ in their support for EU integration by and large reflecting citizen attitudes towards European integration. Finally, the comparison to old member states from Western Europe suggests that the scope of Europeanization is larger in CEECs, while patterns of Europeanization are remarkably similar in the East and West. However, comparable data are largely limited to the Netherlands and a handful of other old member states and non-member states from Western Europe, implying the need for further cross-regional studies of the Europeanization of central government.

The article further places the findings in the context of the literature on the Europeanization of central government, in particular, arguments that predict: (i) the convergence of CEECs among each other and with old member states from Western Europe; (ii) the regional exceptionalism of CEECs in comparison to the old member states; and (iii) the emergence of clusters of CEECs and hence the differentiation among CEECs and vis-à-vis old member states. We argue that the Europeanization of central government qualifies as a case of partial convergence. The large range of similarities among the CEECs and between them and old member states provides support for the notion of convergence. However, convergence is partial, as it does not consistently apply across all dimensions of Europeanization. Moreover, the larger proportion of officials who are involved in EU activities in CEECs suggests – to the extent that comparable data are available – a wider and deeper Europeanization of central government in CEECs compared to old member states and non-member states from Western Europe.

The article is divided into four parts. The first part discusses the literature on the Europeanization of central government, in particular the framework proposed by Mastenbroek

and Princen (2010). The second part develops the three scenarios for the Europeanization of central government in CEECs. The third part outlines the data and operationalization of the framework. The fourth part presents the empirical findings for the CEECs collectively and individually. The conclusion summarizes the findings and explores mechanisms of executive Europeanization in light of the literature on the Europeanization of central government.

## STUDYING THE EUROPEANIZATION OF CENTRAL GOVERNMENT

Over the last decade and a half, the Europeanization of central government has been widely studied for old member states and Western European non-member states (Goetz 2000; Jordan 2003; Lægread *et al.* 2004; Bulmer and Burch 2005, 2009; Laffan 2006, 2007; Laffan and O'Mahoney 2007).<sup>1</sup> Mastenbroek and Princen (2010) (henceforth M&P) integrate this body of research, distinguishing three dimensions of the Europeanization of central government: the incorporation of the EU into (i) the structure and (ii) the culture of government organization, and (iii) the type of EU-related activity that civil servants perform. They then examine one old member state, the Netherlands, on the basis of a large-scale survey of civil servants employed at central government ministries.

First, the 'structural dimension' concerns the incorporation of EU affairs into government organizations. M&P specifically examine the extent to which civil servants employed by government organizations, primarily ministries, deal with EU policies and the amount of time that they spend every week on EU affairs. In the analysis of the Dutch case, they show that approximately 30 per cent of all central-level civil servants are involved in the management of EU policies. However, there are important differences across ministries. Moreover, M&P show that the overwhelming majority of civil servants spend only a small part of their weekly working time on EU affairs. They therefore conclude that the Europeanization of Dutch central government is 'two-sided': on the one hand, a significant proportion of civil servants deal with EU issues but on the other hand, only a very small group carries the bulk of the government's EU-related work.

Second, M&P refer to the cultural dimension of Europeanization as the 'civil servants' working practices and their outlook'. They examine the importance of the EU in personnel management such as training curricula, recruitment practices, and career progression. Moreover, they seek to capture the extent to which civil servants 'think European'. Following Jordan (2003), they explore issues such as the importance of EU issues in ministerial policy-making relative to national issues and the extent to which civil servants direct their attention to the coordination of policies to Brussels rather than to other ministries at the national level. M&P find limited support for the Europeanization of Dutch central government on the cultural dimension. EU issues are moderately incorporated into the management of personnel and there is no evidence that civil servants think overly European at the expense of their national orientation in policy-making and coordination.

Third, M&P refer to the 'tasks and roles' of civil servants as the third dimension of Europeanization. Following Bulmer and Burch (2009), reception-related activities concern the transposition and implementation of EU policies at the national level. By contrast, projection-related activities include the preparation of national positions for EU-level negotiations, regular participation in EU-level meetings organized by the Council and the Commission, as well as the coordination of policies with officials from other EU member states. For the Dutch case, M&P show that reception-related activities are more important for civil servants than projection-related activities. Moreover, civil servants who deal

with reception-related activities do not necessarily work on projection-related tasks. This finding reinforces the two-sided nature of the Europeanization of central government.

Research on the Europeanization of central government conducted prior to M&P's analysis typically relies on different methods and focuses on the structural dimension of Europeanization. For instance, Lægread *et al.* (2004) survey heads of departments (rather than all employees of central government ministries) to examine Europeanization in Finland, Sweden, Norway, and Iceland. They find that 50–60 per cent of the departments dealing with internal market policies are significantly affected by the EU. By contrast, EU exposure is much less relevant for departments working on foreign and security policy, justice, and home affairs.

