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ENLARGEMENT OF ANOTHER KIND ...

**Study on the specific features of the
candidate countries of central and eastern Europe**

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Notre Europe

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FOREWORD

I am, more often than I would like, surprised that there is so little discussion about the forthcoming enlargement in the European public debate. Or rather, that this promising topic should so rapidly boil down to the question of the institutions in an enlarged Union, which is not quite the same issue.

For it is becoming increasingly clear that this enlargement is very different from the previous ones, and is raising problems of an unprecedented nature and magnitude in the Union's short history. Letting this realisation sink in without further comment would be dangerous, for it could encourage the wildest fears and fantasies, ultimately leading to what I have on occasion referred to as "schizophrenia": the contrast between an urgent political necessity, regularly highlighted but not acted upon, and a purely technical negotiation mandate left to the Commission and resulting in a discouraging inventory of the difficulties to be addressed.

Franciszek Draus has kindly accepted Notre Europe's invitation to try and explain this grey area of enlargement and identify the specific social, economic, institutional and political features of the central and eastern European candidates. His study demonstrates that beyond the figures – which apply to very different situations and are therefore frequently misleading – the real challenge of the enlargement to eastern Europe is how to integrate societies (rather than just economies) that are in the midst of transition and reconstruction into a homogeneous entity.

The findings are disturbing but meet the objective set. No doubt, given its emphasis on the fact that new problems are involved, this report might be accused of wishing to make things even more difficult. I nevertheless believe that it is useful and necessary to tackle the issues head on. All those who, like me, are campaigning for rapid enlargement in the political sphere know that it is easier to move forward once the real issues have been identified with the firm aim of resolving them. In a democratic Europe, to plead for a rapid enlargement is to accept public debate on all of its consequences, whether positive or negative. It also means acknowledging differences which will not necessarily disappear with time and are best regarded as sources of enrichment for the European integration process.

The proposals with which the author concludes his report bring us back to the fundamental question which I had myself endeavoured to raise: how can we find a practical way of reconciling the urgent political necessity of enlargement with the indispensable period of time required to resolve the substantial convergence difficulties we know lie ahead? We must lose no time in investigating the new political solutions required to resolve this dilemma.

Jacques Delors

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INTRODUCTION

The enlargement of the European Union to eastern Europe – to the former communist countries – is a specific process. It differs greatly from previous enlargements and largely surpasses them in terms of its political, economic and social scale and general historical significance. The difference is both quantitative and qualitative.

What makes this enlargement exercise so specific?

A first reason is the number of candidate countries: an objective factor which adds a new dimension to this enlargement and requires the Union to carry out substantial institutional reform. Another aspect concerns a number of specific features of the candidate countries, which stem from their objective historical situation. These features include the level of socioeconomic development, which overall stands at barely half the Community average, and certain characteristics of their institutional culture, which indicate that they still have considerable ground to make up in political terms.

The enlargement of the European Union to eastern Europe is also specific on account of a number of subjective factors that are influencing policy-making in the central and eastern European countries (CEECs) today and will probably continue to do so in future. For instance, some of these countries have political interests and ambitions which do not quite correspond to the general guidelines of the European Union's immigration and border control policy. The picture of an enlarged Europe as drawn by the candidate countries also reflects views which do not entirely coincide with the idea of European integration currently shared or being discussed by the main Member States of the Union. Lastly, the enlargement involves countries which have only just recovered their national sovereignty, or in some cases gained it for the first time in their history. Given the attachment of these countries to their sovereignty, which can be dogmatic or indeed almost mystic in some cases, they are little inclined to adopt an international institutional framework which places the very concept of sovereignty into perspective. The differences we have just pointed out, and will discuss in more detail later, are hard historical facts and forces. They are factors which are fundamentally influencing policy in the CEECs.

We could argue that the objective differences (such as the gap in socioeconomic development) and the cultural and institutional divergences will gradually diminish as economic growth builds up and democratic awareness and institutions become more firmly entrenched. The process will inevitably be long and arduous, however. Furthermore, what will probably have the most pronounced and lasting influence on the policy of these countries – and hence the policy of the enlarged European Union – are the subjective differences and factors. The interests, ambitions and feelings expressed by certain candidate countries with respect to their partners and other countries, whether neighbouring or distant, are not merely related to the immediate circumstances. They are dictated by their national interests and historical identity.

Yet the distinctive nature of the European Union's enlargement to eastern Europe does not stem solely from the singularities and question marks on the candidates' side. It is also linked

to the situation in the European Union itself. The Union's current state of political, economic and social integration also presents many distinctive features and leaves a number of questions unanswered. There is no such thing as a European Union that is fully completed, institutionally stable, and politically confident, save one particular problem to resolve : enlargement to eastern Europe. Integration in the western part of our continent is far from concluded. The European Union is still more of a project than a reality. In recent years, it has undoubtedly made enormous progress in the economic sphere, but has yet to achieve genuine political integration and assert a European institutional identity with respect to foreign and security policy. Here again, what is at issue is not a particular short-term or exceptional situation but the very political rationale underpinning European integration. The aim of creating an ever closer union among the States and peoples of Europe calls for ceaseless action, sustained momentum and tireless exploring of institutional and political solutions. Every enlargement, of the European Communities, and now the European Union, required the candidate countries to jump on the integration bandwagon without breaking a leg and without knocking the vehicle off course. In the present case, the integration bandwagon is moving particularly fast, while several of the candidates are in pretty poor "physical shape"...

The enlargement of the European Union to eastern Europe is a specific process for yet another reason. Independent of the objective and subjective factors mentioned above, the countries involved – in particular Poland, Hungary and the Czech Republic –see their accession to the European Union as a distinctive historic endeavour.

In the case of previous enlargements, there were no essential differences between the European Communities or the European Union on the one hand and the candidate countries on the other in terms of the perception and interpretation of enlargement or accession. Generally speaking, the aim was to expand the geographical scope of Community law and policies. It went without saying that this legal and political enlargement would also contribute to the process of creating an ever closer union between States and peoples, in line with the objective enshrined in the founding treaties. In this case, things are more complex. By and large, the Union perceives this exercise in the same way as the previous ones. However, the forthcoming enlargement of the Community area is also supposed to improve conditions for economic and social development and establish additional guarantees of democracy and political stability. While these aspects are naturally part of the current perception of enlargement, for the CEECs the main significance of the process lies elsewhere. They view their accession to the European Union in specific terms and lend it an equally specific historical significance. Countries such as Poland, Hungary and the Czech Republic consider their accession to the European Union as a moral and historical right, an act of historical justice, or a reward for 50 years of suffering under communist rule (1). They see it as the settlement of a historical debt that western Europe contracted by letting central and eastern Europe be taken over by the Soviet Union after the second world war. *"The western powers chose to let half of Europe come under Soviet influence. The West has a share of moral responsibility for this situation. (...) The division of Europe was subsequently confirmed and compounded (in particular in economic terms) by the fact that the satellite countries of central Europe, pressured by the Soviet Union, had to reject the Marshall Plan. (...) Once again, the countries of western Europe thus contracted a form of debt vis-à-vis the countries located on the other side of the Iron Curtain"* (2). Poland also points out its role in the collapse of communism. "It is through our own means that we managed to ward off the

totalitarian threat hanging over the world as a whole and Europe in particular. *"By freeing the world of this fear, have we not earned a certain right to solidarity?"* (3)

For the CEECs, enlargement is a major and necessary step in the unification or reunification of Europe. The process has acquired a historical and spiritual dimension which goes far beyond the significance of the Community *acquis* and all that it entails. The process is viewed as a historic transformation which involves not only eastern but also western Europe. *"From now on, something has to change in the way of being European and in the way of envisaging and building Europe"* (4).

The Community *acquis*, and the enlargement method which consists of measuring the integration capacity of candidates according to the amount of legislation aligned on Community law or the number of institutions changed to implement Community policies, are thus put into perspective. According to B. Geremek, the enlargement of the Union *"requires generosity and enthusiasm, not just figures and objective criteria"*. V. Havel shares this approach to enlargement: *"I believe the political elite should put the historic, unprecedented dimension of European reunification before their individual interests. It seems dangerous to me that the technical aspect of the negotiations – which touch upon administration, industry, agriculture, etc. – should make us forget the historic significance, the fundamental motivation of reunification."* (5)

From this viewpoint, enlargement is a moral and historical necessity. The collapse of communism has offered Europe *"an opportunity to establish a truly equitable order at last"* (V. Havel). Awareness of this unique opportunity should dominate European policy and guide the enlargement process. It should encourage particular openness and trust. The enlargement of the European Union to the CEECs is basically *"a great adventure of our civilisation. (...) In taking part, we must be pragmatic and precise, but we should also aspire to a degree of change, be capable of heeding the signs of the times and let ourselves be carried by the strength of our vision."* (6)

Therefore it is worth looking more closely at the specific nature of the enlargement of the European Union to eastern Europe. The situation must be carefully examined, taking proper stock of the subjective factors underlying the process. We will do this by briefly looking at five issues which encompass both the objective and subjective factors influencing the CEECs' policy on European integration. In the first chapter, we will examine economic and social development, while in the second we will reflect on the institutional development of these countries. Our aim will be to point out a number of structural and operational differences, approaching them from an analytical perspective which will suggest the emergence of specific systems. We will nevertheless restrict our examination of the particular features of the economic and institutional culture in the CEECs to those aspects that are likely to be useful in understanding the European Union's enlargement process. In the third and fourth chapters, we will consider certain subjective political factors (interests, ambitions and feelings) which are influencing the strategic and diplomatic conceptions and views of the CEECs today and will probably continue to do so in future. By way of example, we will discuss the issue of the specific interests of Poland as regards the area along its eastern border and the question of its sovereignty. Under the heading "Accession doctrine", we will then consider how European integration is perceived and the reasons for accession, as well as the picture of the enlarged European Union as drawn by the CEECs. The final chapter will look at the European Union's

information policy in these countries, the participation of the social partners in the accession policy and the attitude of the general public towards enlargement. In our conclusion, we will suggest a few political proposals which could contribute to making a success of the European Union's enlargement to eastern Europe, both for the candidate countries and the 15 current Member States.

