

**Europeanization in the Central and Eastern European New EU
Member States: A Strategic Approach to Development Cooperation**

By

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ABSTRACT

This thesis is concerned with the study of development cooperation policies of the Central and Eastern European countries which joined the European Union in 2004/2007. The existing literature fails to provide enough attention to the strategic approach of the development cooperation policies in the new member states, wrongfully assuming a similar starting point at strategic level for the ten countries. Focusing my argumentation within the framework of Europeanization, the main question I address is *how development cooperation strategies of the new CEE EU member states reflect the transposition of European “soft” norms at national level*. The main method employed is the analysis of primary strategic documents of the new CEE EU member states.

The analysis identifies a series of inconsistencies in terms of the way and level to which the “soft” norms were integrated. It confirms, however, the superficiality of the process of Europeanization in the case of development assistance, and identifies the distinction between the existing assumptions regarding new member states’ commitments and their own understanding regarding their own engagements. Addressing the problem of Europeanization it underlines the close link between the level of Europeanization and the nature of the norms it aspires to promote.

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INTRODUCTION

As a young practitioner, I remember being introduced to development cooperation as one field of foreign policy my country *had* to promote as part of its commitments to join the European Union. I was quite intrigued when, by participating in a series of international meetings, I realized how the discourse of the new member states varied in order to encompass quite a wide range of reasons and relevance of the policy. However, the most interesting aspect to these countries' development cooperation was their self-assumed success in implementing the policy, despite the criticism raised against this view. Even more than that, their seeming lack of reaction to both change in the policy and criticism seem to put them on radically different stands than those of the older member states, which take many precautions to ensure their aid policies are permanently updated and criticism is dealt with.

Framed within this context, my current research is concerned with the return to donor-ship of these ten countries, mainly with their approach to the policy and the integration of a European approach to development cooperation. Its theoretical grounds lie with the theory of Europeanization, taking a top-down approach to this theoretical framework. Specifically, it is concerned with the problem of Europeanization of the strategic framework guiding the development cooperation policies of these ten countries.

In terms of existing literature, it is important to note the scarcity of studies on development cooperation policies of the new member states, with only a very limited number of researchers interested in addressing this issue. Furthermore, while most studies are mainly preoccupied with the performance of these countries - and, especially, with the financial aspects of their

performance¹-, a main gap in the literature exists when approaching the principles at the basis of their respective strategies guiding the development assistance policies. Moreover, among the existing studies, the comparative element between these countries is barely touched upon by the study of the strategic framework.²

The main research question to be addressed is *how development cooperation strategies of the new CEE EU member states reflect the transposition of the European “soft”³ norms at national level*. In order to answer it, this paper will mainly use text analysis applied to the primary strategic documents. The main body of documents to be studied is represented by the national strategic documents, with the analysis focused particularly on the most recent ones available.

The basis of the research is constituted by the EU’s approach to development, approached as “soft” norms. In this context, a first step in the analysis will be to establish the main characteristics of the development cooperation, as approached by the European Union, and compare the reaction of the member states by searching for their transposition within these countries’ strategic documents. Further, I will proceed to compare these strategic responses between them in order to underline their main characteristics, commonalities and differences. The analysis will answer to the following questions relevant in order to approach the main research question of this study: Is the country’s strategic framework updated and flexible enough to ensure

¹ See, for example, Ondřej Horký and Simon Lightfoot, “From Aid Recipients to Aid Donors? Development Policies of Central and Eastern European States”, *Perspectives on European Politics and Society*, Vol 13 no. 1, (April 2012), 2-3

² A reference to the strategic framework is made, for example by Simon Lightfoot and Irene Lindenhovius Zubizarreta, “The Emergence of International Development Policies in Central and Eastern European States”, *CRCEES Working Papers*, WP2008/05, <http://79.170.44.93/assessingaccession.eu/wp-content/uploads/2012/02/CRCEES-WP2008051.pdf> (accessed 20 April 2012).

³ By “soft” norm, I understand, for the purpose of this paper, the EU-level adopted principles and guidelines applying to development cooperation but which cannot be imposed on the member states, their insertion into their strategic and legal framework relying mainly on their compliance.

incorporation of the EU soft norms? How are they incorporated? What is the motivation for the development policy? What do they tell us about the assumed engagements?

The data requirements refer, under these circumstances, to the following types of documents: strategic documents of the CEE EU member states, main documents and analysis on development cooperation produced at the EU level, documents reflecting the “*soft*” norms and engagements to be integrated by the EU member states. In those cases where specific strategic documents could not be identified, the analysis will refer to secondary sources, such as country-based analysis or/and other relevant documents, whenever available. The temporal limits of the analysis vary for each country due to the different timing of their change in status and adoption of their first (and, in some cases, only) strategies on development assistance, but broadly range between 2003 and 2011.