These findings are complemented by qualitative studies of Europeanization. Laffan (2006), in research on Ireland, Finland, and Greece, and Laffan and O'Mahoney (2007), in a study of the Irish case, distinguish between the 'central coordinators' including foreign affairs, finance and prime ministers' offices, an 'inner core' such as agriculture, interior, and economic affairs, and an 'outer circle' of ministries for which EU affairs are secondary. M&P's study confirms the basic distinction between an inner core and outer circle of ministries dealing with EU affairs.

For CEECs, the Europeanization of central government has mainly been addressed in the context of studies of the coordination of EU policies. Research that moves beyond specialized structures for EU coordination has been less common so far. An important exception is the study by Zubek and Staronova (2012) on the impact of EU exposure on ministerial oversight structures in Estonia, Poland, and Slovakia. Their findings imply a distinction between an inner core and outer circle of EU-oriented ministries in CEECs, for instance the distinction between highly exposed ministries such as 'agriculture' and less exposed ministries such as 'interior' in all the countries under study.

In order to gain a comprehensive understanding of the Europeanization of central government in CEECs, this article therefore applies the framework developed by M&P for the comparative analysis of new EU member states. M&P's framework was originally developed for the analysis of a single case at a single point in time. In order to open the framework for comparative analysis, we introduce two additional dimensions that cut across M&P's original formulation. First, we distinguish the *scope* of Europeanization, which refers to the extent to which central government is Europeanized. Put simply, the scope of Europeanization allows us to distinguish basic proportions, for instance the difference between 30, 50, or 70 per cent of civil servants dealing with EU policies. Second, we distinguish *patterns* of Europeanization. They concern the ordering of Europeanization features. For instance, patterns of Europeanization indicate whether the inner core and outer circle of ministries are by and large identical across countries regardless of the extent to which civil servants deal with EU policies. The distinction between the scope and the patterns of Europeanization applies to all three dimensions discussed above.

The distinction between scope and patterns of Europeanization is important for comparative analysis because we may find that the scope differs while patterns are similar. The opposite scenario with similar scopes but different patterns is also conceivable. The differentiation between scope and patterns has implications for our understanding of the 'outcomes' of Europeanization; a key concern of Europeanization studies (Radaelli 2003; Boerzel 2005; Graziano and Vink 2013). In particular, it allows us to qualify the nature of 'convergence and divergence' among CEECs and among them and the old member

states, as it provides a tool to distinguish 'convergence in scope' from 'convergence in pattern' as well as convergence at the level of individual dimensions of Europeanization.<sup>2</sup> The question then arises as to what outcomes to expect for the Europeanization of central government in the CEECs.

### WHAT OUTCOMES TO EXPECT FOR CEECS: CONVERGENCE, DIVERGENCE, OR REGIONAL EXCEPTIONALISM?

In this article, we distinguish three scenarios in order to capture the outcomes of Europeanization in terms of similarities and differences, first, among the CEECs, and second, between them and the old member states. The first scenario expects a convergence among CEECs and between them and old member states. Convergence of national administrative systems is frequently hypothesized in the Europeanization literature (Goetz 2000; Kassim *et al.* 2000; Batory 2012). The participation in EU policy-making and implementation exerts functional pressures for adaptation in the member states. Because all members have to deal with the implementation of EU policies and participation in EU policy-making in the same way, the adaptive pressures are assumed to be uniform, leading to a convergence of administrative systems. As a consequence, one should expect convergence in scope and patterns, that is, CEECs should be similar among each other and they should be similar to old member states.

Second, even if convergence is frequently hypothesized, it is rarely found (for an exception, see Kaeding 2007). Instead, the differential impact of the EU on national administrations is a widely accepted finding in the literature on the Europeanization of public administration in the old member states (Knill 2001; Laffan 2006). Læg Reid *et al.* (2004), who compare the Europeanization of central government in the Nordic states, confirm this finding. Factors such as the status of political relations to the EU, the timing of accession, and the size of a country are found to affect the extent to which central government is Europeanized. In particular, Læg Reid *et al.* (2004) argue that countries with a small administration are likely to be more Europeanized. These countries have generally fewer opportunities for specialization and hence a larger proportion of officials are involved in EU affairs. As a result, Læg Reid *et al.* (2004) are able to explain why the Icelandic government is much more exposed to the EU than the Norwegian case even though both countries were non-EU members at the time of research.

The insights from Læg Reid *et al.* (2004) are relevant for the CEECs. While ten CEECs joined the EU in relatively short succession in 2004 and 2007, they differ considerably with regard to other factors including the size of the country and hence public administration. In particular, the Baltic States and Slovenia are small countries, while Poland and Romania stand out as the largest CEECs. Taking into account the general expectation of a 'differential Europe' (Heritier *et al.* 2001), one should therefore expect that the CEECs differ among each other in scope and patterns of Europeanization, and they should differ from the old member states.

The third scenario returns to a regional perspective, expecting the CEECs to be different from the old member states but similar among each other. The notion of CEECs as regionally exceptional with regard to administrative developments is not new. Taking issue with delays in public administration reform, persisting politicization, a lack of executive coordination capacity, and a sense of general institutional weakness, Goetz and Wollmann (2001) suggested more than a decade ago that a specifically post-communist type of administration might emerge on the ruins of the communist legacy.