Our ultimate goal is to spark in-depth debate on how best to complete what is a very special project in many respects. Is the European Union's approach to enlargement to eastern Europe taking sufficient account of the objective and subjective singularities found in most candidate countries? Is the accession approach adopted by the candidate countries giving due consideration to the distinctive political, economic and historic situation they are in after the collapse of communism, and to the current position of the European Union itself?

There are no gratuitous questions, either in philosophy or in politics. To raise a question is to put into question, i.e. instil a doubt. Not to upset or discourage, but on the contrary to raise awareness and encourage. For doubt is not an end but a condition for the advancement of knowledge. It is therefore also a condition for intelligent action.

CHAPTER I – SOCIOECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT IN THE COUNTRIES OF CENTRAL AND EASTERN EUROPE

The enlargement of the European Union to eastern Europe involves countries whose current socioeconomic situation and general level of societal development differ in many respects from those found in western Europe. This is due in part to short-term discrepancies related to the transition policy. However, some of the differences also suggest that a specific socioeconomic system is emerging. Whatever the case, they are variables of crucial significance for the enlargement of the European Union.

I.1 – The economic gap

What socioeconomic differences do we find in the CEECs? And what are the socioeconomic trends bringing these countries gradually closer to the Union? There are many such differences and trends, in a variety of areas. They have to do with the structures of the national economy, the level of economic development, and the level and quality of social development. They clearly appear in the tables below.

Per capita gross domestic product (according to purchasing power parities) compared with the Community average (EU=100)

	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999
Bulgaria	27	25	23	22	22
Czech Republic	60	65	64	60	59
Estonia	31	33	37	37	36
Hungary	45	47	48	49	51
Latvia	24	25	27	28	27
Lithuania	27	29	30	31	29
Poland	31	34	35	36	37
Romania	32	33	31	28	27
Slovakia	40	44	46	47	47
Slovenia	62	66	68	69	71

Source: Eurostat, in Uniting Europe No. 111, 7.08.2000.

Unemployment rate

	1996	1997	1998	1999 (Jan.-Jun.)
EU (average)	10.8	10.6	10.0	9.1
Germany	8.9	9.9	9.4	8.8
France	12.4	12.3	11.7	11.1
Bulgaria	13.5	13.7	12.2	14.1
Czech Republic	3.8	4.5	5.9	8.5
Estonia	9.6	9.4	9.6	11.7
Hungary	9.9	9.2	8.0	6.9
Latvia	22.2	15.9	14.7	14.0
Lithuania		14.1	14.0	13.0
Poland	12.4	11.3	10.2	12.5
Romania	5.9	5.5	5.6	6.2
Slovakia	11.2	11.4	12.1	15.8
Slovenia	7.3	7.1	7.7	7.4

Source: Eurostat, in European Commission (ed.), "Employment and the Labour Market in the CEECs", January 2000; European Commission (ed.), "Employment in Europe 1999".

Employment structure by sector (as a percentage of the working population)

	1990			1998		
	Industry	Services	Agriculture	Industry	Services	Agriculture
EU (average)	33.2	60.2	6.7	29.5	65.7	4.8
Germany	40.1	56.2	3.7	34.4	62.8	2.8
France	30.4	63.2	6.4	26.4	69.2	4.4
Bulgaria	36.6	36.7	18.5	26.4	43.5	25.7
Czech Rep.	37.8	42.9	11.8	32.8	53.6	5.4
Hungary	29.7*	53.7*	11.3*	28.0	58.3	7.5
Poland	25.8*	41.4*	25.8*	23.4	45.1	25.7
Romania	37.9	27.6	29.0	27.2	30.4	37.5
Slovakia	32.9	43.3	12.6	28.2	56.6	7.8
Slovenia	43.2	42.1	8.2	34.5	51.7	6.7

Source: Economic and Social Committee, "Employment and the Social Situation in the CEECs", September 2000 (Belated report); the figures marked with an asterisk date back to 1992. European Commission (ed.), "Employment in Europe 1999".

Share of the economic sectors in gross domestic product (base=100)

	Industry (excl. construction)	Services	Agriculture
EU (average)	20.7	67.4	1.6
Germany	23.4	67.2	1.2
France	19.0	70.1	1.8
Poland	27.9	58.7	4.8
Czech Rep.	34.3	53.7	4.5
Hungary	28.1	61.4	5.9
Slovakia	28.1	62.1	4.6
Slovenia	32.0	58.3	3.9

Source: compilation from data contained in the Commission's latest annual reports on the candidate countries, November 1999.

Inflation rate (%)

	1995	1996	1997	1998
Germany	1.7	1.4	1.9	0.9
France	1.8	2.0	1.2	0.8
Bulgaria	62.1	123	1082	22.3
Czech Republic	9.1	8.8	8.5	10.7
Estonia	29.0	23.1	11.2	8.2
Hungary	28.2	23.6	18.3	14.3
Latvia	25.0	17.6	8.4	4.7
Lithuania	39.6	24.6	8.9	4.6
Poland	27.8	19.9	14.9	11.8
Romania	32.3	38.8	154.8	59.1
Slovakia	9.9	5.8	6.1	6.7
Slovenia	13.5	9.9	8.3	7.9

Source: Eurostat, in European Commission (ed.), "Employment and the Labour Market in the CEECs", July 1999.

Since the beginning of the postcommunist transformation, we have grown accustomed to analysing and evaluating the economic systems of the CEECs exclusively in the light of macroeconomic criteria such as gross domestic product, economic growth, inflation, unemployment, the share of the three traditional sectors (agriculture, industry and services) in gross national product and employment, etc. This approach to trends in these countries is undoubtedly valuable and politically useful, but it is also in a way biased. It neglects a number of sociological aspects which are equally important for a proper understanding of the postcommunist economies. Economists, who by nature tend to prefer what can be analysed, quantified and expressed in figures, provide us with regular reports indicating that the gap between the CEECs and the Union is closing in certain areas and persisting in others. Generally speaking, the purely macroeconomic approach is giving us an increasingly

optimistic view of the socioeconomic situation in these countries. However, sociologists are drawing a somewhat different picture. Without denying the economic figures, they are suggesting that a particular form of capitalism is emerging in the CEECs (7), pointing out a number of specific socioeconomic features, including the fundamental weakness of the economy's societal base. They do not necessarily see these specific features and this weakness as obstacles to economic growth and social development, or as barriers to the accession of these countries to the Union. They see them primarily as the defining elements of a specific approach to modernisation, which nevertheless presents a significant challenge for the enlarged Union.

1.2 – The specific social features of postcommunist capitalism

From a sociological point of view, the socioeconomic systems of the CEECs can be characterised first of all by a number of significant dualities. The first of these is between State-owned and privatised enterprises on the one hand and private-sector enterprises on the other. This duality can be seen mainly in management strategies and industrial relations. The State-owned and privatised enterprises (which remain wholly or partially owned by the State) base their action strategies on State subsidies or preferential tax concessions. Their economic strategies tend to be defensive. They feature a relatively strong trade union presence. They usually comply with social law. They are members of the employers' organisations and tend to favour social dialogue. On the other hand, the enterprises which were established in the private sector, with capital contributed by individual entrepreneurs, are dynamic and flexible with respect to action strategies but base their outlook on very short-term economic calculations. What they want is immediate profitability. Productive investment does not always feature among their strategic priorities. Their management methods are frequently incompatible with social law. They dominate the services sector (in particular retailing) and small-scale industrial and crafts manufacturing. The postcommunist private-sector business managers tend to dissuade employees from establishing trade unions in their enterprise. They look upon employers' organisations with a sceptical eye. They usually have no interest in social dialogue (8).

A second duality can be noted between foreign businesses and businesses under foreign control on the one hand, and privatised and private-sector businesses exclusively based on "national" capital on the other. The former usually attempt to instil the economic culture of their home companies or countries. They accept trade unions and are anxious that industrial relations should be properly managed. They invest considerably in executive training. Compared with enterprises based on purely national capital, they offer higher salaries and also register far higher levels of productivity (9).

Lastly, the social and economic systems of the CEECs feature another interesting duality between businesses which operate primarily for export markets and those which produce exclusively for national or regional markets. The former make remarkable profits. They have no difficulty finding foreign partners, which often provide support for their various investment plans. The situation of the latter is almost exactly the opposite, however. Their social and financial situation is usually insecure (10).

Another specific trait of the socioeconomic systems of the postcommunist countries is the extent and significance of the underground economy or "black market". What is known as "informal" economic activities is thought to account for between 20% and 30% of gross

domestic product on average. Furthermore, the black market is not just an economic phenomenon. Since it also has significant social and political repercussions. Informal or undeclared economic activities largely contribute to preserving socioeconomic balance. They ensure a certain political stability. They are tolerated by the State, which rightly regards them as a factor contributing to social peace and alleviating socioeconomic hardship. The political capital made from tolerating these activities offsets, in a way, the losses they cause to the State budget. The social structure of the population groups engaged in undeclared activities in the CEECs also features a number of original traits. They comprise for the most part men with few professional qualifications. Yet if we take Hungary, we can see that the black market includes highly qualified people, such as legal and financial advisers, doctors and health professionals, and persons working in trade and services (in the form of a second job, of course) (11).

Postcommunist capitalism features a significant amount of economic activities which might be referred to as "incivic". These include not only the black market, but also phenomena such as corruption, tax fraud and cronyism. We should stress that what is specific to postcommunist capitalism is not the existence of these phenomena *per se*, but their extent and social importance and the general tolerance with which they are met (including on the part of the State itself).

