

## Europeanisation in new member and candidate states

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### Abstract

The Europeanisation of candidate countries and new members is a rather recent and still comparatively small, but - particularly since 2003 – a fast-growing research area. Research in this area has developed primarily in the context of the EU's eastern enlargement. More recently, a small number of theoretically informed, book-length studies of the EU's influence on the East Central European candidate countries have established the Europeanisation of applicant states as a distinctive research area. These studies fit within a common conceptual framework, which draws on the debate between rationalist and constructivist institutionalist theories in International Relations and Comparative Politics. This framework makes these studies highly compatible with analyses of the Europeanisation of member states, with which they share one key empirical finding, namely that the impact of the EU on candidate countries is differential across countries and issue areas. On the other hand, the theoretical implications of these findings appear more clear-cut than in the case of the Europeanisation of member states: rationalist institutionalism, with its focus on the external incentives underpinning EU conditionality, and on the material costs incurred by domestic veto players, appears well suited to explaining variation in the patterns of Europeanisation in candidate countries. The next stage of this research agenda concerns the impact of accession on the dynamics of pre-accession Europeanisation and how durable the patterns of candidate Europeanisation are in the post-accession stage.



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## 1 Introduction

The Europeanisation of candidate countries has emerged only recently as a separate research area. The study of Europeanisation has long been confined to analyses of the member states of the European Union (EU). However, what the literature usually considers as ‘Europeanisation’, is not confined to the member states. While there is considerable debate about how to define ‘Europeanisation’ (see e.g. Börzel 2005; Börzel and Risse 2003, 2007; Cowles *et al.* 2001; Falkner 2003; Featherstone and Radaelli 2003; Mair 2004; Radaelli 2003), the literature generally uses the term as shorthand for ‘influence of the EU’ or ‘domestic impact of the EU’. Of course, this conflation of ‘Europe’ with the EU is problematic and the dominant focus of the literature on responses to top-down adjustment pressures emanating from the EU limits the scope of analysis – and hence of this review – in a number of ways (which I will discuss below). Yet these restrictions notwithstanding, the domestic impact of the EU is certainly not confined to the EU’s members. The narrow focus of the Europeanisation literature on membership may therefore appear surprising. Throughout the EU’s history, outsiders have undertaken various forms of unilateral adjustment. Two principal reasons account for why such adjustments were not studied under the umbrella of Europeanisation.

One reason is fairly straightforward: the research agenda on Europeanisation is relatively recent. Only by the end of the 1990s did the term Europeanisation come to denote a distinctive research area in EU studies. While adjustment of outsiders, candidates and new members thus certainly had been analysed before, the term Europeanisation was hardly used as a label to designate it as a common research area, or to provide a focal point for a coherent framework of analysis.

A more substantive reason is that while the adjustment of outsiders has been a longstanding phenomenon of European integration, these adjustments were generally a response to various negative externalities of European integration. Adjustments to the EU in non-member states were thus highly selective and did not result from deliberate attempts by the EU to create adjustment pressures. Analysts therefore did not consider such adjustments comparable to the EU’s impact on member states – and hence as cases of Europeanisation.

A qualitative change in the EU’s impact on outsiders occurred in the 1990s with regard to two groups of countries whose adjustment was much more comprehensive and much more directly influenced by the EU. First, the European Economic Area (EEA) agreement between the EU and most members of the European Free Trade Association (EFTA) created a regime in which the non-member states unilaterally adopted the EU’s rules and regulations – the *acquis communautaire* (except for agriculture). This adjustment allowed them to participate in the EU’s internal market and most of their governments regarded it as a first step on the way to full membership.

Second, the EU’s influence has been most comprehensive and explicit in the case of the post-communist Central and Eastern European countries (CEECs) that declared their intention to join the EU after the regime changes of 1989. The EU’s adjustment requirements did not only include the implementation of the *acquis communautaire*, but also an explicit political and economic conditionality, which covered many rules for which EU institutions have no legal competences vis-à-vis full member states (such as democracy and minority rights). In particular, the study of the EU’s conditionality in the context of eastern enlargement has started to frame the analysis in terms of ‘Europeanisation’ of candidate countries. These studies thus started to broaden the focus of Europeanisation and to establish the Europeanisation of applicant states as a separate sub-field of this broader research agenda.

Thus, two key characteristics of these adjustments of non-members are comparable to the impact of the EU on member states, and hence suggest that it makes indeed sense to study the impact of the EU on candidate countries in terms of ‘Europeanisation’: the significant extent to which EU actors and institutions direct and enforce the adjustment process (even if instruments differ) and the comprehensive nature of adjustment to cover the entirety of the *acquis*. Yet at the same time,

the Europeanisation of candidate countries has distinctive characteristics, which suggest that it can be seen as a particular sub-field of Europeanisation research. First, the status of candidates as non-members has implications on the instruments used by EU institutions to influence the adjustment process. EU institutions cannot rely on the treaty-based sanctions, but have to use softer instruments, including conditional incentives, normative pressure, and persuasion. At the same time, monitoring of compliance is much more intrusive and direct than in full member states. Second, as non-member states, the candidates had no voice in the making of the rules that they have to adopt and the power asymmetry vis-à-vis the incumbents has led to a top-down process of rule transfer, with no scope for ‘uploading’ their own preferences to the EU level.

Moreover, the distinctive characteristics of candidate Europeanisation were more prominent in the case of the eastern enlargement than in the 1995 enlargement. The adjustment pressures for candidates differed with regard to the EEA and the eastern enlargement process. In its final form, the EEA did not generate the possibilities for decision-shaping by the EFTA members and a more equal role in the enforcement and interpretation of the ECJ and EFTA surveillance authority as initially envisaged. Still, while many EFTA governments considered the EEA early on as a mere transitory regime on the way to full EU membership, the EFTA states also considered the adoption of the *acquis* in the EEA of intrinsic value to change national regulatory practices (Smith 1999). By contrast, the adaptational pressures for the CEECs were far higher: the legacy of post-communism created high adjustment costs; the main rationale for adopting the *acquis* was the benefits of full EU membership rather than the intrinsic benefits of EU models in the various policy areas. Moreover, only in the context of the CEECs did the EU spell out, and regularly monitor, an explicit pre-accession conditionality.

Similarly to the recent nature of the focus on candidate country Europeanisation, the Europeanisation of new members as a distinctive sub-field of Europeanisation studies is very new (see also Pridham 2006: 3-4). What makes the Europeanisation of new members more similar to candidates, rather than longer-standing members, is that the adjustment pressures of membership are different for states that did not participate in the making of the rules. Yet prior to the 1995 enlargement – as the first post-internal market enlargement – the adjustment pressures on new members had been much more limited. Thus, while some research on the impact of membership on newcomers started to emerge in the context of the EFTA enlargement (see e.g. Falkner 2000, 2001), studies of the experience of new members are still rare. However, the Europeanisation of new members is likely to become a major research area in the aftermath of the 2004 eastern enlargement. The distinctiveness of candidate country Europeanisation in the context of these countries suggests that the post-accession period will be a key test for the effectiveness of the mechanisms used by the EU to ‘Europeanise’ these countries prior to accession. This review therefore concentrates primarily on the insights from studies of candidate country Europeanisation, and in particular on the context of eastern enlargement, in which this research area has emerged (while the emerging literature on new members will be a point for later extensions in future Living Review updates).