With regard to the Europeanization of central government, a similar argument can be put forward. It is widely acknowledged that the preparation for EU accession involved a major logistic effort on the side of the CEECs (Toshkov 2008; Zubek 2008, 2011). It required a wide range of institutional changes and an impressive mobilization of resources, in particular, human resources. While accession to the EU in 2004 and 2007 implied a normalization of the relations between the EU and the CEECs, theories of organizations and more specifically administrative traditions would lead one to expect organizational inertia (at least in the early period) after accession. According to the scenario of regional exceptionalism, we should therefore expect convergence in scope and patterns of Europeanization among CEECs but differences in comparison to old member states.

### CASE SELECTION AND DATA

Empirically, the article compares the Europeanization of central government in Estonia, Latvia, Poland, and Slovakia. The four CEECs joined the EU in 2004 in the context of the Eastern enlargement of the EU. They share the common functional pressures for adaptation that stem from EU membership. They also underwent largely similar accession processes. Estonia and Poland opened negotiations in 1998. Latvia and Slovakia followed in 2000. With regard to the scenarios outlined in the last section, similar scope and similar patterns of Europeanization should therefore be expected across the four countries.

At the same time, the four countries differ with regard to their size, which according to Læg Reid *et al.* (2004) presents a relevant condition for differences in the Europeanization of central government. Estonia and Latvia are among the smallest EU member states with a population of 1.3 and 2.0 million, respectively. Slovakia is not much larger, with 5.4 million inhabitants. Poland is the largest new member state with a population of 38.2 million. Following the second scenario developed above, we should expect differences between four CEECs; in particular, we should expect Poland to differ from the three smaller countries in the sample.<sup>3</sup>

The empirical analysis relies on a large N survey of ministerial civil servants that was conducted by the authors in the spring and summer of 2008 in the context of an OECD study on the post-accession sustainability of civil service reform in CEECs (Meyer-Sahling 2009). The survey included many but not all of the questions initially asked for the Netherlands by 't Hart *et al.* (2007) and later used by M&P. The survey was managed as an online survey in local languages. Web-based surveys have the advantage that one reaches a much larger number of potential respondents; they are also more cost- and time-efficient than traditional, paper-based surveys. However, web-based surveys, especially when targeting a large population such as ministerial civil servants, provide less control over the identity of respondents.

In order to maximize the consistency and reliability of the data, the same strategy for the distribution of the survey link was followed in each country. In the context of a research mission to each country, we explained the background and purpose of the survey to the heads of central civil service management departments or equivalent institutions. They distributed the survey link together with a short explanation to the responsible HR managers. HR managers then passed on the link to the civil servants within the core structure of their ministry. Civil servants in agencies, deconcentrated and territorial units of the ministries were excluded from the survey. In order to maximize the comparability of the data, we included responses from the ministries of agriculture, economy, regional development,

transport, labour and social affairs, environment, education, culture, finance, health, interior, and justice, and the prime minister's office or equivalent.<sup>4</sup>

For the four countries, the survey generated 1,507 responses. It is not possible to exactly define the survey response rate because it is not known with certainty who precisely received the email invitation to participate in the survey in the ministries and who had an opportunity to complete the survey. However, it was possible to secure data on the size of government ministries, indicating that the survey includes responses from around 10–25 per cent of the civil servants employed by the ministries. In the ministry of culture in Slovakia, the survey covered up to 30 per cent of all civil servants on the payroll of the ministry.

Data regarding the staff size and demographic characteristics of civil services are notoriously difficult to get in CEECs. Comparisons against the gender distribution of civil servants in ministries of finance, health, and culture in Slovakia suggest a fairly high degree of representativeness.<sup>5</sup> Data collected for the Polish civil service employed across all ministries in 2010 shows a similar pattern for the gender distribution of respondents, while young civil servants – as one would expect from an online survey – appear to be slightly over-represented when comparing 2010 and 2008 data.

The analysis of the three dimensions of Europeanization follows the approach by M&P. With regard to the *structural* dimension, it examines:

- the proportion of civil servants that are involved in EU-related activities;
- the proportion of weekly working time that they deal with EU-related activities;
- the differences in EU involvement across government ministries in order to identify the inner and outer core of Europeanized ministries.

With regard to the *cultural* dimension, the analysis deviates from M&P for the lack of directly comparable data. It therefore focuses on the beliefs and expectations of civil servants with regard to European integration. Specifically, the article examines:

- the extent to which civil servants seek to pursue careers in EU institutions;
- the extent to which civil servants support both EU membership and further European integration.

With regard to the *staff* dimension, the article follows M&P, examining:

- the extent to which civil servants deal with reception- and projection-related activities in the context of their daily jobs.