Another aspect of postcommunist capitalism is socioeconomic inequality. Not just in terms of salaries, but also, and primarily, in terms of access to education, healthcare, justice, the administration, culture, etc. Particular dualities can also be observed in the social sphere. Good schools and quality healthcare naturally exist in the CEECs, but are almost exclusively reserved for people with substantial financial means. In practice, this means they are open only to a small minority. Most of the population has to make do with limited and mediocre services. In the social sphere, cleavages are growing steadily deeper in the postcommunist countries, thus increasing the gap between their average level of social development and that of the Union.

A few social indicators compared with the European Union (1997)

	Life expectancy	Child mortality
EU (average)	77.2 years	5.4 (per 1,000 births)
France	78.1	5
Germany	77.2	5
Poland	72.9	10
Hungary	70.9	10
Czech Republic	73.9	6
Slovakia	73.0	10
Slovenia	74.4	5
Romania	69.9	22
Bulgaria	71.1	16
Estonia	67.7	13
Latvia	68.4	16
Lithuania	69.9	13

	Healthcare expenditure (as a % of GDP)	Education expenditure (as a % of GDP)
EU (average)	6.1	6.0
France	8.0	5.9
Germany	8.2	4.7
Poland	4.8	4.6
Hungary	6.8	6.0
Czech Rep.	7.7	6.1
Slovakia	6.0	4.4
Slovenia	7.4	5.8
Romania	3.6	3.2
Bulgaria	4.0	4.2
Estonia	6.3	6.6
Latvia	4.4	6.3
Lithuania	5.1	6.1

Source: compilation of data obtained from W. Quaisser, M. Hartmann, E. Hönekopp, M. Brandmeier, "Die Osterweiterung der Europäischen Union: Konsequenzen für Wohlstand und Beschäftigung in Europa", Bonn, Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung, 2000.

Poverty is another phenomenon which is taking on worrying proportions in the CEECs. The macroeconomic data indicate that overall wealth in these countries is increasing. However, poverty and social exclusion are also growing. Clearly, the prosperity registered in the macroeconomic figures is not benefiting everyone; it is favouring some and excluding others. In Poland, for instance, relative poverty (the number of people whose salary is below the average) increased by 3% between 1994 and 1999. Absolute poverty has also risen. Statistics show that approximately two million Polish people (out of a total population of 38.6 million) live in absolute misery, i.e. cannot afford proper accommodation and regular meals. Over half the Polish population cannot afford the various educational, medical and cultural services available (12).

Lastly, the feature which in a way sums up the specific nature of postcommunist capitalism is regional disparities. Although the CEECs are deeply attached to their national sovereignty vis-à-vis the outside, they are exploding internally in socioeconomic terms. Geographically, they divide up into prosperous and extremely poor regions. The former are characterised by relatively low unemployment, high salaries, permanent investment (in particular inward investment) and various technological amenities. The latter are crippled by high unemployment, a lack of productive investment, and social and cultural pauperisation. Divisions are forming in particular between national and regional capitals on the one hand and the rest of the country on the other. Furthermore, a significant gap is widening between conurbations and rural regions.

Unemployment in the context of regional disparities (1999)

	Region where unemployment	
	is lowest	is highest
Poland	9%	20%
Czech Rep.	4%	14%
Hungary	4.9 % (5.4%)	12%
Slovenia	5-6%	12,8%

Source: compilation of data obtained from European Commission (ed.), "Employment and the Labour Market in the CEECs", January 2000.

Measured according to the criterion of per capita gross domestic product (in accordance with purchasing power parities), almost all regions in the CEECs are well below the critical level of 75% of the Community average, which determines eligibility for Structural Fund assistance. Out of 50 actual or registered regions (in certain countries some regions exist for statistical purposes rather than as genuine geographical entities), only two exceed the 75% threshold: Prague (119% of the Community average) and Bratislava (96%) (13).

CHAPTER II – THE INSTITUTIONAL CULTURE OF THE COUNTRIES OF CENTRAL AND EASTERN EUROPE

The development of political institutions and civic responsibility in the postcommunist countries of central and eastern Europe (14) raises a legitimate question as to whether and to what extent we are witnessing the emergence of a specific postcommunist form of democracy. This question logically complements the one tackled in the previous chapter, in which we suggested that a specific form of capitalism was taking hold in these countries. Here again, however, we must be particularly cautious in our analysis of the specific political nature of postcommunism. We are assuming that democracy is definitively and irrevocably established in the postcommunist countries of central and eastern Europe. We are also assuming that democracy in practice exists only through a variety of regional and national systems and coexists with various institutional cultures. To identify the specific nature of postcommunist democracy, we must carefully pinpoint the relevant structural and operating differences, and in particular be able to distinguish between short-term differences which are merely the result of the transition policies and those differences whose importance and implications reveal or reflect the emergence of original systems.

By institutional culture, we mean all the operating principles and frameworks of action which reflect and support political and economic life in democracy. These can include both formal and informal principles and institutional and spontaneous frameworks of action. We should further add the question of the political awareness of the general public as the moral foundation of any democratic institutional system. Institutional culture is an objective factor. It codetermines the political identity of a given State.

To analyse institutional culture, we must make a distinction between four levels of political life in democracy: the constitution (operating principles and framework of the government system *stricto sensu*), the institutional base of political life (political parties and associations), the institutional base of economic life (mainly trade unions and employers' organisations) and citizenship (political awareness, attitudes and behaviour, participation of citizens in associations and groups, etc.).

II.1 – The specific nature of the transition process

Generally speaking, the specific nature of institutional life in the CEECs stems from that of the postcommunist transition process itself. For instance, this process differs greatly from the previous democratic reforms which occurred *inter alia* in southern Europe (Spain and Portugal). But the real historical singularity of the process only truly emerges when contrasted with the development of western political institutions.

The aim of political transformation in southern Europe was to evolve from an authoritarian to a democratic system. In the case of the CEECs, the aim is to build democracy on the political, economic and social ruins of communist totalitarianism. The difference between authoritarian and totalitarian regimes (16) is sufficiently eloquent to convey the specific magnitude and historical significance of the postcommunist transformation process. In southern Europe, the

transformation process involved first and foremost the political system. The Spanish and Portuguese economies were in need of some reform, but not the introduction of private property, the labour market, and the mechanism of supply and demand. Civil society in Spain and Portugal needed no special coaching to recover and reaffirm its political autonomy and spontaneity. In the case of postcommunist transformation, the process is in a way total. Almost everything has to be built anew, reinvented, changed, both in terms of the political and economic systems and in terms of civil society.

Democratic reform in southern Europe was historically a redemocratisation process. To help them build a democratic future, the countries involved could rely on their own political and democratic experience from previous periods of their history. They could easily accommodate the postauthoritarian transition to democracy in their respective national contexts and thus consolidate the new democratic institutions and awareness. In the CEECs, democratisation is a historically new phenomenon, both in terms of institutions and political awareness. As we know, the first democratic experiences of Poland and Hungary after the first world war did not last for very long. Only Czechoslovakia succeeded in maintaining a democratic regime between 1918 and 1939.

This specific nature of postcommunist democratisation in historical terms is particularly obvious if we compare it to the political development of the western democracies. Without going into the detail of this fascinating subject, we must underline at least two of its characteristics. The evolution of capitalism and democracy in most western countries was a gradual process which unfolded over a period of centuries. Capitalism and democracy were at first societal forces, before becoming formal and national economic and political systems. Secondly, the development of capitalism and democracy in the West was preceded or accompanied by philosophical debates which supported them as just and good processes on the basis of rational premises on the nature and freedom of humanity. In the CEECs, economic and democratic modernisation started in the 19th century, but was short-lived. Furthermore, it was a policy conducted by foreign imperial administrations (Prussia and Austria) rather than by genuinely national powers. It was unable to generate major philosophical debates on democracy and capitalism. Now that the communist period is over, the process of modernisation has started anew in the CEECs (17). It perhaps marks the first real beginning of modernisation in this part of Europe. Oddly enough, the process has again been triggered by the States themselves, without any real philosophical debate. This, however, would appear to be the historical lot of central and eastern Europe. The State always was and remains the main modernising force. It has never prompted original political ideas. The modernisation of central and eastern Europe has always been a passive and imitative process. Today's transition policy is no exception.

In the western countries, the 19th century was a period of significant democratic learning. This learning occurred within the framework of sovereign national States. Central and eastern Europe was not involved in this capital historical process. At that time, it had other concerns and problems to deal with. In the 19th century, the Poles, Czechs and Hungarians were not living in national States on the road to democratisation, but in the provinces of imperial States. For these people, freedom primarily meant national independence and Statehood. Democracy to them meant the moral duty to join forces for the nation and support action to defend their national interests.

In the western countries, the 20th century saw unimaginable economic and social modernisation, in spite of the two devastating world wars and the ideological and strategic

conflict with communism. In the CEECs, on the other hand, the 20th century first brought the restoration of their Statehood after the first world war and a brief period of national sovereignty, followed by Nazi occupation, communist domination after the second world war, and ultimately the almost miraculous liberation from communist oppression. Virtually throughout these unstable or tragic times, the concept of modernisation was either ideologically banned or politically subverted.

As regards political institutions, the postcommunist transition is an imitative, instrumental and artificial process. After the collapse of communism, the CEECs failed to develop any new, original economic and political order that could have reflected in some way their distinctive historical situation and accommodated their particular mentalities and political traditions. Instead, they turned to the West as a source of efficient political institutions and solutions. They saw the western institutional culture not as the historical result of the modern ideal of freedom and democracy, but as a political and administrative vehicle for rapid transformation, economic prosperity and political stability. The institutional systems established in the CEECs are artificial in two ways. Firstly because they are based on a few western models rather than being rooted in their own society. In some cases, they exceed by far the general public's average level of political culture. Secondly – and this is a specific and permanent trait of the modernisation effort in central and eastern Europe – because they were introduced not only as functional systems but also as educational systems, as a means of learning modern and democratic procedures.