Keywords	total hits	before 2000	2003-05
Europeani*ation AND new member*	3	0	3
Europeani*ation AND candidate*	7	0	3
Europeani*ation AND enlargement	18	0	13
Europeani*ation AND accession	19	2	13
Europeani*ation AND Central Europe*	7	4	3
Europeani*ation AND East* Europe*	29	4	15
All of the above combinations, excluding multiple hits	50	6	30

Table 1: *SSCI search, up to December 2005*

Table 1 summarises the results of a keyword search of the Social Science Citation Index. It confirms the Europeanisation of applicant states and new members as a still comparatively small, but fast-growing research area, particularly since 2003. It also reflects the predominance of studies of applicants in the eastern enlargement round.

In recent years, the Europeanisation of candidate countries has become a more sophisticated research area, as studies moved increasingly beyond largely descriptive analyses and towards comparisons across countries and issue areas. Studies that set their analysis explicitly into a theoretical framework have only started to emerge over the last couple of years. In particular some recent, theoretically informed, book-length studies of the EU's influence on the East Central European candidate countries have made a considerable contribution to the development of a common research agenda and have established the Europeanisation of candidate states as a distinctive research area. These studies share considerable common ground, both with regard to their analytical frameworks and empirical findings. Their framework of analysis, which is situated within insitutionalist debates in International Relations and Comparative Politics, is strongly compatible with those used to studying Europeanisation in member states. They also share one key empirical finding, namely that the impact of the EU on candidate countries is differential across countries and issue areas. At the same time, the empirical findings with regard to candidate Europeanisation appear much more clear-cut in identifying a dominant mechanism of the EU's domestic impact. Rationalist institutionalism, with its emphasis on credible external incentives underpinning EU conditionality, and on the material costs incurred by domestic veto players, appears to be well-suited to explaining variation in the broad patterns of Europeanisation in candidate countries. The next stage of this research agenda concerns the impact of accession on the dynamics of pre-accession Europeanisation and how durable the patterns of candidate Europeanisation are in the post-accession stage. Especially for the sustainability of compliance in the post-accession phase, factors emphasised by constructivist institutionalism might prove particularly salient.

This review provides an overview of the key research questions and dependent variables of (primarily, theoretically-informed) studies of candidate country Europeanisation, their conceptual frameworks, empirical foci, and main findings. It concludes with identifying emerging gaps and new directions in this research area. The empirical focus of the review is restricted in two significant ways.

The first restriction stems from following the general focus of the Europeanisation literature on domestic responses to top-down adjustment pressures emanating from the EU. On the one hand, this excludes influences from other European or transatlantic international organisations, such as the Council of Europe or NATO, although some studies consider the interplay between the EU and such organisations. On the other hand, this focus somewhat neglects the more voluntary adjustments to the EU and instances in which the EU provided ideational inspiration for domestic change. This restriction might have some conceptual implications, since precisely those instances of 'Europeanisation' are more likely to result from mechanisms emphasised by constructivist institutionalism. However, some studies explicitly consider voluntary emulation and lesson-drawing as alternative explanations.

The second restriction is the focus on eastern enlargement and the CEECs, which was chosen because the theoretically informed literature on candidate Europeanisation developed in this context. These countries are also particularly instructive cases for Europeanisation effects, in view of the often very substantial political and economic adjustment costs resulting from the systemic transformation to democracy and market economies. However, there are also studies of the other two countries involved in the EU's 2004 enlargement – Malta and Cyprus – that directly engage the Europeanisation literature (see e.g. Cini 2000; Featherstone 2001; Mitchell 2002; Tocci and Kovziridze 2004). Moreover, especially with regard to the EU's impact on democratisation, a lively debate over the Europeanisation of Turkey is emerging (see e.g. Diez *et al.* 2005; Heper 2005; Kubicek 2005; Muftuler Bac 2005; Tocci 2005); while some studies cover Turkey in comparative

studies of the CEECs (see e.g. Engert 2004; Kubicek 2003b; Schimmelfennig *et al.* 2006).

While noting these restrictions, I would like to emphasise that the broader conceptual points derived from the Europeanisation of the CEEC candidates highlighted in this review should also apply to other international organisations, candidate countries and issue areas. Since the primary focus in this review is on theoretical frameworks that relate to the more general analysis of the domestic impact of international institutions, the factors emphasised should be more broadly applicable beyond the case of eastern enlargement – while taking due account of the fact that the setting of these factors, and accordingly the impact of the EU (or other actors), might vary in these different contexts.

## 2 Research questions

In line with most definitions of ‘Europeanisation’ in the literature (see e.g. Börzel 2005; Börzel and Risse 2003, 2007; Cowles *et al.* 2001; Falkner 2003; Featherstone and Radaelli 2003; Mair 2004; Radaelli 2003), studies of the Europeanisation of candidate countries are primarily concerned with analysing the EU’s impact on the domestic level in the candidates. Specifically, the key question that guides these studies is to what extent and how the EU influences domestic political change in these countries.

Concrete questions in particular theoretically informed studies display some variation. For example, such questions include:

- ‘do we see convergence in [the CEECs’ political reform] trajectories and, if so, how much of this convergence was caused by the leverage of the EU?’ (Vachudová 2005: 2);
- ‘how much have EU ... external pressures or incentives shaped [CEE elites’ institutional and policy] choices?’ (Jacoby 2004: 2);
- ‘under what conditions do non-member states adopt EU rules’ (Schimmelfennig and Sedelmeier 2005c: 8)? or
- ‘when and how [has] ... the EU influenced governments to pass certain legislation’ (Kelley 2004: 2)?

Yet in essence, these guiding questions all boil down to one main question: under what conditions is the EU’s influence effective? Or, in other words: what factors explain variation in the EU’s influence across countries and issue areas? This question contains two parts. First, studies assess the extent to which the EU has a domestic impact, and second, they ask what factors account for this (lack of) impact, focusing on different EU strategies and mediating domestic factors.

The following two subsections review respectively the main questions that guide the literature with regard to the whether and how of the EU’s impact. They provide some indicative examples of studies that are guided by such questions but only review the different answers to these questions (with a more comprehensive indication of the relevant literature) in the Section 3 on ‘empirical findings’.