The next part presents the results of the analysis. This article provides a rare opportunity to analyse and report the results of empirical research that was initially conducted for one old member state from Western Europe and later replicated in a group of new member states from Central and Eastern Europe. We therefore follow M&P's presentation of results as closely as possible to make the comparison of our findings as easy and clear as possible.<sup>6</sup> However, we are aware that the comparison between old and new member states is inevitably limited because comparable data are only available for the Netherlands and, with qualifications, a handful of other North-Western European member and non-member states.

TABLE 1 *Civil servants dealing with EU-related activities*

	Estonia	Latvia	Poland	Slovakia
Proportion working on EU	65.5%	53.4%	66.1%	59.2%
Frequency working on EU	232	126	250	319
Total number of respondents	354	236	378	539

## THE EUROPEANIZATION OF CENTRAL GOVERNMENT AS A CASE OF PARTIAL CONVERGENCE

### Structural dimension

To what extent are EU-related activities part of the day-to-day work of central government civil servants? Table 1 shows that the proportion of civil servants working on EU issues ranges from 53.4 per cent in Latvia to 66.1 per cent in Poland. Slovakia is located between the two countries, while the proportion of Estonian civil servants dealing with EU activities is similar to that of Poland. The proportions indicate that the EU reaches widely and deeply into central government ministries.

The differences between the four countries suggest that small countries are not subject to a larger scope of Europeanization than large countries. In fact, Poland as the largest country in the sample has the largest proportion of civil servants involved in EU affairs. By contrast, Latvia, one of the small countries in the sample, has the lowest proportion. Yet the differences between the countries should not be over-interpreted. Instead, the four CEECs are remarkably similar to each other.

The picture is subject to qualification when considering the amount of time civil servants work on EU issues. Table 2 shows that the largest proportion of civil servants spend less than 25 per cent of their time on EU issues (second column). Proportions range from 60.1 per cent in Poland to 78.8 per cent in Latvia. Even when only looking at the group of officials who work on EU issues, the modal answer is consistently less than 25 per cent of the working week. At the same time, table 2 shows that there is only a small proportion of civil servants who work full time or almost full time on EU issues. The proportion ranges from 8.5 per cent in Estonia to 17.1 per cent in Poland. For the group of officials who work on EU issues, the relevant proportions range from 15.3 (Estonia) to 28.7 (Poland and Slovakia) per cent. Table 2 further shows that the differences between the four countries are small. Civil servants generally spend similar amounts of time on EU issues, and in all four cases it is only a minority of civil servants who work full time on the EU.

Table 3 turns to the variation in the involvement of civil servants across government ministries. In order to enhance the comparability of results across the four CEECs, we distinguish eight policy sectors that coincide with individual ministries in most but not all cases.<sup>7</sup> In particular, we merge the economic policy ministries such as economic affairs, regional development, transport, and labour into one category. This takes into account that central governments differ in the way they organize economic policies, for instance in Latvia transport policy is covered by the ministry of economic affairs.

The comparison across government suggests three broad groups of ministries. First, the ministries of agriculture, economy (and related ministries), and environment are the most Europeanized ministries. In the words of Laffan (2006) and Laffan and O'Mahoney (2007), they form the 'inner core' of ministries dealing with EU policies. The proportion of

TABLE 2 *Time spent on EU-related work (assuming 40-hour working week)*

	Total group		Civil servants involved in EU-related activities	
	Frequency	Valid percentage	Frequency	Valid percentage
<b>Estonia</b>				
<25	239	72.2%	92	50.3%
25–50	33	10.0%	32	17.5%
50–75	31	9.4%	31	16.9%
>75	28	8.5%	28	15.3%
<b>Latvia</b>				
<25	197	78.8%	50	48.5%
25–50	19	7.6%	19	18.4%
50–75	8	3.2%	8	7.8%
>75	26	10.4%	26	25.2%
<b>Poland</b>				
<25	232	60.1%	71	31.8%
25–50	48	12.4%	48	21.5%
50–75	40	10.4%	40	17.9%
>75	66	17.1%	64	28.7%
<b>Slovakia</b>				
<25	391	71.7%	95	38.9%
25–50	39	7.2%	38	15.6%
50–75	44	8.1%	41	16.8%
>75	71	13.0%	70	28.7%

civil servants dealing with EU issues is above the mean involvement for all four countries. This finding is not surprising in that the EU has acquired relatively more competencies in these policy areas. Second, the ministries of education and culture are consistently least Europeanized and hence part of the 'outer circle' of ministries dealing with EU issues. The values show that the degree of involvement is lowest for all countries for which data are available.

The third group consists of the ministries of finance, interior and justice, and health, and prime ministers' offices (or equivalent, see also endnote 4). Ministries of finance cluster relatively closely to the country means. State Chancelleries in Estonia and Latvia are much less involved in EU issues than the Prime Minister's Office in Poland and the Government Office in Slovakia. Ministries of interior and justice are below the country mean for Estonia and Latvia and close to the country mean of involvement in EU affairs in Poland. Slovakia's interior ministry differs in that the proportion of civil servants who deal with EU issues is much greater than in the other countries. However, the number of respondents from the interior ministry in Slovakia is small, so that one can be less certain about this particular value.