Let us now look in a little more detail at the political institution systems in Poland, the Czech Republic and Hungary, which are the largest countries and those that have undoubtedly made most progress towards modernisation. We will use these countries as a representative sample for the entire region that is sometimes referred to as the "other Europe".

II.2 – The constitutional order

The constitutional systems in these countries were developed on the basis of the theoretical analysis and practical experience of western constitutions, often with the "technical assistance" of western experts. They are original political works in that they combine a number of elements borrowed from the western constitutional systems with certain specific local components (18). It is possible that these constitutional "compilations", overall, will prove perfectly adequate for ensuring institutional stability. We are not querying the viability of the postcommunist constitutions. Yet they contain many political inconsistencies which could create difficulties in periods of crisis.

For instance, the president of the Czech Republic has the right to attend and speak at sessions of the parliamentary chambers and at government meetings, but not the right to initiate legislation. There is therefore some doubt as to the political and legal weight of the president within these forums. Furthermore, the laws adopted and signed by the Czech president must also be signed by the head of government. What would happen if the latter refused to sign is unclear. The Hungarian constitution admits both the principle of collegial governmental responsibility and the principle of individual ministerial responsibility, but does not provide for the possibility of individual motions of censure against ministers. The Polish constitution also features this contradictory mechanism of a two-tiered political responsibility of the government : the collective responsibility of the entire government and the individual

responsability of each minister. It further stipulates that the president "cooperates" with the government in the foreign policy sphere, without clarifying the institutional form or formal limits of this cooperation. Lastly, it establishes a "cabinet council" (the government chaired by the president), without defining its role and powers (19).

II.3 – The institutional base of political life

The institutional base of political life – essentially the political parties – is particularly weak in the CEECs. We should first note a duality between the parties born of the former communist organisations, which have managed to preserve most of their organisational infrastructure and retain a far from negligible membership, and the new political parties. The latter still have great difficulty in getting organised and making their mark on the political scene. This dichotomy is also apparent as regards ideological development. The postcommunist parties have generally aligned themselves on western social democracy, and are more or less sticking to this ideological and political course. Most of the new political parties, on the other hand, have adopted diverse, inconsistent and incoherent ideological profiles. They generally represent conservative and nationalist trends, but usually result from fluctuating ideological combinations which are difficult to identify. The CEECs also feature a few new parties with a social democratic profile. However, their political weight is virtually nil, with the exception of the Czech Republic, where the Social Democrat Party (which has no links with communism) is currently the largest parliamentary group and is in power.

One of the paradoxes is that government policy is largely influenced by neoliberal ideas, despite the extreme weakness of the liberal parties. This is perhaps because liberal political ideas have gradually permeated politics, the economy and society. There could also be a far deeper historical explanation, however, which would confirm the theory that liberalism has never properly taken root in central and eastern Europe, where it remains a mysterious and ill-understood political doctrine to this day (20).

Generally speaking, the new political parties in central and eastern Europe are ideologically confused, organisationally weak, and politically unstable. Recent sociological research (21) shows that their membership is low and their organisational structures are particularly inadequate. They are often most active in national and regional capitals. They make themselves known through the media rather than through direct political contacts with society. They mark themselves out from one another through political temperament and ideological rhetoric rather than political platforms. They are in a permanent state of flux, splitting and merging according to short-term electoral calculations. The Polish political parties are probably the most inventive in this respect. At each parliamentary election, the Polish Right takes on a new organisational form. It is made up of a dozen small parties which endlessly form and break alliances and political cartels, primarily to accommodate the immediate interests of their leaders. The new political parties in the Czech Republic and Hungary are also changing, although their evolution is slower and more discreet than that of the right-wing parties in Poland. For instance, at least four parties have emerged from the successive splits in the civic movement which was behind the Czech "revolution". In Hungary, little is left today of the party which governed the country for the first four years after the collapse of communism.

However, the most significant weakness of the political parties, independent of their historical origins, is that they are unable to muster stable and loyal electoral support. Their penetration of society is virtually nil. They inspire more distrust than confidence on the part of ordinary citizens (22). On average, the popular confidence ratings of the army and churches are three times higher than those of political parties (23).

Political parties: confidence ratings in the CEECs

	CEEC (average)	Czech Rep.	Hungary	Poland
confidence	11	15	11	9
distrust	65	55	66	66

Source: compilation of data obtained from R. Rose and C. Haerpfer, "New Democracies Barometer", Glasgow, 1998, pp. 92-93.

Is it justifiable to consider the weakness of political parties in the CEECs as a distinguishing feature of a postcommunist form of democracy? It is still too soon to be sure. What must be stressed, however, is that any political transformation aiming to establish democracy should provide for a quantitative and qualitative increase in political activities. Political parties must be strong, so as to channel the new freedom and societal expectations in an orderly and institutionalised manner. Their degree of institutional development should be able to serve as a criterion for measuring the societal depth and political consolidation of the established democracy. However, we must also take into account the hypothesis that the current weakness of most political parties in these countries could herald the emergence of a specific form of democracy. In such a democracy, popular sovereignty would tend to be expressed through direct communication between personalities seeking to play an important political role and the general population, and where personal relations and informal political networks would take precedence over institutional relations.

II.4 – The institutional base of economic life

The institutional base of economic activity (trade unions, employers' organisations, industrial relations and collective bargaining agreements) is also weak in the CEECs in both structural and functional terms (24). The social clout of trade unions (mobilisation capacity and political influence) is diminishing. This is reflected in a steady decrease in union membership, in the rate of industrial action (strikes and protests) and in the prestige of trade unions in the eyes of public opinion. These various trends all have practical and easily identifiable origins and causes. The falling number of union members is due partly to privatisation, which usually involves closures and restructuring of companies with massive redundancies, and partly to growing scepticism towards unions among the workers themselves. One way or another, the unions are losing their real and potential members.

However, disaffection with trade unions has other even more significant causes. Socioeconomic developments in the CEECs are bizarrely linked to a sociologically original and politically surprising reorganisation of trade union activities and systems. Clearly, trade unions in these countries are found mainly in State-owned enterprises and survive to some extent in privatised enterprises, which are often wholly or partially controlled by the State

(through capital holdings). In the latter case, they have nevertheless experienced a decrease in membership and in influence on the management of industrial relations. However, the most significant factor of postcommunist trade unions is that they are unable to penetrate newly created private-sector companies. The heads of these organisations usually manage to dissuade workers from establishing trade unions in their enterprises by granting them higher wages than comparable companies in which such unions are already established. Furthermore, the trade unions themselves are often unable to design appropriate strategies for penetrating genuine private-sector companies.

Trade unions: confidence ratings in the CEECs

	CEEC (average)	Czech Rep.	Hungary	Poland
confidence	24	28	15	26
distrust	47	38	64	43

Source: compilation of data obtained from R. Rose and C. Haerpfer, "New Democracies Barometer", Glasgow, 1998, pp. 92-93.

Nonetheless, in discussing the situation of trade unions in the CEECs, we must also take account of the main difficulty they all have to face in this postcommunist period, which results from the very nature of the transition policy. On the one hand, the trade unions support this policy. They cannot do otherwise, for the main aims of transition are democracy and economic prosperity. On the other hand, the transition policy entails tremendous social costs, reflected for instance in insecure employment, joblessness, exclusion, and pauperisation. These are all phenomena to which trade unions cannot turn a blind eye, if they wish to remain true to their traditional role in society. In practice, the unions are endeavouring to overcome this dilemma, or contradiction, by alternating between support and opposition according to circumstances. But this dual approach is unclear and is seriously undermining their political credibility.

The general weakening of trade unions is matched by the particularly slow and difficult consolidation of employers' organisations (25). Traditionally, these organisations developed in western countries to defend the interests of employers in the face of union demands, to defend the interests of private-sector companies and to lobby the State as its intervention in economic and social life gradually increased. The institutional consolidation of employers' organisations was triggered and considerably accelerated by highly active unions and an interventionist State. If we look at the emergence of these organisations in the CEECs, we can see that the context in which they had to develop was original in two respects. They were not formed to counter increasing intervention on the part of the State, but on the contrary to cope with the massive withdrawal of the State and drastic reduction in State support in the economic and social spheres. Secondly, these organisations did not develop in response to a real need to confront strong trade unions, but on the contrary in a general context of increasing union weakness. Whether this historical comparison is a valid explanation or not, employers' organisations in the postcommunist countries had to develop in a specific political, economic and social context. In many cases, they were established on the initiative of the government with financial assistance from the State, either directly or through chambers of commerce (which had the status of semi-public organisations). In many others, they appeared as politically independent initiatives.

In the early years of the transition period, the employers' organisations essentially brought together State-owned enterprises. They were therefore not really in a position to establish independent industrial relations with the trade unions. The latter understandably granted only secondary importance to these organisations, since they purported to represent the interests of enterprises whose real boss was the State itself. Today, employers' organisations have more and more private-sector companies among their members but still wield little influence. Except in two or three specific cases, they have not yet reached a level of institutional development which would allow them to emerge as unconditionally valid partners. They are still greeted with scepticism by business managers. Many of these fear that joining one or the other of these employers' organisations could draw them into the kind of commitment (such as sectoral collective bargaining agreements) that they are trying so hard to avoid. They sometimes believe that approaching unions and State authorities individually will be more effective than taking part in collective action organised and managed by people whom they do not personally know. In some cases, they are not even aware of the existence of employers' organisations.

The current state of institutional development of trade unions and employers' organisations, essentially marked by the weakening of the former and the low level of consolidation of the latter, may be seen as a temporary situation resulting from a given stage in the transition policy. However, it can also be interpreted in a broader societal context. According to political sociology, intermediary organisations (such as trade unions and employers' organisations) can develop and run smoothly only in a society that is soundly based on differentiated socioeconomic criteria, within which there is a political awareness that particular or individual interests are achieved quicker and more efficiently if they are centralised. The societies of central and eastern Europe do not yet seem to fulfil these conditions. Socioeconomic differentiation is still under way. For the moment, it appears in fairly rudimentary forms. Furthermore, the widespread anarchic individualism in these societies seems to be stifling awareness that individual aims could be achieved by collective means. In short, we again find ourselves facing the question already raised in the previous chapter: that of the distinctiveness of the socioeconomic future of central and eastern Europe, and of the possible emergence of a singular and original socioeconomic culture.