### 2.1 Extent and nature of the EU’s impact

The extent of the EU’s influence is usually the dependent variable of the analysis. With regard to the extent, or nature, of the EU’s impact, most studies broadly distinguish in broad terms whether or not the EU has an influence on domestic change (or whether the EU’s influence is strong/weak). Sometimes this focus includes a temporary dimension in assessing whether the EU’s influence is smooth, or whether adjustment is reluctant and incremental.

Increasingly, studies have also started to differentiate more specifically between different types of change that the EU induces. For example, studies in Schimmelfennig and Sedelmeier (2005b) distinguish between formal change (the legal transposition of rules) and behavioural change (implementation, application and enforcement) (see also Hughes *et al.* 2004a: 526; Hughes *et al.* 2004b; Jacoby 1999). Jacoby (2004: 8-12) identifies four different outcomes of CEEC elites’ attempts to emulate EU rules, ranging from ‘open struggle’, to ‘scaffolding’, ‘continuous learning’, and to ‘homesteading’ by new domestic groups.

### 2.2 Conditions for the EU’s impact: mediating factors

Explanatory studies usually do not only ask whether and what kind of influence the EU has on the candidate countries, but also *how* the EU exercises such influence. The conditions and factors that



determine the effectiveness of the EU's influence from the independent variable in this research area. For the sake of analytical clarity, we can broadly distinguish five different types of questions that focus on different sets of independent (or intervening) variables, even if in practice many studies include more than one set of factors.

One set of alternative independent variables is located at the international level. The key question in this respect is which of the strategies and instruments that the EU uses are most effective. One key difference between the Europeanisation of members and candidate countries concerns the instruments through which the EU generates adjustment pressures. A prominent strategy of the EU to influence candidate countries is the use of conditionality: the use of conditional positive incentives (ultimately EU membership) as reward for states who adopt certain rules that the EU specifies. However, the strategy of conditionality is far from uniform and homogenous, and the EU's application of conditionality varies across issue areas, target countries, and over time. Thus, some studies primarily identify factors (at the level of the EU) that account for effectiveness of conditionality (see e.g. Grabbe 2001, 2006; Pridham 2005; Smith 1998, 2003; Vachudová 2003).

Moreover, the EU also uses other strategies than conditionality to affect domestic change, such as persuasion and socialisation of elites. Some studies therefore explicitly contrast the relative effectiveness of conditionality and alternative strategies (see e.g. Kelley 2004; Kubicek 2003b; Schimmelfennig *et al.* 2003; Schimmelfennig and Sedelmeier 2005b). To the extent that these alternative strategies – conditionality and ‘learning’ – also draw on explanatory factors favoured by different theoretical approaches (as the following section elaborates), these then lead to a distinction between alternative (but not necessarily mutually exclusive) mechanisms of Europeanisation.

Another set of studies focuses primarily on the domestic level, and ask which factors mediate the EU's influence (see e.g. Brusis 2005; Schimmelfennig 2005; Vachudová 2005). To the extent that such studies hold factors at the international level more or less constant, they sometimes resemble more closely the analytical framework of Europeanisation in member states.

In addition to studies that focus on mediating factors at the international or domestic level or both, a few studies also ask explicitly about the channels through which the EU exercises its influence. Such studies distinguish between two different channels – intergovernmental and societal – and analyse their relative importance for the EU's domestic impact (Schimmelfennig *et al.* 2003; Vachudová 2005). Through the intergovernmental channel, the EU directly influences governments and policy-makers in candidate countries. In the societal channel, where the EU's influence is indirect, it achieves this through the pressures that domestic groups bring to bear on their governments.

Finally, some studies frame the question in terms of the relative importance of EU conditionality and domestic politics in shaping domestic political change (e.g. Hughes *et al.* 2004a,b), and hence take into account that such changes might not be induced by the EU. Other studies consider explicitly that there need not be a causal link with EU conditionality if domestic change in the candidate countries meets the EU's demands. For example, Jacoby (2004) distinguishes between different ways in which post-communist institutions might emulate EU rules. Such emulation might be voluntary, rather than the result of EU pressures, either in the form of faithful ‘copies’ (which were rare) or more approximate ‘templates’ (e.g. in health care). The contributions in Schimmelfennig and Sedelmeier (2005b) consider ‘lesson-drawing’ as an alternative explanation for the adoption of EU rules by candidate countries, where such rules might be used to address domestic policy failure, regardless of possible EU rewards for doing so. Andonova (2003) focuses on the economic incentives for internationalised sectors of the economy to adjust rapidly to EU environmental standards – to some extent independently of the requirements of EU membership.

### 2.3 Theoretical framework: alternative institutionalist approaches to the EU's impact

Despite such variations in the specific explanatory focus of particular studies as indicated above, the conceptual frameworks of theoretically informed studies of candidate country Europeanisation are strongly compatible. Moreover, while the frameworks of analysis reflect the distinctiveness of the Europeanisation of candidate countries, in broader terms they also fit well with the conceptual approaches used in the study of member state Europeanisation.

The Europeanisation of member states distinguishes between two analytically distinctive approaches – rationalist institutionalism and sociological (or constructivist) institutionalism (see e.g. Börzel 2005; Börzel and Risse 2003; Cowles *et al.* 2001). Rationalist institutionalism suggests that the EU's domestic impact follows a 'logic of consequences' rather than a 'logic of appropriateness' (March and Olsen 1989: 160). Adaptational pressure from the EU changes the opportunity structure for utility-maximising domestic actors. It empowers certain actors by offering legal and political resources to pursue domestic change. Formal domestic institutions are the main factors impeding or facilitating changes in response to EU adjustment pressures. By contrast, sociological institutionalism emphasises that such responses follow a 'logic of appropriateness'. The EU's domestic impact results from a process of socialisation in which domestic actors internalise EU norms that they regard as legitimate. Domestic norm entrepreneurs, as well as domestic cultural understandings and informal institutions are key mediating factors for whether domestic actors engage in a social learning process through which EU rules redefine their interests and identities.

Likewise, most theoretically-informed studies of the Europeanisation of candidate countries are generally set within the framework of institutionalist theory (see e.g. Dimitrova and Steunenberg 2004; Epstein 2005a,b, 2006c; Goetz 2002; Grabbe 2006; Jacoby 2004; Kelley 2004; Kubicek 2003b; Schimmelfennig and Sedelmeier 2005b), and in particular the debate between rationalism and constructivism (or sociological institutionalism) in International Relations theory (see also Schimmelfennig and Sedelmeier 2006: 4).

Such studies contrast the use of conditionality – as a strategy emphasised by rationalist institutionalist approaches – with alternative strategies that sociological institutionalism is best suited to analyse. For example, Kelley (2004) contrasts 'incentives' with 'normative pressure'; Kubicek (2003c) 'conditionality' with 'convergence', which entails the 'spread of norms'; Schimmelfennig and Sedelmeier (2005c) 'external incentives' with 'social learning'. Most of these studies formulate specific hypotheses according to which either of the two general approaches would expect the likelihood of the EU's influence to be high/low (see Table 2), both with regard to factors relating to the EU's strategies and domestic factors.