The third and fourth columns of table 3 complement the findings. Column 3 shows the amount of time that civil servants in the ministries spend on EU issues. It shows that civil servants in highly Europeanized ministries spend more time on EU affairs. The last column presents the extent to which working time on EU issues is concentrated or dispersed among civil servants. The dispersion index correlates with the proportion of civil servants working on EU issues and the amount of time they spend on them. In ministries of agriculture, for instance, a much larger share of civil servants spend a lot of time working on EU issues. By contrast, in the less exposed ministries the dispersion index is lower.

TABLE 3 *EU involvement by ministry*

	Involved in EU-related work		Median EU-time share (among civil servants involved in EU work)	Dispersion of EU work (civil servants involved in EU work)
	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage of working time	Dispersion index*
<b>Estonia</b>				
Agriculture	78%	54	50.0%	0.77
Economy, regional, transport, labour	71%	46	22.5%	0.60
Education and culture	n.d.			
Environment	56%	47	17.5%	0.53
Finance	67%	26	50.0%	0.61
Health	75%	3	18.8%	
Interior and justice	66%	19	20.0%	0.57
Prime Minister's office	50%	10	7.5%	0.42
Total	66%	205	25.0%	0.61
<b>Latvia</b>				
Agriculture	58%	15	75.0%	0.74
Economy, regional, transport, labour	58%	29	37.5%	0.62
Education and culture	40%	2	10.0%	
Environment	64%	9	75.0%	
Finance	n.d.			
Health	62%	26	37.5%	0.55
Interior and justice	50%	14	20.0%	0.56
Prime Minister's office	42%	8	16.3%	
Total	56%	103	32.5%	0.61
<b>Poland</b>				
Agriculture	75%	24	50.0%	0.81
Economy, regional, transport, labour	73%	94	75.0%	0.78
Education and culture	44%	4	37.5%	
Environment	70%	19	62.5%	0.68
Finance	61%	72	50.0%	0.65
Health	50%	6	81.3%	
Interior and justice	50%	10	50.0%	0.75
Prime Minister's office	67%	12	45.0%	0.86
Total	66%	241	50.0%	0.72
<b>Slovakia</b>				
Agriculture	63%	29	37.5%	0.68
Economy, regional, transport, labour	62%	127	50.0%	0.71
Education and culture	28%	8	12.5%	
Environment	64%	23	50.0%	0.76
Finance	53%	57	62.5%	0.75
Health	54%	13	75.0%	0.80
Interior and justice	75%	3	57.5%	
Prime Minister's office	64%	34	50.0%	0.66
Total	58%	294	50.0%	0.71

\*Dispersion index not calculated for ministries with fewer than ten respondents who work on EU issues (see M&P for the same approach). For the background and calculation of the dispersion index, see the online Appendix.

Table 3 reinforces the finding that the scope and the patterns of Europeanization are fairly similar across the four countries. Differences between an inner core and outer circle of ministries are clearly identifiable, and even if small differences can be identified the same types of ministries cluster in the two categories. Moreover, the scope of Europeanization appears to be large, in particular in ministries of the inner core where up to 75 per cent of the civil servants regularly work on EU issues.

The impression that central governments in CEECs are subject to a large scope of Europeanization is reinforced when comparing them to the old member states to the extent that comparable data are available. M&P show that in the Netherlands, merely 30 per cent of the central government civil servants work on EU policies and Dutch civil servants generally spend less time on EU issues. At the same time, M&P's analysis shows a distinction between an inner core and outer circle as well as the division between a minority of civil servant who work full time on EU policies and a large majority of civil servants who spend little of their working week on EU issues. For CEECs, we found the same kind of two-sidedness. The empirical data for the Nordic member and non-member states are less directly comparable but point in the same direction.

### Cultural dimension

The essence of the cultural dimension of Europeanization concerns the orientations of civil servants towards the EU. We therefore examine the extent to which civil servants seek to pursue a career at EU institutions and the extent to which they support EU integration. We further follow M&P by examining the relation between the degree of Europeanization and the orientation towards the EU. One would expect that greater exposure to the EU is associated with support for the EU and greater interest in a career at the EU level. This argument reflects Egeberg's (1999) findings that greater EU exposure of civil servants is associated with a shift of allegiances from national to supranational institutions.

We coded the degree of Europeanization by taking for each country the mean for the proportion of civil servants involved in EU affairs as the point of reference (see table 1). We then defined the middle category of ministries as the range  $\pm 5$  per cent of the country mean. Ministries with a degree of EU involvement that is more than 5 per cent above the country mean were attributed a 'high' degree of Europeanization. Ministries with a degree of involvement that is more than 5 per cent below the country mean were coded as having a 'low' degree of Europeanization.

Table 4 shows the proportion of civil servants who seek to pursue a career in EU institutions in relation to the degree to which their ministry is Europeanized.<sup>8</sup> The bottom row shows a high proportion of civil servants who seek a career in EU institutions. It ranges from 49 per cent in Estonia to 63 per cent in Slovakia. In Poland and Latvia the proportion is also around 50 per cent. The values indicate the general attractiveness of EU jobs for civil servants from CEECs.