II.5 – Citizenship and civil society

The societal foundations of democratic institutions can be examined from several angles. For instance, we could consider the number, workings, and political influence of intermediary organisations or civic associations and attempt to draw some conclusions as to the strength or weakness of civil society. We could complete this analysis by examining political participation and the attitudes of citizens vis-à-vis political institutions. Or we could adopt a more interpretative approach by looking at mentalities, political traditions and specific historical contexts, past and present. Nevertheless, where the societies of central and eastern Europe are concerned, all sociological considerations, whether analytical or interpretative, point to the same conclusion: these societies are particularly weak in terms of civic culture.

Recent empirical research has shown that the postcommunist civil societies are strong in statistical terms but weak in political terms. They feature an amazing number of associations (in particular in the social, educational and sports fields), but these have for the most part no political significance. Furthermore, there is a strong concentration of societal initiatives in

national and regional capitals and a low degree of organisation of associations into federations or confederations (26).

It is also worth pointing out that political interest and involvement on the part of the general public is generally low in the CEECs. This is reflected in particular in low and unstable electoral turnouts. In Poland, electoral participation is relatively low and can vary greatly. The presidential polls – direct elections based on the French system – are those which attract the highest turnout (60%, 64%, 60%). The population is less interested in the legislative elections (43.2%, 52.1%, 47.9%). Participation in regional elections is even lower (42.3%, 33.8%, 45%). The new constitution was adopted in 1997 further to a referendum in which only 42.8% of citizens took part. In statistical terms, the Czechs and Hungarians seem to be more politically-minded than the Poles, but their interest appears to be steadily declining. Electoral turnouts in the Czech Republic and Hungary are dropping. In the Czech Republic, the rate at the last parliamentary elections was 65%, versus 76% in 1996 and 86% in 1992. In Hungary, it is also steadily diminishing, although it was lower to start with (65%, 55%, 50%).

These figures can admittedly be interpreted in various ways. They can be read as indicating a degree of "democratic normalisation". If people do not see the need to vote, they must be satisfied with democracy as it is. We do not believe this interpretation is valid in the CEECs. Given the number of economic and social problems facing the countries in that part of our continent, their citizens should be particularly active and easily involved in political issues. Therefore, if participation in politics on the part of the population is itself becoming a problem, that indicates they do not or no longer believe politics can resolve their difficulties and improve their living conditions. Furthermore, the rejection of politics is also a rejection of those involved in politics. This brings us to the essence of the apolitical nature of postcommunist societies, which is precisely the low degree of confidence of citizens in political institutions and leaders. In a previous analysis of the political culture of the Czech people after the fall of communism, we accordingly indicated that the most serious problem the societies of central and eastern Europe had to contend with today was the crisis of confidence in both their economy and their political institutions (27).

Political institutions: confidence ratings in the CEECs

	CEEC (average)	Czech Rep.	Hungary	Poland
Government				
confidence	24	26	25	23
distrust	39	42	39	40
Parliament				
confidence	21	15	25	25
distrust	55	64	54	44
Army				
confidence	40	31	40	53
distrust	32	38	31	19
Churches				
confidence	35	29	37	51
distrust	44	44	44	28

Source: compilation of data obtained from R. Rose and C. Haerpfer, "New Democracies Barometer", Glasgow, 1998, pp. 92-93.

Curiously enough, the sociological image of the societies of central and eastern Europe in the postcommunist era is fairly similar to that reflected in historical analyses. The latter have accustomed us to perceive societies in this part of Europe as weak in terms of political institutions and institutionalised action, disinterested in politics, distrustful of parties and political leaders and reliant on the State as the main political force. However, they also appear as societies featuring a remarkable degree of individual activism, widespread anarchic individualism, and surprising shrewdness and rhetoric.

CHAPTER III – THE POLITICAL INTERESTS OF THE COUNTRIES OF CENTRAL AND EASTERN EUROPE

The CEECs are more than just candidates for EU membership. As sovereign and independent States, they have their own outlook, ambitions and political interests. What they expect from accession is not merely to become the outlying provinces of an enlarged Union, but to play a role and influence its policy. We can therefore legitimately wonder whether the outlook, ambitions and political interests of these countries are compatible with the political, economic and social orientations of the Union. Admittedly, the general orientations of the European Union are not static. They essentially depend on the will of the Member States themselves. It is precisely this open and dynamic nature of the European Union which provides opportunities and encourages the budding Member States to voice their particular political views and believe that they will be able to influence European policy in the future.

The issue of whether the national interests of the candidate countries – or a number of them at least – and the interests of the European Union are compatible is real and important, even vital, for European integration. Our purpose here is not to go in great detail into all the factors which are shaping the CEECs' policy today and will continue to do so for the foreseeable future, in particular as regards foreign and security policy and international relations in general. We will merely discuss two particular aspects of this crucial question: the issue of the Union's future border to the east (of Poland) and the issue of sovereignty, which is of particular importance in the postcommunist countries.

III.1 – Poland and the future eastern border of the European Union

The issue of the European Union's future eastern border can be summarised as follows: how can the Community approach – which provides for and imposes rigid control over the Union's external borders and makes a clear administrative distinction between the citizens of the Union and the nationals of other countries – be reconciled with the interests of Poland, which regards its eastern border as a source of political, economic and cultural influence over its neighbours and wishes to keep it relatively open?

Poland's border with Lithuania, Belarus, Ukraine and Russia (region of Kaliningrad) is a particular one. It admittedly establishes an administrative separation between sovereign and independent States, but it also has a broader societal, economic and cultural significance. It is shared by peoples who have lived through a common history of alternating peace and strife for centuries and who are now discovering a multitude of common interests after a more or less long period of communism. These border communities are thus currently moving closer together. This significant development is also a process of civilisation. It is no doubt still fragile and uncertain in places. But the political ambitions underpinning it are historically founded and politically valid.

What socioeconomic significance does the border have today? In political and administrative terms, Poland's eastern border is open for nationals of the neighbouring States, who can cross it without a visa. In economic terms, the fact that the border is open enables the regions on either side – which are among the poorest regions in this part of Europe – to achieve a more or less acceptable level of subsistence. The Belarussians and Ukrainians cross the border to sell

goods to the Poles, who then resell them elsewhere at a higher price. They also buy goods in Poland which they resell in their own countries, earning a sufficient income for themselves thanks to the profit made. The Belarussians and Ukrainians also come to Poland to carry out seasonal work. Some of them settle there and provide labour which is easily absorbed by the job market. The average salary differentials between Poland and the home countries of these people are a strong incentive for this type of migration. In human terms, the relations between the Poles and their eastern neighbours, which used to be tense and confrontational, have considerably improved. Transnational contacts are intensifying, friendships are being forged, mixed marriages are increasingly common, and prejudice is being overcome. All these phenomena, the tangible signs of advancing civilisation, are not natural products of history. They are the result of a deliberate policy to keep the border open. Poland is making a considerable effort to convince its eastern neighbours that it can establish fruitful relations with them, not as a dominating force but as an adviser and representative. Poland sees its role in this geostrategical region as a bridge or intermediary between western and eastern Europe. It views its current and future membership of western organisations (such as NATO and the Union) not as a means of escaping from its eastern European environment, but as a means of comforting and strengthening its strategic situation in order precisely to be in a better position to act in favour of its eastern neighbours.

Poland has expressed two principles which it would like to see applied as a member of the European Union. It considers first of all that its accession to the Union should not result in the closure of its eastern border, as this would run counter to its particular sensitivities and curtail its freedom of action with respect to its eastern neighbours. It will therefore be requesting, in due course, that the "Schengen policy" be adjusted, in order to enable it to preserve privileged relations with these countries. Secondly, Poland considers that the enlargement of the European Union should not stop definitively at its eastern border. It does not wish to remain a border State for ever. It wants to see Ukraine join the candidates for Union membership soon and hopes that Belarus will sooner or later move in a political direction which will eventually allow it to join the Union as well. The Poles are well aware that their *Ostpolitik* does not exactly coincide with the European Union's policy as regards external borders. They are expecting a fundamental confrontation on the issue during the accession negotiations. The Polish prime minister noted recently that "*the (eastern) external border of the European Union will be one of the thorniest issues we will have to address in our accession negotiations with the Union. (...) We will have to meet the accession conditions in this area. We shall nevertheless undertake measures to create the right conditions for developing relations with our eastern neighbours. (...) We would not like to create a new barrier and a new demarcation line along Poland's eastern border*" (28).

The question of the European Union's future eastern border also concerns Hungary. The country has its own vision of relationships with its neighbours, a vision which is also somewhat at odds with the provisions of the Schengen agreement (integrated into the Community body of law further to the Amsterdam treaty). The Hungarian government has flatly stated that it will not have administrative or political measures forced upon it which contradict the historical identity and interests of Hungary in relation to the Hungarian minorities in Slovakia, Romania or Serbia.

A similar pattern of specific interests (of a political, economic and cultural nature) relating to the eastern borders can be found in almost all candidate countries, with lesser or greater differences. The Czech Republic can also claim to have certain specific interests relating to

Slovakia, as can Slovakia relating to Ukraine, Romania relating to Ukraine and Moldova, Lithuania relating to Latvia, etc.

III.2 – Enlargement and sovereignty

The transition policy in the central and eastern European countries comprises a series of practical political and economic reforms, but also reflects the assertion of national sovereignty, whether recovered or newly gained. In these countries, the idea of national sovereignty (in the sense of freedom and independence on the international stage) was first a mobilising force against the communist regime. It then played a major role in the collapse of that regime. Lastly, it facilitated the legitimisation of democratic institutions and public reform policies. The idea has become an essential component of the new political awareness.