At the same time, while the two approaches emphasise analytically distinct mechanisms, these are – at least partly – complementary, and not necessarily mutually exclusive (see also Jacoby 2004: 20-40; Schimmelfennig and Sedelmeier 2005c: 25). Indeed, as Kelley (2004) points out, in the issue area of minority policy, the EU never relied exclusively on conditionality, which was always combined with normative pressures by international institutions. In such cases, it is impossible to disentangle the relative importance of either mechanism, but only to contrast the effectiveness of exclusive normative pressure from normative pressures underpinned by conditionality. Likewise, Epstein (2006b) emphasises the social context of conditionality, rather than a simple either/or debate; and Johnson (2006) suggests a 'two-track' diffusion model, in which both mechanisms work simultaneously on different domestic groups within the same issue area. Jacoby (2004) goes one step further to suggest the concept of 'embedded rationalism' as a synthesis between the various strands of institutionalist theory.

Table 2 depicts the key independent variables analysed in explanatory studies of variations in the effectiveness of the EU's influence.

	<b>Rationalist institutionalism</b>	<b>Sociological/constructivist institutionalism</b>
EU strategy	Conditionality	Socialisation
Facilitating international factors		
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• clarity of EU demand</li> <li>• credibility of conditionality</li> <li>• sizeable rewards and power asymmetry</li> <li>• monitoring capacity</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• identification with EU</li> <li>• legitimacy of EU demands</li> </ul>
Domestic facilitating factors		
polity dimension	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• liberal democratic governments</li> <li>• high quality of political competition at moment of regime change</li> <li>• dominance of liberal ethnic policy preferences in parliament</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• positive normative resonance with domestic rules</li> <li>• transnational (epistemic) networks</li> </ul>
policy dimension	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• low actor density/number of veto players</li> <li>• internationalisation of policy sector</li> <li>• absence of institutional legacies</li> </ul>	

Table 2: *Conceptual framework: main independent variables*

## 2.4 Rationalist institutionalism

Rationalist institutionalism focuses on the use of conditionality by the EU to influence candidate countries. Most studies that analyse the effectiveness of conditionality identify factors relating to its application by the EU to explain variations in its impact. At the domestic level, rationalist institutionalism focuses – just as in studies of member state Europeanisation – on the differential empowerment of domestic actors.

### 2.4.1 EU strategy: conditional incentives

A number of studies consider the clarity of the EU's demands as an important factor increasing the likelihood of effectiveness. Clarity means that the candidates need to know what they need to do if they decide to comply with the EU's conditions. It applies to both whether a certain issue area is included and what particular rules the candidates need to adopt (Schimmelfennig and Sedelmeier 2005c). Uncertainty might stem from evolving rules in the EU, such as the Schengen

*acquis* (Grabbe 2003, 2005), from the absence of a single EU model in many policy areas, as well as from learning processes (and internal conflict) within the Commission about what model might be most suitable for candidates (Hughes *et al.* 2004b). For example, initially some parts of the Commission informally advocated a model of regional policy based on democratic regional self-government, before the Commission expressed a preference for more centralised management of the structural funds.

Another key factor is the credibility of EU conditionality. Credibility has two sides. The candidates have to be certain that they will receive the promised rewards after meeting the EU's demands. Yet they also have to believe that they will only receive the reward if they indeed fully meet the requirements. Thus, credibility relates to the consistent, merit-based application of conditionality by the EU (Kubicek 2003c: 18; Schimmelfennig and Sedelmeier 2005c: 13-16; Vachudová 2005: 112-120). It suffers both if political conflicts inside the EU make candidates doubt that the EU will deliver (as in the debates surrounding the opening of accession negotiations with Turkey) and if suspicions arise over whether political favouritism, ulterior motives, or side-payments led to rewards for candidates who did not meet (all) the requirements (fully) (as in the run-up to the start of negotiations with Bulgaria, Romania, or Croatia).

Superior bargaining power, resulting from asymmetrical interdependence in favour of the EU, is a precondition for the ability of the EU to withhold rewards if its conditions have not been met (Moravcsik and Vachudová 2003; Schimmelfennig and Sedelmeier 2005c: 14). However, the EU's bargaining power affects also another factor: the size of the rewards and benefits that the EU can use as leverage (Grabbe 2003; Kubicek 2003c: 17-18; Schimmelfennig and Sedelmeier 2005c: 13; Vachudová 2005: 63-79, 108-110). The ultimate reward of EU membership is indeed a sizeable benefit for candidates, but sometimes the payment of the reward is distant. The use of intermediate rewards is therefore important. The EU can tie both offers of trade and aid, as well as its role as a gatekeeper to different stages of the accession progress to the fulfilment of specific conditions (e.g. Grabbe 2003: 316).

The credibility of conditionality is also linked to the ability of the EU to monitor effectively the fulfilment of its requirements (Schimmelfennig and Sedelmeier 2005c: 15). Information asymmetries usually work in favour of candidate countries. In the case of eastern enlargement, the EU has therefore made significant investment into its monitoring capacity, which contrasts starkly with the decentralised mechanism of monitoring compliance with EU rules in the member states.

#### 2.4.2 Domestic politics: differential empowerment and costs

Rationalist institutionalism also specifies a number of mediating factors at the domestic level that mediate the EU's influence. Studies usually identify different sets of factors, depending on whether the EU's influence is aimed at the polity dimension (democratic principles, human rights and minority protection) or the policy dimension.

In the polity dimension, Vachudová (2005) and Schimmelfennig (2005) identify as a key facilitating factor the presence of a liberal democratic government, for which the costs of meeting the EU's demands are unlikely to be prohibitively high. More specifically, Vachudová (2005) emphasises the quality of political competition at the moment of regime change, which in turn depends on a strong opposition to communism and a reforming communist party. Kelley (2004) operationalises the absence of costly domestic opposition as the dominance of liberal ethnic policy preferences over nationalists in parliament.

In the policy dimension, a low 'actor density' in a policy area (Jacoby 2004: 9), or a low number of veto players (Schimmelfennig and Sedelmeier 2005c) is a key facilitating factor. In turn, the number of actors opposed to the EU's demands is likely to be low, if a policy area does not have strong institutional legacies (see also e.g. Hughes *et al.* 2004b), or if a sector of the economy is highly internationalised (Andonova 2003).

## 2.5 Constructivist institutionalism

Processes of socialisation and persuasion are a mechanism for the EU's domestic impact, which rationalist approaches discard, but constructivism or sociological institutionalism are well equipped to analyse. Through such processes, candidate countries come to consider that the EU's rules have an intrinsic value, regardless of the material incentives for adopting them.