With regard to the relation between the degree of Europeanization and the interest in an EU career, table 4 does not present a clear picture. In Estonia and to a lesser extent Latvia, it is evident that more exposure is associated with a greater interest in a career in EU institutions. For Poland and Slovakia, this pattern does not apply. Slovakia comes relatively close to the two Baltic States, as the number of observations is very low for the category of low level of Europeanized ministries. The relevant distinction might be drawn

TABLE 4 *Civil servants seeking to pursue a career in EU institutions*

	Estonia	Latvia	Poland	Slovakia
<b>Low</b>	39%	50%	52%	88%
<b>Moderate</b>	47%	52%	35%	60%
<b>High</b>	61%	54%	51%	69%
<b>Total</b>	49%	52%	50%	63%

TABLE 5 *Civil servants' support for EU integration*

	Degree of Europeanization	Estonia	Latvia	Poland	Slovakia
Membership was good for my country	Low	74%	58%	98%	100%
	Moderate	84%	70%	87%	91%
	High	89%	66%	96%	90%
	Total	83%	66%	95%	91%
I'm in favour of more EU integration	Low	70%	50%	96%	88%
	Moderate	66%	58%	94%	68%
	High	60%	60%	92%	63%
	Total	66%	57%	93%	68%

between moderately and highly Europeanized ministries. Overall, it therefore appears that the degree of Europeanization and the interest of civil servants in an EU career are related to each other albeit weakly.

Table 5 shows the support of civil servants for EU accession and future integration. The most interesting result is seen at the aggregate level. In Poland and Slovakia over 90 per cent of the civil servants support EU membership. Furthermore, more than 90 per cent of the Polish civil servants favour more integration and nearly 70 per cent of the Slovak civil servants do so. The overall support for EU integration is lower for Latvia and Estonia. However, in Estonia support is above 80 percent and in Latvia it is above 60 per cent. The second question reported in table 5 concerns the support for further EU integration. While aggregate values are slightly lower, the results still indicate high support for further integration, especially in Poland where 93 per cent of the respondents are in favour of more EU integration.

The relatively large differences between the countries appear to be explained by the extent to which citizens support EU integration. In 2008 – the year when the survey was carried out – Latvia was the country with the lowest public support for EU integration among the new member states, in that less than 30 per cent of the population considered EU membership ‘a good thing’. By contrast, in Poland approval ratings stood at 66 per cent and in Estonia and Slovakia they were just above 60 per cent (European Commission 2012).

At the same time, there appears to be no strong relation between the degree to which ministries are Europeanized and the support of civil servants for EU integration. For Estonia, a high degree of Europeanization appears to be associated with a positive evaluation of EU membership. In Latvia, the pattern is similar though the difference lies between low Europeanization on the one hand and medium and high Europeanization on the other. For Poland and Slovakia there does not appear to be any association between the degree of Europeanization and civil servants' support for EU integration. The differences between the two Baltic States on the one hand and Poland and Slovakia on the other are likely to be driven by the generally high support for EU integration among the latter.

Overall, the cultural dimension is characterized by a mix of similarities and differences. The large interest in EU careers and the positive evaluation of EU membership suggest a large scope of Europeanization. Moreover, the weak association between EU exposure and the extent to which civil servants ‘think European’ applies fairly consistently across the four countries. However, the differences in support for EU integration are noteworthy, indicating that the cultural dimension of Europeanization is characterized by important

TABLE 6 *Importance of types of EU-related activities for civil servants working on EU issues*

Statement	Estonia	Latvia	Poland	Slovakia
Preparation of national input into meetings that take place at the EU level	57.8%	48.7%	46.8%	58.3%
Participation in meetings organized by the European institutions such as the European Commission, the Council of Ministers	48.9%	40.0%	54.9%	48.8%
Consultation with colleagues from one or more EU member states	46.8%	40.0%	44.9%	54.2%
Exchange of experts, bilateral or multinational cooperation programmes	38.5%	41.3%	64.1%	49.0%
Transposition of European policies into national legal measures	70.6%	71.7%	67.1%	67.0%
Practical application or enforcement of rules and policies that originated in the EU	79.3%	74.6%	81.1%	81.0%
Taking into account EU policies during national policy-making	80.2%	75.2%	80.2%	72.8%

elements of intra-regional differentiation. It is more difficult to compare the results to the findings for the old member states, as the cultural dimension of Europeanization is rarely assessed. Yet the weak association between EU exposure and cultural indicators of Europeanization is also found by M&P for the Netherlands.

### Staff dimension

As the third dimension of Europeanization, we examine the type of EU-related activities that civil servants perform. Based on 't Hart *et al.*'s (2007) original survey, we asked seven questions that correspond to the questions that M&P used for their analysis. They distinguish between 'projection-related' and 'reception-related' activities (Bulmer and Burch 2009). Table 6 shows the proportion of respondents that considers these activities as important or very important.<sup>9</sup> Two major findings can be identified.