The importance of the idea of sovereignty in the postcommunist countries, although understandable in the light of their historical experience, nevertheless seems paradoxical in the context of the political developments in today's world and of the strong aspiration of these countries to join international organisations – two factors which, in a way, place the very concept of sovereignty in perspective. For globalisation, which is affecting both the western and the central and eastern European countries, is among other things resulting in a complex and tangled interrelation between a large number of economic factors, and this is considerably reducing the regulatory capacity and scope of States. On the other hand, European integration is a process which entails the common exercise of sovereignty on the part of the Member States, and this necessarily converts sovereign action into a special political art. Whatever the case, the States remain autonomous political players but accept that their action will primarily be influenced by diverse forms of cooperation and compromise rather than a rigid will reflecting the alleged national egoist reflexes inherited from history. Yet it seems that the understanding of sovereignty in the countries of central and eastern Europe ignores both the theory and practice of contemporary international politics and the workings of supranational European institutions.

The attachment to sovereignty, combined with the desire to join the European Union, has led the CEECs to produce ambiguous and obscure statements and thoughts on sovereignty. The Polish political speeches are particularly revealing in this respect. In 1998, the Polish senate adopted a resolution in which it declared itself in favour of European integration and Poland's accession to the European Union, while stressing its conviction "*that the European Community will continue to develop in compliance with the external sovereignty and the internal sovereignty of its peoples and Member States, and that the role of the supranational institutions will be strictly limited to implementing the policy decided by the governments of the sovereign States*", and adding "*that the national sovereign State shall remain the main subject of social, economic and political life in the European Union*" (29). In 1999, the trade union *Solidarnosc* published a declaration on European integration in which it notably stated that it shared "*the conception of the European Union as an economic, social and political union of States, which settle their internal political and social problems in accordance with their own traditions*" (30). Lastly, B. Geremek, the former Polish minister of foreign affairs, recently stated that Poland, as a member of the European Union, had to preserve its economic sovereignty and conduct a sovereign foreign policy. He pointed out that Poland could conclude alliances in the field of security policy, for such alliances strengthen sovereignty, but

added that "*foreign policy is a capital expression of sovereignty, and must therefore remain a reserved area*" (31).

In this context, it is interesting to note the various Polish reactions to J. Fischer's famous speech on European integration. As could be expected, the reactions were mostly negative. The idea of a European federation equipped with a constitution and institutional system with strong supranational components evidently clashed with the Polish attitude toward sovereignty and the European Union. A. Michnik, despite being one of Poland's fervent pro-European militants, bluntly criticised the German foreign affairs minister for going dangerously fast and far, and upsetting "*people who had been dreaming for years of Polish independence, and who had suffered greatly to regain this independence*". He wrote "*That is why, in spite of my admiration for the German minister's visionary qualities, I believe I shall be a Polish citizen until the day I die. Of course, I shall be a Polish citizen within the European Union*" (32).

CHAPTER IV – THE CENTRAL AND EASTERN EUROPEAN COUNTRIES' DOCTRINE OF ACCESSION TO THE EUROPEAN UNION

None of the candidate countries has clearly expressed a conceptually developed doctrine to underpin and justify its policy of accession to the European Union. However, we can distinguish certain elements of such a doctrine by analysing the comments and reactions of these countries to the various events and western European opinions relating to the European Union and European integration in general.

IV.1 – How the European Union is perceived in the CEECs

During the 1990s, the European Union was seen by the CEECs first and foremost as a pole and framework for economic integration. This perception resulted in a way from a particular interpretation of the situation Europe was in after the collapse of communism. The Old Continent was expected to become the theatre of two major integration processes: one economic and the other political. The former would take place through and thanks to the European Union, while the second would involve the Atlantic Alliance under the auspices of the United States. This theory still persists in certain political circles of central and eastern Europe but is now a lot less persuasive, in particular in Poland, the Czech Republic and Hungary, following their accession to the Atlantic Alliance. These countries now seem to be realising that the European Union is a political as well as an economic community. They nevertheless remain extremely cautious about political integration within the European Union.

Independent of this particular aspect, the European Union is usually perceived by the CEECs as a spiritual community or a community of values expressing and sustaining the cultural heritage of European civilisation (the approach commonly found among the political elite) and as an area of economic prosperity and well-being (the attitude commonly found among the more disadvantaged social groups). In both cases, the perceptions are intellectually or politically superficial. They ignore the European Union's structures and workings. They also tend to mystify European integration, each in its own way.

IV.2 – Why join the European Union?

Why do something rather than nothing? The question is never irrelevant. It should always accompany the action of humankind, not to encourage scepticism but to make the conscience underpinning or guiding this action more lucid, intelligent and responsible. While it is true that "*people make history, but know not the history they make*", it would nevertheless seem desirable that the people making history should at least try to find out as much as possible about it.

Why, then, join the European Union? Generally speaking, the CEECs have three explanations for their desire to join the European Union: one cultural, one economic and one political. They consider that the fact of belonging to European civilisation and sharing Europe's cultural heritage predisposes them, so to speak, to joining the Union, which is the historical product of

common European values. That is why they view their accession to the European Union as a "return to Europe". In economic terms, the CEECs see the accession to the European Union as necessary in two respects. Firstly because the European Union has become their main trading partner over the last few years. Secondly because accession is expected to generate economic momentum and create favourable political conditions for economic growth, either through direct investment or through Community assistance delivered under the solidarity policies. In political terms, the CEECs view their accession to the European Union as fulfilling their moral and historical right to play a full part in defining European policy and shaping decisions on European integration and the destiny of Europe as a whole.

IV.3 – Which European Union do the CEECs want to join?

The frequent and strongly worded statements of the CEECs on their reasons for joining contrast sharply with the paucity, in both qualitative and quantitative terms, of what they have to say about the post-accession period and the policy they will eventually want to implement as Member States. There is no intellectual debate on that subject in these countries. The governments avoid formally addressing the issue, except if obliged to do so. Even then, they express themselves reluctantly and in a vague, non-committal manner. Poland justifies its reserve in this area by pointing out that it is not entitled to comment on the future orientations of European integration or the future institutional forms of the European Union because it is not a member. This attitude is not mere diplomatic evasiveness. More fundamentally, it stems from the fear that revealing Polish priorities and interests with respect to European integration could be interpreted as supporting or opposing the various other views of the European Union's future currently being discussed by certain Member States (notably France and Germany). These States might be less inclined to support Poland's bid for Union membership if they thought Poland's positions contradicted theirs on essential points or represented a threat to their own interests. Is such a fear justified? Is it sincere? Does it not reflect a curious situation in which psychology replaces or hinders politics?

Generally speaking, the CEECs want to join a strong and efficient European Union. However, they are saying nothing – or very little – of substance on the institutional and political conditions for such a Union. For instance, according to a senior representative of the Polish government, Poland wishes to belong to "*a strong and coherent European Union based on values of solidarity and capable of identifying and pursuing ambitious political, economic, social and cultural objectives*" (33). That happens to be what all the Union's Member States and the other candidate countries want as well, but a number of problems remain all the same. The European Union remains a fragile construction.

What practical ideas do the CEECs have about European integration? What Europe, what European Union do they want or will they want to build? We can identify some essential aspects of the ideas of these countries about Europe firstly from their recent comments on institutional reform, submitted to the intergovernmental conference leading to the Nice summit, and secondly from their reactions to the recent progress of the European Union as regards the common foreign policy and European defence identity.

At the invitation of the Portuguese presidency, the candidate countries formally gave their respective opinions on institutional reform in February 2000. The three countries we are primarily concerned with here (Poland, the Czech Republic and Hungary) began by

suggesting that the intergovernmental conference should be restricted to dealing with the issues left unresolved by the Amsterdam treaty. As regards the composition of the European Commission, they stressed that each country should be entitled to designate a commissioner. On the issue of the new weighting of votes within the Council, Poland declared itself in favour of the demographic factor as the main criterion and for a weighting of votes which would ensure a balance between large and small States. Hungary expressed support for a weighting of votes which would reflect the current demographic ratios, while preserving a relative overrepresentation of the small States. The Czech Republic merely expressed the hope that the intergovernmental conference would put forward realistic proposals in this respect. The CEECs were particularly cautious on the issue of extending qualified majority voting. Poland proposed that a precise review of existing treaty provisions requiring unanimity should be performed before any changes are made in this area. In the Polish view, the unanimity requirement should be maintained for all decisions relating to issues of a constitutional nature – such as amendments to the treaties, the enlargement of the Union, appointments to important posts, the Union's system of own resources and all questions of vital significance for the Member States. Hungary too indicated that it was in favour of extending qualified majority voting, but also proposed that unanimity be preserved for all issues of a constitutional nature or of vital significance for the Member States. The Czech Republic admitted the need to extend the number of decisions that could be taken on a qualified majority vote, but postponed further clarifications on its position. Lastly, the three countries suggested that the question of "closer cooperation" should not be dealt with within the framework of the intergovernmental conference. If the question were to be settled, Poland proposed to restrict the debate to closer cooperation as provided for under the treaty of Amsterdam.

The question of closer cooperation is a subject of particular concern in the CEECs, in particular in Poland, the Czech Republic and Hungary. Bulgaria is the only candidate country which believes that closer cooperation could contribute to both the deepening and the enlargement of the European Union.

In Poland, it is thought that the closer cooperation system involves a risk (if not a deliberate intention) to divide the members of the enlarged European Union into two categories, thus effectively converting the States which do not take part in certain forms of "cooperation" into second-class members. The country cannot or will not see a positive link between differentiated European integration and enlargement of the Union to eastern Europe. The Poles tend to believe that closer cooperation could possibly be used to discriminate against economically weaker Member States (34), or that this particular type of integration might be expressly designed to prevent the CEECs from taking part in decisions on the future of European integration (35). In a document submitted to the intergovernmental conference in July 2000, the Polish government expressed the conviction that the Amsterdam treaty provisions on closer cooperation were perfectly adequate. If the conference nevertheless decided to change these provisions, it should take account of the following principles: "*closer cooperation must not lead to the emergence of a group of States not fully involved in the dynamic progress of European integration, (...) [and] in no case should it lead to the exclusion of the future Member States from important new cooperation measures*" (36).