### 2.5.1 EU strategy: socialisation and persuasion

A number of factors increase the likelihood that persuasion and socialisation are effective. If a candidate country – both elites and publics – positively identifies with the EU, or holds it in high regard, the government is more likely to be open to persuasion and to consider the rules that the EU promotes as positive (Epstein 2006a; Kubicek 2003c: 14-15; Schimmelfennig and Sedelmeier 2005c: 19).

Likewise, if a candidate country considers that the process through which EU conditions are made, and the process through which the EU transfers its rules to candidates, as legitimate, it is more likely to adopt these rules. Facilitating factors thus include the participation of the target countries in setting conditions and the making of rules – both of which were problematic in the case of candidates as opposed to full members. Furthermore, to be perceived legitimate, the conditions for candidates must not be more onerous than for the incumbents (Schimmelfennig and Sedelmeier 2005c: 18-19; Schweltnus 2006). Moreover, legitimacy increases with the use of soft tactics rather than overt pressure (Kubicek 2003c: 16), and a 'low density of EU demands', which allows domestic actors 'to engage in relatively unpressured "learning" (Jacoby 2004: 10).'

### 2.5.2 Domestic politics: normative resonance

Constructivist institutionalism emphasises that the EU's impact that does not (only) depend on the domestic material interest constellations, but on the extent to which there is a 'cultural match' or 'resonance' between EU demands and domestic rules and political discourses (Epstein 2006a; Grigorescu 2002; Kubicek 2003c: 13-14; Schimmelfennig and Sedelmeier 2005c: 20; Schweltnus 2005).

Transnational networks that connect elites in candidate countries and with the EU are a facilitating factor for the EU's influence for both rationalist and constructivist institutionalist approaches. The latter emphasise particularly the role of transnational epistemic communities that do not only exercise pressures on governments, but contribute to persuading them of the legitimacy of the rules in question (Johnson 2006; Kubicek 2003c: 15-16; Schimmelfennig and Sedelmeier 2005c: 23). The EU's twinning programme, in which officials seconded from the member states assisted their counterparts in the candidate countries with adopting EU legislation in their area of expertise, could facilitate such processes. (Tulmets 2005). However, obstacles to influence and 'cognitive convergence' include factors such as the institutional fluidity of programmes or the politicisation of projects, and their success depends much on the individuals involved (Grabbe 2003: 315; Papadimitriou and Phinnemore 2004; Pridham 2005: 125-126; Steffens 2003).

### 3 Empirical findings: EU impact across issue areas

The empirical findings of studies of candidates confirm some key insights of research on member state Europeanisation. First, the EU's impact is differential across countries and issues (see also Börzel and Risse 2007; Goetz 2005; Grabbe 2003: 317). This finding might be somewhat surprising, as there are good reasons to believe that the EU's impact should be more pervasive and induce greater convergence. The EU's conditionality and its tight link with progress in accession negotiations induced strong top-down pressures; at the domestic level, post-communist institutions are less firmly entrenched than in the older member states (see also Goetz and Wollmann 2001; Grabbe 2003: 306-308; Héritier 2005; Schimmelfennig and Sedelmeier 2005c). The EU's influence on candidates in the context of eastern enlargement was arguably indeed greater than on member states, and induced a certain extent of convergence. Still, the broader patterns suggest that diversity persists, both between eastern and western Europe and within the new member states (see also Bruszt 2002). Furthermore, even in certain areas where the EU's pre-accession influence has been particularly pervasive, it remains to be seen whether this impact remains sustainable after accession, as the applicants had incentives to engage only in shallow institutionalisation which is not difficult to reverse (Goetz 2005: 262).

On the other hand, some of the theoretical findings are much more clear-cut. Research on the member states does not identify a dominant mechanism of Europeanisation. By contrast, rationalist institutionalism, with its focus on the EU's use of conditionality and domestic veto players, appears well-suited to explaining the main patterns of candidate country Europeanisation. The sections below illustrate that the factors emphasised by rationalist institutionalism – the credibility of the incentive of membership and the incumbent government's material power costs of adjustment – generally account better for variation in the EU's influence on liberal democratic principles and socio-economic policies than the factors emphasised by constructivist institutionalism (see also Kelley 2004; Kubicek 2003a; Schimmelfennig and Sedelmeier 2005a, 2006).

#### 3.1 Impact on the polity

Through the EU's political conditionality, the EU's impact on fundamental principles of liberal democracy in the candidate countries has been much stronger than on the incumbents. At the same time, the EU's influence has been strongly constrained by domestic factors. The accession process had a strong impact on the organisation of core executives, but without resulting in convergent structures across the candidates. Another similarity to member state Europeanisation is that overall, the EU's impact on polities has been on the whole more limited than its policy impact. At the same time, there has been more attention, particularly in legal studies, to the adaptation of the CEECs' constitutions and legal order in view of accession (see Albi 2005; Poplawska 2004; Sadurski 2004, 2006; Sajo 2004).

##### 3.1.1 Liberal democratic principles

The EU's impact on democracy and political rights in East Central Europe has become a well-established subfield of research. Many of the contributions come not only from the EU studies community, but also from the broader disciplines of International Relations and Comparative Politics. They include the literature on the first phases of democratisation, in which the theme of the 'return to Europe' played a prominent role. Such studies are more generally interested in the international dimension or domestic conditions of democratisation; they often do not only focus on the EU and are less likely to use the terminology of 'Europeanisation' (see e.g. Cooley 2003; Knack 2004; Levitsky and Way 2006; Pevehouse 2002, 2005; Pridham and Ágh 2001; Pridham *et al.* 1994; Schimmelfennig *et al.* 2006; Schimmelfennig and Sedelmeier 2005a; Whitehead 2001; Zielonka and Pravda 2001).

Analyses of the EU's ability to promote democracy, human rights and minority rights in candidate countries find that the EU's influence has crucially depended on the regime type and party political constellations in the candidates (Schimmelfennig 2005; Schimmelfennig *et al.* 2003; Schimmelfennig and Sedelmeier 2005a; Vachudová 2005). In states with liberal democratic governments (such as the democratic frontrunners, Poland, Hungary and the Czech Republic), the EU did not need to use democratic conditionality heavily. In such countries, the EU was also generally successful when it used conditionality to promote particular norms, such as minority rights, even against initial domestic opposition, for example in Romania or the Baltics states (for a more critical view, see Hughes and Sasse 2003; Kelley 2004; Sasse 2005; Schwellnus 2005; Vermeersch 2003). By contrast, the EU's impact on states dominated by a nationalist and/or authoritarian leadership (e.g. Slovakia under Meciar, Croatia under Tudjman, or Serbia under Milosevic) was negligible (see also Kubicek 2003a). For such governments, the domestic political power costs of meeting the EU's demands were prohibitive.