First, table 6 shows that civil servants consider reception-related activities to be more important than projection-related activities. When asked about the need to take EU policies into account at the national level, up to 80 per cent of the civil servants respond positively. However, even projection-related activities are seen as important by 40–55 per cent of the civil servants. Second, table 6 indicates that on the staff dimension the differences between the countries are fairly small. The absolute values are relatively similar across the countries. Moreover, for all four countries, reception-related activities are considered to be more important than projection-related activities.

Following M&P, we complement the assessment using principal component analysis to uncover underlying dimensions in the data. A high factor loading suggests that responses correlate closely. It implies that officials who find one activity important will also find another, correlated activity important. M&P identify two separate dimensions, confirming their conceptual distinction. One dimension includes activities related to projection and the other dimension captures reception-related activities. M&P conclude that the two types

TABLE 7 *Factor loadings of specific EU-related activities*

	National input into EU policy-making	Implementation of EU rules
<b>Estonia</b>		
Preparation of national input	<b>0.801</b>	0.240
Participation in EU-level meetings	<b>0.840</b>	0.228
Consultation with other member states	<b>0.865</b>	0.139
Bi- and multilateral exchange	<b>0.705</b>	-0.010
Transposition of EU policies	0.221	<b>0.844</b>
Application and enforcement of EU rules	-0.035	<b>0.882</b>
Taking into account EU policies	0.268	<b>0.779</b>
<b>Latvia</b>		
Preparation of national input	<b>0.835</b>	0.148
Participation in EU-level meetings	<b>0.839</b>	0.056
Consultation with other member states	<b>0.769</b>	0.152
Bi- and multilateral exchange	<b>0.626</b>	0.353
Transposition of EU policies	0.229	<b>0.821</b>
Application and enforcement of EU rules	-0.004	<b>0.860</b>
Taking into account EU policies	0.292	<b>0.765</b>
<b>Poland</b>		
Preparation of national input	<b>0.785</b>	0.105
Participation in EU-level meetings	<b>0.775</b>	0.308
Consultation with other member states	<b>0.868</b>	0.051
Bi- and multilateral exchange	<b>0.719</b>	0.062
Transposition of EU policies	0.275	<b>0.804</b>
Application and enforcement of EU rules	-0.069	<b>0.803</b>
Taking into account EU policies	0.206	<b>0.836</b>
<b>Slovakia</b>		
Preparation of national input	<b>0.704</b>	0.429
Participation in EU-level meetings	<b>0.804</b>	0.335
Consultation with other member states	<b>0.869</b>	0.112
Bi- and multilateral exchange	<b>0.839</b>	0.011
Transposition of EU policies	0.205	<b>0.824</b>
Application and enforcement of EU rules	0.102	<b>0.826</b>
Taking into account EU policies	0.179	<b>0.837</b>

of EU-related activities are essentially performed by distinct groups of civil servants. More specifically, they identify what they call a 'participation ladder' whereby one group of civil servants primarily works on reception-related tasks, while a second group deals with reception and, in particular, projection-related tasks.

For the four CEECs our analysis reveals a very similar picture. Table 7 shows that projection-related tasks form one dimension, while reception-related tasks form another. The two-dimensional pattern applies consistently to all four countries. Moreover, the factor loadings for both dimensions reported in table 7 are high, ranging from 0.63 to 0.87 (marked in bold) (0.4 is usually taken as a cut-off point to decide whether or not to include a variable for a particular dimension).

For the staff dimension, we therefore also conclude that the scope and patterns of Europeanization are similar among the CEECs. Moreover, the finding matches the two-sided pattern of Europeanization that M&P found for the Netherlands. Bearing in mind that we can compare the data to only one old member state, the results suggest potential for convergence in patterns between old and new member states also on the staff dimension of Europeanization.

## CONCLUSION

In this article we have examined the Europeanization of central government in the new EU member states of Central and Eastern Europe. We have applied and extended the analytical framework developed by Mastenbroek and Princen (2010) for the comparative analysis of new EU member states. Based on a large N survey of civil servants employed at central government ministries, we have first compared four CEECs: Estonia, Latvia, Poland, and Slovakia among each other. Subsequently, we have compared the new members to Western European member states to the extent that comparable empirical insights are available.

The empirical analysis has shown that the Europeanization of central government in the four CEECs studied in this article is characterized by a remarkably high degree of convergence. On all three dimensions, the scope of Europeanization is high and it is relatively similar across the countries. Moreover, the patterns of Europeanization are very similar. In all four countries we identified a large proportion of civil servants who work on EU issues but only a small group that does so full-time. We consistently identified the same ministries in an inner core and outer circle of more or less Europeanized ministries. In all four countries our analysis showed distinct groups of civil servants who work on reception-related EU activities and others who concentrate on projection-related EU activities, which involve regular contact with EU institutions and officials from other member states.