Another sensitive area of the accession doctrine of the CEECs is the foreign and security policy and the European defence identity. The reactions of these countries to decisions taken during the European Council meetings in Cologne (in June 1999) and Helsinki (in December 1999), which notably provided for the creation of a European intervention force, were

generally very cool. In Poland, both the politicians and public opinion regard the common European defence identity as an initiative aiming to weaken the Atlantic Alliance and trigger the withdrawal of the United States from the European continent in the longer term. The Polish diplomats entirely share this concern, while expressing it in a less blunt and more subtle manner. Poland is taking every opportunity to underline the beneficial dominance of the United States in the global and European security policy. In the Polish paper already mentioned above, the European Union is invited to postpone the debate on extending the closer cooperation system to the common foreign and security policy (37). The Czech Republic has also expressed significant reservations about European integration in the field of foreign and defence policy. It accepts that "*the European Union should possess the necessary resources to react to events occurring in its immediate strategic neighbourhood and liable to affect its stability and security, but that should under no circumstances lead to the strategic emancipation of the European Union or the reduction of the strategic domination of the United States on the European continent*" (38).

IV.4 – The enlargement method as seen by the CEECs

The current political climate between the European Union and candidate countries such as Poland, the Czech Republic and Hungary is extremely tense. These countries are openly distrustful of the current Community efforts to deepen and consolidate the European integration process through institutional reform, and are discontented with the enlargement policy itself.

The convening of the intergovernmental conference in 2000, the decision to start accession negotiations with new candidates (Lithuania, Latvia, Slovakia, Romania, Bulgaria and Malta) and the recent speeches of leading western politicians (Jacques Delors, Joschka Fischer, Jacques Chirac, etc.) on the future of European integration are all events interpreted in the CEECs as expedients or deliberate stratagems to slow the enlargement process. This is making these countries all the more anxious to be given a precise and close accession date.

The closer cooperation system and the various institutional proposals aiming to create an integrationist "avant-garde" are regarded in central and eastern Europe as manoeuvres to establish a legal basis for relegating the candidate countries to second-class status within the European Union. That is why these countries are insisting they should be admitted into the European Union as members with equal rights as regards participation in decision-making on the future of Europe from the very first day after accession.

Poland is particularly wary of any proposal to consider the accession of the candidates individually, according to the progress they make in incorporating and implementing the body of Community law. It is unwilling to accept the possibility that it might not be among the first wave of new members, claiming that in that case the enlargement would be meaningless.

The free movement of people within the European Union is regarded in the CEECs first and foremost as a matter of political status. Any transitional period in this area is interpreted as relegation to a second-class category and is therefore unacceptable. The proposal to maintain passport controls on the border between Germany and Poland, as long as the latter's eastern border does not meet Community standards, provoked a wave of indignation which verged on

revolt. It was greeted as evidence of the European Union's strategy to give Poland the rank of second-class Member State.

The European Union and the Member States are not speaking the same language as regards enlargement or accession. The European commissioners arriving in Warsaw at regular intervals with suitcases full of Community legislation provoke astonishment, amusement and sometimes exasperation among the Polish people. The Poles visiting European Commission offices or western diplomatic representations provoke similar reactions among their contacts and partners. That is a very bad sign, both for the enlargement of the European Union and for European integration as a whole.

The CEECs are attempting to force the Union's enlargement by all possible rhetorical means. For instance, the head of the Hungarian government made a bold statement recently which is worth examining more closely: "*If the accession date of my country to the European Union is not set at the European summit in Nice, Hungary could consider life outside the European Union*" (39). Poland is also capable of strong positions on this topic. According to its president, if enlargement does not happen soon (by January 1, 2003), there will be serious political problems. There will be an upsurge in anti-European nationalism and extremism. In central and eastern Europe, people will say: "*They have punished us once again*" (40). Enlargement obviously gives rise to strong political feelings in the CEECs. The reactions clearly indicate that we are in the presence of a specific political process. They also confirm the fundamental political weakness of the CEECs, which results in institutional political action being envisaged in terms of political psychology.

IV.5 – Questions and contradictions

The attitude of the CEECs vis-à-vis the European Union prompts many intellectual and political interrogations and contains some contradictions. Their pleas for a strong and efficient Union are usually meant in economic terms. They also want the Union to have strong and efficient institutions, yet insist on national sovereignty as a value that must not be undermined by European integration. They are particularly wary of political integration (foreign and security policy, defence, democratisation of the Union, Europeanisation of political parties, transnational electoral lists, etc.)

Poland hopes that enlargement will not stop at its eastern border. At the same time, it is against setting differentiated integration mechanisms. It is critical of the decision to include new candidate countries such as Lithuania in the accession negotiations, yet presents itself in other contexts as defending Lithuania's interests with respect to accession.

The CEECs want to play an active part in drawing up projects on the European Union's future. They want to decide on the future of Europe, but we do not know what Union and what Europe they are thinking of when talking about European integration. Either they have no ideas in this respect or they do not want to reveal them. Western politicians have been expressing diverging views on European integration for a number of years. These ideas have not been commented on to date by the CEECs. They have not even been seriously discussed by public opinion in these countries. The only exception is V. Havel, but his statements – although interesting – quickly drift off into an obscure moral discourse which, however well-meaning, is of little political use.

CHAPTER V – THE ACCESSION POLICY OF THE COUNTRIES OF CENTRAL AND EASTERN EUROPE

The CEECs are conducting the accession negotiations following well-established strategic concepts. At the same time, they are engaging in diplomatic contacts at bilateral level with a view to persuading the Member States of the European Union to accept the principle of rapid accessions. The candidate countries undoubtedly have an external accession policy, directed both towards the institutions of the European Union and its Member States. But do they have an internal accession policy, directed towards their own societies and addressed to their own citizens? If they do, what are its content and institutional forms?

It must be noted that the CEECs first adopted a purely diplomatic approach to joining the European Union. They drew up their respective action strategies behind closed doors and kept their negotiating positions highly secret. Those citizens interested in the issue were not invited to contribute to shaping the accession policy, even though they were directly concerned. This internal "State interest" approach led to a paradoxical situation. For instance, what was virtually a State secret for Polish society was necessarily the subject of open discussions within the Community institutions and was therefore publicly commented in the western European press. The Polish general public was therefore able to obtain much better information about Poland's negotiating positions and developments in the accession negotiations through the western European press and the documents of the European Commission than through the Polish press or official documents of the Polish government. The Czechs and Hungarians were in a similar position. It is only recently, and at the invitation of the European Union itself, that the Polish, Czech and Hungarian governments revealed their negotiating positions to their citizens. According to recent surveys, 73% of Polish people consider they are not sufficiently informed about the political content and unfolding of the accession negotiations. It is only fair to add, however, that the Polish government has made a great effort to address this demand from its citizens.

Survey in Poland (1999): how well am I informed about the accession negotiations?

very well	3%
well	20%
poorly	46%
very poorly	27%
N/A	4%

Source: Institute for Public Affairs, Warsaw, in L. Kolarska-Bobinska (ed.), "The European Debate in Poland", Warsaw, 1999, p. 20.

V.1 – The information policy

The information policy on European integration and the enlargement of the European Union leaves a lot to be desired in the CEECs. In Poland, the government has launched a major information programme and has created a network of regional information centres. It would appear, however, that the initial results of this programme (conferences, brochures, etc.) are rather disappointing (41). The quality of the information provided is judged to be poor. The scheme seldom reaches socioprofessional groups such as farmers, craftspeople and the managers of small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), for whom rapid accession of Poland to the European Union is far from being a clear-cut issue. In any case, the information programme offers no answer to the question which really interests these social groups, which is the possible negative consequences, in the short and longer term, of accession to the European Union for the socioeconomic framework of small-scale industrial, agricultural and crafts production. The official information focuses almost exclusively on presenting the positive implications and economic advantages of membership of the European Union for Poland.

The situation in Hungary is very similar in this respect. For instance, the Hungarian trade unions openly declare that they have already heard a lot about the advantages for Hungary of joining the European Union. However, they would also like to know about the social costs of this historic move. They are critical of both the Hungarian government and the European Commission for their lack of information on the possible negative consequences of accession. They would at least like to be given forecasting and analysis tools with respect to trends in salaries, the labour market and unemployment once barriers to the free movement of people, goods, services and capital are lifted. This criticism from the Hungarian unions is not prompted by general scepticism or a fundamentally anti-European attitude. On the contrary, the Hungarian unions, in both words and deeds, are unwaveringly supportive of their country's rapid accession to the European Union. They merely want to be able to control this major historical process. Similar comments have been expressed by the Hungarian employers' organisations representing SMEs in the industrial and trade sectors. SME managers in Hungary fear that rapid accession of their country to the European Union by the date planned by the government could jeopardise their very existence. They are not yet well enough prepared to operate within the framework of the single European market.

Polish SMEs also fear international competition after Poland's accession to the European Union. The Polish farmers even want accession to be delayed as much as possible in order to have time to consolidate the structure of their holdings and prepare for western European competition. These Hungarian and Polish positions are by no means anti-European or anti-integrationist. Such opinions also exist in these countries, but we are not concerned with them here. The trade unions' criticism and employers' fears mentioned above reflect their perfectly rational and reasonable desire to be told about all the implications, both positive and negative, and in particular the social and economic risks resulting from enlargement of the European Union to eastern Europe. They want to be able to prepare for the large European market and adapt their action methods and strategies to competition and an open pan-European economy (42). Forward analyses could also help to dispel the sometimes irrational fears concerning the consequences of accession to the European Union for SMEs. According to a recent survey, 44% of Poles fear that accession of their country to the European Union might result in bankruptcies among SMEs. A further 40% think the Polish economy will not be able to cope

with competition from the rest of Europe (Warsaw, OBOP, 16-18 October 1999). Other surveys have yielded similar results.