The EU's impact on democratic consolidation was most pronounced in those states in which nationalist or authoritarian forces lost power to liberal forces, such as in Slovakia, Croatia, or Romania. Once more liberal opposition parties assumed power, the EU's conditionality – if combined with a credible accession perspective – had a lock-in effect that endured subsequent changes in government (Schimmelfennig 2005; Vachudová 2005).

Debate persists on whether the EU was able to influence the electoral defeat of nationalist/authoritarian governments. (Schimmelfennig 2005; Schimmelfennig *et al.* 2005, 2006) argues that the EU's influence is limited to the intergovernmental channel (once favourable governments are in power). By contrast, Vachudová (2005) suggests that the EU influenced domestic politics indirectly and helped create a more competitive political systems in 'illiberal' states that pushed them to a liberal political trajectory. The EU empowered liberal reformers by informing electorates about the implication of their choices for the country's accession prospects and facilitating cooperation and moderation of opposition forces. Vachudová thus suggests that even if the EU did not directly influence voters' choices, it had a tremendous influence on the nature of the elites that won power in 'watershed elections' that marked the departure from illiberal systems.

The importance of domestic costs as the main constraining factor underscores the explanatory power of rationalist institutionalism for the general patterns of the EU's impact in the polity dimension. At the same time, Schwellnus (2005) argues that the inclusion of factors emphasised in constructivist approaches – domestic resonance – can provide complementary, but more convincing, explanations of the domestic processes leading to the adoption of EU rules, and the particular choices of rules within the scope of the EU's conditionality.

### 3.1.2 Executives and administrative structures

The EU's impact on political-administrative structures has been pronounced for those institutional arrangements that link national executives and the EU. This impact is largely the result of the functional pressures arising from the need to organise relations with the EU, formulate negotiating positions, and to implement EU policies, rather than any deliberate attempt by the EU to change executive structures. And just as in Western Europe, there is considerable variation in the extent to which intra-governmental coordination is fragmented or centralised (Fink-Hafner 2005; Goetz 2001; Goetz 2005: 271-272; Lippert *et al.* 2001). At the same time, especially in the later stages of the accession process, a tendency towards more centralised and hierarchical coordination could be observed, for example in Poland (Zubek 2001, 2005). Evidence from earlier enlargements, such as in the case of Spain, suggests that a centralisation of intra-governmental coordination in order to respond to the high coordination requirements of accession negotiations may prove sticky even after accession (Jones 2000).

A novelty in the context of eastern enlargement is that the EU has undertaken considerable

efforts to influence administrative practices in candidates, including civil service reforms, or anti-corruption. It may well be that the EU ‘certainly hastened such reform and gave it a visibility it would not otherwise have achieved as well as providing some legitimation for such change’ (Pridham 2005) and there is evidence of considerable changes in formal rules induced by conditionality (Dimitrova 2005). At the same time, the impact was varied and often restricted by post-communist legacies, domestic opposition, the lack of a single EU model of administration, and inconsistent application of conditionality (Ágh 2003; Bossaert and Demmke 2003; Dimitrova 2002, 2005; Hintea *et al.* 2004; Meyer-Sahling 2004; Pridham 2005: 122-127; Reinholde 2004).

Finally, while a number of studies have analysed the impact of the EU on regionalisation, evidence of the EU’s impact is limited (Ágh 2004; Brusis 2002, 2005; Fowler 2001; Glenn 2004; Hughes *et al.* 2004a,b; Jacoby 2004; Kettunen and Kungla 2005; Marek and Baum 2002; O’Dwyer 2006; Sturm and Dieringer 2005). The lack of impact of the EU fits well with the expectations of rationalist institutionalism. The *acquis* does not prescribe decentralisation and the devolution of powers to the regional level, but merely the establishment of statistical units for the purpose of administering the allocation of structural funds. Although parts of the Commission initially tried to promote a much more far-reaching interpretation of these conditions, inconsistencies in the Commission’s message make the finding that domestic politics was the main determinant of regional policy fully compatible with a rationalist institutionalist perspective.

### 3.2 Impact on politics

Studies of the EU’s impact on the politics dimension of candidates – political parties and interest groups – are only slowly starting to emerge. Analyses of the Europeanisation of interest groups are still particularly rare (but see Perez-Solorzano Borragan 2004, 2005). There is a larger literature on the Europeanisation of political parties and party systems in the candidates, but it is considerably smaller than the literature focused on the polity or policy dimensions of the EU’s impact. Studies of EU conditionality often overlook the area, as the EU makes few deliberate attempts to exercise influence on party systems. The exception are cases in which the EU rather openly took sides in national elections against nationalist and/or authoritarian parties (see e.g. Pridham 2002; Rybar and Malova 2004; Vachudová 2005), but such studies are then usually placed within the context of the EU’s impact on democratisation, rather than the party system. However, while studies of the Europeanisation of political parties in the older member states find that the EU only has a limited influence on national party systems (Mair 2000), the EU’s impact in East Central Europe might be more significant.

The unconsolidated party systems of the eastern candidate countries may be more susceptible to influence, not least through European transnational party organisations that have been particularly active (Dakowska 2002; Lewis 2003; Pridham 1999; Pridham 2005: 164-166). Furthermore, the reactions in the candidate countries’ party systems to the question of EU membership have attracted considerable attention. One particularly prominent focus in this area is on Euroscepticism in the party systems of candidates/new members (Ágh 2002; Batory and Sitter 2004; Henderson 2005; Kopecký and Mudde 2002; Lewis 2005; Taggart and Szczerbiak 2004).

Another central focus is the politics of the accession referenda (Baun *et al.* 2006; Cini 2004; Fowler 2004; Hanley 2004; Henderson 2004; Krašovec and Lajh 2004; Mikkel and Pridham 2004; Szczerbiak 2004; Szczerbiak and Taggart 2004a,b, 2005).

Analyses of the EU’s impact on party competition are often more critical of the EU’s impact than the bulk of the studies that analyse the EU’s impact on democratisation. The latter studies – usually set within the broader discipline of International Relations – often find that the EU had a positive, or at worst no, impact. By contrast, a number of studies (usually from a Comparative Politics perspective) suggest that the EU’s influence might have been detrimental to democracy in the candidate countries (see e.g. Grzymala-Busse 2004; Grzymala-Busse and Innes 2003; Hughes



2001).

For example, the EU's main impact on national party systems that Mair (2000) identifies, namely the de-politicising effect of a domestic consensus on integration, which hollows out political competition, is exacerbated in the context of accession and post-communist transition. Innes (2002: 101-102) suggests that the EU 'could have a debilitating effect, arresting party developments by excluding from political competition those substantive, grass-roots, ideological policy conflicts around which western European party systems have evolved'. Similar criticism has been levelled against the impact of the EU on the development of domestic civil society organisations. Paradoxically, EU efforts to strengthen environmental NGOs in the CEECs had the reverse effect of undermining them by usurping their agenda and divorcing them from grassroots support and activism (Fagan 2005; Fagan and Jehlička 2002; Fagan and Tickle 2001; for a less pessimistic view, see Stark *et al.* 2005).