Relevant differences between the countries were only found in relation to the cultural dimension of Europeanization. Specifically, the support of civil servants for EU integration differed across the countries, in particular between low support in Latvia and very high support in Poland. The evidence suggested that civil servants' support for EU integration reflects citizen attitudes towards EU integration, which is in itself a relevant finding that will require further research in the future. Yet overall the comparison indicates a convergence in patterns and at least a partial convergence in the scope of the Europeanization of central government in CEECs.

The analysis has further provided an opportunity to compare the Europeanization of central government in old and new member states. The findings suggest that the patterns of Europeanization, in particular, are very similar across the regions. The study by M&P (2010) for the Netherlands revealed a pattern of two-sided Europeanization, which has been confirmed for the new member states. Moreover, the distinction between an inner core and outer circle of ministries that has been identified by Lægneid *et al.* (2004) and Laffan (2006) in comparative studies of Western European member and non-member states has been found among the four CEECs studied in this article.

It is more difficult to directly compare the findings as far as the scope of Europeanization is concerned. Europeanization research has attempted to classify the degree of change as transformation, accommodation, and absorption (Radaelli 2003; Boerzel 2005) but it remains a matter of interpretation how to differentiate a high, medium, and low degree of change. In relative terms, our article suggests that the scope of Europeanization is larger in the new member states than in the Netherlands as the only old member state for which directly comparable data are available. Without further comparable empirical evidence from additional Western European states it is difficult to confirm the extent to which the difference in the scope of Europeanization applies consistently across old and new member states. Yet, overall, the insights of qualitative and quantitative studies of old member states in comparison to the findings of this article suggest a convergence in patterns of Europeanization while the scope of Europeanization differs.

In relation to the three scenarios of convergence, differentiation, and regional exceptionalism, our article has found most support for the first and the third scenarios. The convergence in patterns of Europeanization is the most consistent finding of this article. It applies to the comparison among the four CEECs as well as in comparison to the old member states to the extent that empirical information is available and comparable. While the Europeanization literature, in particular in relation to the old member states, tends to emphasize the persistence of national diversity, our article implies that convergent outcomes are more prevalent than is often appreciated.

By contrast, the differences in the scope of Europeanization lend most support to the notion of regional exceptionalism, as the CEECs are consistently characterized by a larger scope of Europeanization than the old member states. The finding might plausibly be traced to the pre-accession period. The preparation for EU accession required a major mobilization of resources in the CEECs. Moreover, pre-accession Europeanization involved major institutional and policy change in CEECs that complemented and reinforced the transformation that was triggered by the change of regime in 1989/1990. It is likely that the large scope of Europeanization reflects the specific European integration trajectory of CEECs.

Our study has provided least support for the scenario that emphasizes differences among CEECs. The intra-regional differences have been largely limited to the cultural dimension of Europeanization. It implies that this scenario is relevant, and it might gain importance as the formative period of pre-accession Europeanization becomes more distant in time. For the time being, our study has shown that the Europeanization of central government qualifies as a case of partial convergence both within Central and Eastern Europe and in comparison to Western Europe.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

We would like to thank Sunil Patil for research assistance, and Francisco Cardona, Bob Bonwitt, and four anonymous reviewers for comments on earlier drafts of this article.

## NOTES

<sup>1</sup> We follow the recent state of the art review by Graziano and Vink (2013, p. 37) to define Europeanization as a 'process of adaptation to European regional integration'.

<sup>2</sup> Note, we do not examine the 'process' of Europeanization but concentrate on 'outcomes'. Outcomes are typically discussed with regard to convergence vs. divergence as well as with regard to the degree of change, such as transformation, accommodation, and absorption (Radaelli 2003; Boerzel 2005). We will return to questions regarding the degree of change in the conclusions.

<sup>3</sup> For the selection of cases, we follow Lægheid *et al.* (2004). However, the difference in size is not the only condition that might be relevant for variation in the Europeanization of central government among CEECs (see, e.g. Kassim *et al.* 2000; Knill 2001; Laffan 2006).

<sup>4</sup> Prime ministers' offices include the State Chancelleries in Estonia and Latvia, the Prime Minister's Office in Poland, and the Government Office in Slovakia. We do not include presidential offices in the analysis.

<sup>5</sup> In Slovakia, we attempted to secure staffing information from individual ministries by invoking the freedom of information act. The procedure provided basic information for a small group of ministries, which are used here to estimate the representativeness of the data.

<sup>6</sup> An exact replication of M&P's format of tables is available in the online Appendix. Throughout the article and Appendix we present frequencies and proportions of respondents for individual countries. The results have not been weighted in accordance with demographic and institutional factors because of a lack of detailed information regarding the population of civil servants.

<sup>7</sup> The focus on eight policy sectors reduces the complexity when presenting four countries (rather than a single case).

<sup>8</sup> For presentational reasons, we report the proportion of civil servants that 'agree' and 'strongly agree' with the statement. For further details, see the online Appendix.

<sup>9</sup> For the exact replication of M&P's table including frequencies, see the online Appendix.

## SUPPORTING INFORMATION

Additional supporting information may be found in the online version of this article: Appendix S1.

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