Survey: will Polish enterprises be able to cope with competition within the single European market?

Yes	12%
Yes, provided they are granted long exemption periods	39%
No, many of them will go bankrupt	38%
N/A	11%

Source: Institute for Public Affairs, Warsaw, in L. Kolarska-Bobinska (ed.), "The European Debate in Poland", Warsaw, 1999, p. 18.

The CEECs' information policy on European integration is open to question for yet another reason. In terms of method, it is biased towards accession. Its true purpose is to convince and put minds at ease rather than contribute to genuine information by promoting intellectual and political debate on the European Union and its enlargement to eastern Europe. It underestimates the intellectual curiosity which is a cultural feature of central and eastern European societies and makes them perfectly able to take their own decisions. It is true that these societies are fond of symbolic gestures and simplistic historical images, and that they tend to greet rational argumentation with a measure of distrust and ironic scepticism. But that is precisely their way of starting a debate. The debating culture in central and eastern European societies may often follow intellectually strange and surprising routes, but it usually produces perfectly rational conclusions sooner or later. That is why one may doubt the efficiency of an information policy designed as an advertising campaign. To return to the case of Poland, one basic purpose of the ambitious governmental programme to inform Polish society about European integration and the country's accession to the European Union was to curb the population's increasing scepticism in this respect. Yet the Poles' support for accession to the European Union has continued to fade.

V.2 – Participation of the social partners in the policy

The participation of the representatives of civil society in the CEECs' accession policy is a fairly recent phenomenon. Representatives of the trade unions and employers' organisations, as well as other representatives of society in Poland, the Czech Republic and Hungary, have recently been allowed to take part (on invitation) in the debates of the special committees established to assist the government – debates which cover all the chapters of the accession negotiations. This solution enables the government to keep abreast of the opinions of the social partners on the various aspects of the accession policy, and gives these representatives an opportunity to be better informed about the issues and problems relating to the accession negotiations. In Poland, a European Integration Committee has also been established to act as an advisory body for the prime minister. It brings together some fifty political and scientific personalities. The presidents of the leading national trade unions and employers' organisations are among its members, but form only a very small minority.

The participation of the representatives of socioprofessional organisations in the CEECs' accession policy is not without its difficulties, however. The current practice in this field reveals certain dysfunctions, but also a political dilemma for governments. The representatives of the social partners frequently express displeasure with their participation in the accession policy, because they are under the impression that their involvement in the meetings of the governmental committees, responsible for preparing the policy positions for the accession negotiations and reflecting on how to implement the Community body of legislation, is essentially symbolic. The information they receive is sometimes incomplete, or supplied "at the last minute".

However, it is important to understand that there is a much deeper problem here. The idea of involving the representatives of civil society in the accession policy is undoubtedly a valid and desirable one. The governments of the central and eastern European countries are not denying it. But, from their point of view, to be able to do so properly, the organisations involved must be representative. Therein lies the rub, in particular where employers' organisations are concerned. Save for one or two exceptional cases, employers' organisations in these countries are not very representative. In certain cases, trade union representation can also be a problem. This low degree of representation and lack of institutional and political balance between the trade unions and employers' organisations largely explain the lukewarm attitude of the central and eastern European governments to involving the social partners in shaping the accession policy.

V.3 – The citizens of the CEECs and enlargement

The awareness that the citizens of these countries have of European integration and their degree of interest in the question also affect the issue of the participation of civil society in the accession process. How do the citizens view the European Union and the accession policies of their respective countries? What are their interests, hopes, and fears as regards the accession of their country to the European Union and how do they interact?

On the basis of sociological surveys, we can provide the following two answers to these questions: the degree of information on the constraints and consequences of accession is inadequate. Likewise, the approval or disapproval expressed by the citizens of the CEECs regarding the accession of their countries to the European Union is usually prompted by emotions (either positive or negative) or simplistic images (positive or negative).

Oddly enough, support of the Polish people for their country's accession to the European Union has been steadily decreasing. It reached record heights between 1994 and 1996 (up to 80%). Since 1999, it has varied between 45% and 55%. The Czechs' support for joining the European Union has never been particularly strong. In 1997, it stood at 35%. The Hungarians, for their part, seem to have maintained an almost steady and average position in this respect, with a more or less equal number in favour and against. Whatever the political value of these sociological findings, we regard them as interesting indicators – not for judging the degree of acceptance or rejection of European integration but as intellectually valid pointers to spur a debate on the degree of cultural and political openness of the CEECs to pan-European cooperation and exchange.

Survey in Poland: I would like the accession of my country to the European Union...

	1997	1999
to be as quick as possible	31%-34%	19%-21%
to be carried out without haste	51%-54%	59%-61%
N/A	9%-12%	9%-10%
to be abandoned	3%-6%	10%-11%

Source: OBOP Institute, Warsaw, 16-18 October 1999.

From the example of Poland, we can point out the existence of a curious political and intellectual duality as regards information on the European Union and the accession negotiations. On the one hand, Europe and the enlargement of the European Union are of professional interest to a few restricted circles of specialists (government officials, university teachers, etc.), who hold forth on the topic in an arcane manner, using almost exclusively legal language. Their comments are difficult to understand for lay people. On the other hand, the speeches of politicians and journalistic analyses on European integration are often dominated by simplistic – even irrational – ideas of very little cognitive value. The technical knowledge of the former is sometimes impressive, but "ignores", so to speak, the political correlation and dimensions of European integration and the enlargement process of the European Union. As for the latter, European issues are usually blindly or abusively politicised for electoral or party political purposes. What is curious is that the Polish citizens, presented with technocratic arguments on the one side and demagogic ones on the other, are ultimately condemned to believe or not to believe, to trust or to distrust what their political leaders are saying and doing in this particular area. Recent surveys indicate that they believe in it ever less and distrust it ever more.

Survey in Poland: to what extent do you trust the Polish representatives and do you think they are protecting Poland's best interests in the accession negotiations?

	1998 (%)	1999 (%)
I trust them entirely	5	4
I tend to trust them	46	38
I tend not to trust them	26	30
I do not trust them at all	10	11
N/A	13	16

Source: compilation on the basis of the results of the OBOP survey, Warsaw, 16-18 October 1999.

The opinion surveys reveal yet another odd feature. The example of Poland also tells us that European integration and the country's accession to the European Union garner strong support among senior business executives and government officials, and among workers and unemployed people. These two social groups, despite their differences, believe that Poland's accession to the European Union will bring particular opportunities and prospects to help them achieve their respective expectations and interests. Small retailers and farmers are mostly sceptical, or even hostile to Poland's accession to the European Union. Small business managers and craftspeople have an ambiguous and fearful attitude to the issue (43).

CONCLUSION

The non-exhaustive analyses that we have just conducted of the various socioeconomic, institutional and political characteristics of the candidate countries show that the European Union's enlargement to eastern Europe is a specific historical process. While some of the singularities stem from short-term factors, others are more structural. All, however, are closely interrelated. It also seems difficult to separate the objective and subjective factors underlying developments in the candidate countries. This observation immediately raises two questions. Will the European Union, on the one hand, and the CEECs, on the other, take account of this specific nature in the ongoing negotiations? Will they thus give themselves the means to make a success of this ambitious enlargement, i.e. enable the Union to welcome new members while pursuing its integration? The answer to these questions, which is of a very political nature, is not ours to give. It is the responsibility of those who are currently managing the enlargement process (Community institutions, governments of the Member States and candidate countries).

However, the above analysis also reveals the risks threatening a process that has been hindered by insufficient constructive dialogue between the two parties away from the negotiating table and the lack of a suitable forum for developing a common view of the future enlarged Union. To make a success of the enlargement, effective or professional negotiation is not enough. We must also develop an appropriate culture of discussion and mode of political cooperation. We must learn to discuss problems and seek solutions together. The CEECs must be encouraged to express their ambitions, interests, fears and sensitivities with respect to the enlargement of the European Union. There is no institutional framework available today that can satisfy this need, and no forum which could host this kind of intellectual and political exchange. That is why we believe it is imperative to review the workings of the European conference, in order to convert it into a forum for genuine intergovernmental debate on Europe and on the enlargement of the European Union. By expressly limiting the scope of the conference to issues relating to the common foreign and security policy and cooperation in the field of justice and home affairs, the European Council meeting held in Luxembourg in December 1997 restricted its role to that of a formal talk shop with no real political purpose.

We could easily draw inspiration from the proposal made by Jacques Delors to the three central and eastern European countries in 1992. The then president of the European Commission suggested that they establish a political cooperation structure which would include all European States and would represent a preliminary framework for the gradual integration of these countries into the European Union. The aim would be to organise six-monthly meetings of the heads of State and government of all European States and quarterly meetings of foreign affairs ministers, during which they could discuss current affairs and in particular the method for integrating the CEECs into the European Union.

Time is running short. We must stop viewing enlargement in a cynical or romantic light, and instead approach it in a lucid and ambitious manner. Acknowledging the specific nature of the forthcoming enlargement exercise is a first step in this direction. The next step will be to give ourselves the most appropriate means to enrich the Union with new diversity without depriving it of its unity.

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39. Comments reported in the *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* (18.9.2000)
40. Comments reported in the *Financial Times* (21.3.2000)
41. B. Zagrodzka, "Waiting for the European Union to Drop from Heaven", *Gazeta Wyborcza* (19.2.2000), in Polish
42. These observations are based on the information obtained from senior representatives of the two sides of industry in Hungary and Poland (as part of our research into industrial relations in the CEECs)
43. L. Kolarska-Bobinska, J. Kucharczyk, "Les opinions des Polonais sur les négociations avec l'Union européenne", in L. Kolarska-Bobinska (ed.), "Le débat polonais...", *op. cit.*, pp. 11-24