Another ambiguous effect of the EU on democratic consolidation in the candidates – which has been also observed in the member states – is the strengthening of executives vis-à-vis parliaments (Goetz 2005; Grabbe 2001; Raik 2002; Sadurski 2006). As Sadurski (2006: 7) puts it: 'Enactment of EU-related laws was often fast-tracked, with little or no serious parliamentary discussions, and with the executive controlling the process throughout. This was perhaps no bad thing, given the notorious inefficiency and incompetence of parliamentary institutions in post-communist states, and was arguably the only way to ensure that the enormous body of EU law was transposed into domestic legislation. ... [However], it strengthened the executive bodies over their parliamentary equivalents, a secretive procedure over fully transparent ones, and the quick-fix pace of decision-making over comprehensive deliberation. [The goal of accession] gave the executive more power to by-pass parliament and to justify the centralisation of decision-making by the emergency-like circumstances.'

### 3.3 Policy Impact

The literature finds the greatest impact of the EU in the policy dimension. Most studies confirm that this impact is due to the EU's conditionality and that the incentive of membership – if credible – also trumped domestic costs (Schimmelfennig and Sedelmeier 2005a: 215-217; Schimmelfennig and Sedelmeier 2006: 8-11).

Empirical – and increasingly theoretically informed – research in this dimension has emerged most prominently in the areas of regional policy (Baun 2002; Brusis 2005; Glenn 2004; Hughes *et al.* 2004a,b; Jacoby 2004; Marek and Baun 2002; O'Dwyer 2006; Vass 2004), social policy (Anderson 2006; Cinca 2004; Guillén and Palier 2004; Leiber 2005; Lendvai 2004; Sissenich 2003, 2005; Woolfson 2006), environmental policy (Andonova 2003, 2005; Carmin and VanDeveer 2004), and Justice and Home Affairs (Grabbe 2000, 2005; Lavenex 1999, 2001; Lavenex and Ucarer 2004). By contrast, studies of adjustments in the CEECs to the EU's internal market regulations are often not framed in terms of 'Europeanisation' (see e.g. Appel 2006; Dunn 2003; but see Prange 2002, 2004).

While the area of (macro-)economic policy in the post-communist countries has received much attention, particularly in studies of post-communist transformation, there have been surprisingly few attempts to disentangle the distinctive impact of the EU from 'globalisation' and economic transformation more generally (but see Andronova Vincelette 2004; Dyson 2006; Epstein 2005a, 2006b; Johnson 2006; Lindstrom and Piroška 2004).

These studies largely find that the EU's policy impact has been strong across policy areas and candidate countries – if these countries had a credible membership incentive. Before the EU spelled out its conditionality, the candidate countries adopted EU rules in some policy areas, but such adjustments were patchy and highly selective. However, once the EU explicitly stated its accession conditions and regularly monitored the alignment of candidate countries, adjustment

increased considerably. The EU's impact on the CEECs' alignment with EU policies intensified especially once the EU opened accession negotiations with the country question, which served as the most important evidence that the EU's membership incentive was credible.

The finding of a strong impact of the EU in the policy dimension does not mean that that domestic adjustment costs and veto players did not matter. Domestic politics did play an important role, in particular in shaping which rules were adopted in cases where concrete EU demands were more limited, such as in the area of regional policy, or when domestic actors used the EU's conditionality instrumentally as a focal point for domestic changes to promote their own priorities. Differences in domestic factors thus account for a continued diversity of outcomes of alignment efforts and for variation in the speed of adjustment across policy areas and accession countries. However, domestic opposition to EU rules rarely effectively prevented the adoption of EU rules that were subject to credible conditionality.

Even the cases in which domestic rules appeared more important for particular policy outcomes than the preferences of EU actors, the limitations of the EU's impact in these cases fits well with rationalist institutional explanations. For example, factors limiting the effectiveness of conditionality include inconsistent demands from the Commission – either because some parts of the Commission informally promoted a more maximalist agenda than is underpinned by the *acquis* (see e.g. Hughes *et al.* 2004b), or because some actors informally indicated leniency in specific areas (Sissenich 2005).

Furthermore, although rationalist institutionalism emerges as particularly well suited to explaining the general patterns of the EU's policy impact, constructivism is relevant to explain specific cases. Such cases include the adoption of EU policies without, or prior to, EU adjustment pressures (Andonova 2005) or the internalisation of EU rules by actors in the candidate countries even if the policies were initially adopted instrumentally (Grabbe 2005). Moreover, in cases in which social learning provided the main mechanism of policy transfer, these policies were much less prone to domestic contestation (Epstein 2005a).

In sum, in view of the starting point of the post-communist countries, the EU did induce a certain extent of convergence; at least if compared to the older member states and especially in areas where EU rules do not leave much scope for discretion. However, convergence has been far from uniform, and diversity persists, as the EU's impact is differential across policy areas and domestic contexts (see also Bruszt 2002; Zielonka and Mair 2002).

## 4 Conclusion: gaps and new directions

The recent emergence of book-length theoretical studies of the Europeanisation of applicant states have contributed greatly to the emergence of this field as a distinctive, fairly coherent and increasingly sophisticated research area (Andonova 2003; Dimitrova 2004; Grabbe 2006; Hughes *et al.* 2004b; Jacoby 2004; Kelley 2004; Linden 2002; Pridham 2005; Schimmelfennig *et al.* 2006; Schimmelfennig and Sedelmeier 2005b; Vachudová 2005). These developments suggest that it is indeed possible and fruitful for the research community to think of candidate country Europeanisation as a distinctive sub-field of research. Factors that make the more recent cases of candidate Europeanisation distinctive are not only the particular socio-economic characteristics of the post-communist countries, but also the sustained attempts by the EU to transfer its rules to non-members prior to accession, underpinned by accession conditionality; the top-down, rather than two-way nature of Europeanisation; and the significant power asymmetry between the EU and the targets of Europeanisation (see also Börzel and Sedelmeier 2006; Goetz 2005; Grabbe 2003; Héri-tier 2005; Schimmelfennig and Sedelmeier 2005c).

At the same time, this distinctiveness does certainly not mean that candidate Europeanisation should be studied in isolation from broader debates. The insights to be gained from research in this area have been greatest precisely when it has been well connected to Europeanisation studies more generally, and to key theoretical debates in the broader disciplines of International Relations and Comparative Politics.

Analyses of the Europeanisation of candidate countries suggest that rationalist institutionalism is well suited to explaining the EU's domestic impact and that conditionality is the dominant mechanism of the EU's influence. At the same time, these studies also suggest that it is important to distinguish clearly between 'conditionality' as a strategy used by the EU, and 'conditionality' as an explanatory model or ideal-typical mechanism of EU influence. To avoid confusion, the latter might be more usefully substituted for a 'rationalist institutionalist' *approach* or 'external incentives' *model*. This holds that conditionality as a strategy is only effective under clearly defined conditions, most importantly, a credible membership perspective as the main reward offered by the EU, and that domestic adjustment costs are not prohibitively high for incumbent governments and do not threaten their power base.

On the one hand, most studies find that the EU's conditionality – as a strategy – has been fairly successful, and generally more successful than normative pressure and socialisation (alone). Yet, many studies also find that there have been limits to the EU's influence through conditionality and that its impact has been differential (Hughes *et al.* 2004b; Jacoby 2004; Schimmelfennig and Sedelmeier 2005c: 2-3).

On the other hand, with regard to theoretical findings, most studies also agree, at least implicitly, that not only the success, but also the limitations of the EU's conditionality – i.e. the conditions that determine its effectiveness – are best explained by a rationalist institutionalist approach. Rationalist institutionalism emphasises conditionality – rather than alternative mechanisms such as socialisation – but crucially also specifies both international and domestic mediating factors. Thus, it explicitly takes into account that 'conditionality' is far from an homogeneous instrument that is applied uniformly across countries and issue areas.

### 4.1 Gaps in the literature

At the same time, gaps and new directions of research have become clearer. One of the more obvious gaps is the almost exclusive focus on applicants from the eastern enlargement. Another can be filled through a better specification of mediating factors at the domestic level.

#### 4.1.1 Comparisons across enlargement rounds

The research agenda on candidate country Europeanisation has developed almost exclusively in the context of the EU's eastern enlargement. As the introduction to this review alluded to, the EU's impact on the applicants in this enlargement round has a number of distinctive elements which were particularly conducive to the emergence of a new research programme. Yet even if in previous enlargement rounds some of these elements were not as distinctive (such as the extent of the *acquis*, the use of explicit conditionality, the socio-economic starting conditions of the candidates), more comparative insights are desirable, precisely in order to establish to what extent the conceptual frameworks developed in the context of eastern enlargement allow us to understand candidate country Europeanisation – and the Europeanisation of non-member states – more generally.

#### 4.1.2 Domestic politics

A conceptual gap that is becoming more evident is – maybe somewhat surprisingly – a better conceptualisation of domestic politics. On the one hand, the conceptual frameworks that dominate in theoretically informed studies of candidate country Europeanisation are informed by approaches from International Relations, specifically on the domestic impact of international institutions. At the same time, however, a particular strength of most of these studies is precisely that they stress the importance of domestic politics (see also Scherpereel 2006: 136) as factors that mediate the EU's influence, e.g. through veto players and adoption costs, or normative rule resonance.

On the other hand, there is a certain imbalance in the extent to which the literature currently identifies domestic and international mediating factors. For example, while Schimmelfennig and Sedelmeier (2005c) elaborate greatly on international factors that can affect governments' cost/benefit calculations, the category for (rationalist) domestic factors remains a rather undifferentiated 'domestic adoption costs' or 'veto players'. The problem is not that this approach neglects domestic politics. It is more the case that the domestic factors that most of the literature emphasises – veto players, actor density, domestic costs – partly remain rather broad and are therefore often subject to ad hoc operationalisation.

Studies of the EU's impact on liberal democratic principles have gone furthest towards a better specification of domestic costs. Distinctions between liberal and illiberal/anti-liberal (and mixed) states or party constellations (Schimmelfennig 2005; Vachudová 2005) and in particular more detailed analyses of the extent to which liberal vs. strict ethnic policy preferences are represented in parliament (Kelley 2004) might provide good indicators of domestic opposition in this particular area. The literature on partial (post-communist) reforms in Comparative Politics (e.g. Hellman 1998) also offers useful indicators for specifying some of the domestic costs for ruling elites of forgoing the benefits of partial reform. Yet, the distinction between domestic governmental party constellations still remains somewhat broad, and cannot be used easily as indicators for the EU's impact on socio-economic policies. In that area, comparative politics and comparative political economy can make stronger contributions, such as in Andonova's study (Andonova 2003) of environmental policy which uses the internationalisation of an economic sector as an indicator for preferences about harmonisation with EU legislation.

### 4.2 New directions

In view of the particular findings in the context of eastern enlargement, two directions for further research stand out: the study of the Europeanisation of new members after accession and the use of conditionality beyond accession candidates.

#### 4.2.1 Compliance after accession

Concerns about the ability of the central and eastern European candidates to apply the *acquis* after accession has been one key reservation against enlargement and the main motive behind the pervasive pressures for strict and early pre-accession alignment underpinned by conditionality.

The finding that conditionality – the external incentive of membership – was the key mechanism that led to the adoption of EU rules by the candidates makes the question of post-accession compliance even more salient (Dimitrova and Steunenberg 2004: 180; Scherpereel 2006: 143; Schimmelfennig and Sedelmeier 2004: 677-679; Schimmelfennig and Sedelmeier 2005a: 226-227): how will the changes in the incentive structure affect behaviour? Will the EU's compliance system compensate for the absence of conditional incentives? Will the success of conditionality in generating change (albeit often still limited to formal change) lead to sustainable compliance – application and enforcement – after accession? What will happen in areas of political conditionality where the powers of EU institutions vis-à-vis full members are limited?

The question of post-accession, or post-conditionality, compliance in the new member states brings the analysis closer to the established literature on EU compliance (see Treib 2006). As opposed to pre-accession adjustment, which often remained limited to formal rule adoption, i.e. legal transposition, the focus in post-accession compliance shifts to implementation and enforcement. It also shifts attention more firmly to the role of ordinary courts in the application of EU law (Kühn 2005). Studies in this area are still at preliminary stages. Quantitative data on transposition and infringements suggests that concerns about an 'eastern problem' are vastly exaggerated and that the new members perform much better than most of the older member states (Sedelmeier 2006). However, emerging qualitative research cautions that the good legislative record may not be matched with regard to application on the ground (Falkner and Treib 2006).

#### 4.2.2 Conditionality beyond EU candidacy

Another finding of the analysis of applicant state Europeanisation is particularly relevant for the study of the EU's use of conditionality and softer instruments of influence in countries that do not have a credible accession perspective. A key factor that determined the effectiveness of conditionality is a credible accession perspective. In other words, the most sizeable reward and incentive that the EU can offer is membership. What does this mean for the ability of the EU to influence domestic politics in non-member states for which membership is explicitly ruled out, at least for the foreseeable future? This is a key question for studies of 'Europeanisation beyond the EU' (see forthcoming Living Review on 'EU governance beyond the European Union').

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