The study is further enriched by existing literature and the information provided by selected technical documents concerned with development cooperation in the new member states., In order to establish the main reference points with regards to what exactly Europeanization in the field of development cooperation actually is, proper attention will be granted to the analysis of the main development cooperation-related documents standing at the basis of the European-level aid policies.

In terms of relevance, the study of the development cooperation strategies of the ten countries will provide important information on two main aspects related to the Europeanization of development cooperation. Firstly, it will converge in underlining the way in which the policy in this field is being legitimized at national level. This will provide a better understanding of how integrated the policy actually is. Further, it will underline how commitments are understood at

national level, an issue that might be useful in predicting how the national states will act within the context of this policy.

In terms of content, the thesis is conceived on three chapters. The first chapter, structured in two parts, is dedicated to assess the main literature addressing Europeanization and the development cooperation policies of the new member states. The second chapter of the paper is focused on approaching development cooperation as addressed by the European Union. This is done in order to establish the grounds for the analysis performed in the third chapter on the strategic approaches to development cooperation. The final chapter will consider the rise of the new member states to their donor-ship status, in order to put into context the applied analysis.

The conclusion of the paper seeks to use the information provided by the hands-on analysis in order to answer the research question. The main findings confirm the shallow nature of Europeanization in the field of development cooperation and identify the need to operate a distinction between the EU's assumptions of new member states' commitments and their own understanding regarding the said commitments.

CHAPTER 1. APPROACHES TO EUROPEANIZATION AND DEVELOPMENT COOPERATION

The first chapter intends to focus on the existing literature and approaches to Europeanization. In this context, it will debate the conceptual and theoretical framework of Europeanization aiming to establish the grounds for the analysis. Furthermore, it will establish and contextualize the methodological approach to be pursued. The aim of this part is to assess the existing literature dealing with the issue of Europeanization as applied to the Central and Eastern European (CEE) new EU member states and to establish the parameters and limitations of the performed analysis.

1.1. Europeanization

Europeanization is a fairly new *field of enquiry*,⁴ quite disputed when it comes to classifying it as a concept or a theory. Olsen refers to Europeanization as a “fashionable, but contested concept”.⁵ According to Robert Ladrech, while accepting that Europeanization as a research concept has its sources in the comparative politics approach that emerged during the 1990s, the form this analysis took at that time was not that of an unified understanding and employment of the concept but rather one focused on approaching the EU as an independent variable able to account for changes occurring at its member states’ level⁶. In this context, Caporaso’s considered the term as part of the post-ontological phase of the European studies. In practice, the emergence of

⁴ Simon Hix and Klaus H. Goetz, “Introduction: European integration and national political systems” in *Europeanised politics? European integration and national political system*, ed Klaus H. Goetz and Simon Hix (Portland, OR: Frank Cass, 2000), 15

⁵ Johan P. Olsen, “The many faces of Europeanization”, *Journal of Common Market Studies*, Vol 40 no.5 (2002), 921

⁶ Robert Ladrech, *Europeanization and National Politics* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), 12

Europeanization is thus approached as part of the shift in the theoretical focus to EU integration, with the analysts becoming less interested in the nature of the EU *per se*, in favor of the study of a wider range of effects.⁷ This shift is also recognized by other authors who see it as a logical step in European studies after “having spent intellectual energy in seeking to understand the ‘nature of the beast’”.⁸

The contextual background leading to the above-mentioned shift of approach lies with events occurring at the EU level at the end of the 1980s and beginning of the 1990s, such as the institutionalization of the internal market or the initiation of the Economic and Monetary Union which led to the conclusion that while an adjustment of national policies aimed at achieving “comparative advantage within a broad EU policy context” is to be expected, this adjustment occurs in relation to a market dynamic unleashed by the global economy but ‘framed’ by a set of EU rules”.⁹ Furthermore, in considering the issue of enlargement, Bulmer and Radaelli explain it “represented a colossal exercise in policy transfer”, considering this process as “the largest example of Europeanization”.¹⁰ Consequently, through the integration of the “*acquis*” into the national legislature, Europeanization is assumed to occur by default.

Considering its relevance, Robert Ladrech identifies five main reasons why Europeanization is important for academic study. Firstly, its importance comes from its capacity to provide the opportunity to approach the linkage between the national and supranational dimensions. Secondly, it allows for an overview of the three dimensions of policy, policy and politics,

⁷ James Caporaso, “The European Union and forms of state: Westphalian, regulatory or post-modern?”, in *Journal of Common Market Studies*, Vol 34 no.1, (1996): 29-52, 30

⁸ Simon J. Bulmer and Claudio M. Radaelli, “The Europeanisation of National Policy”, *Queen’s Papers on Europeanisation*, No.1/2004, http://www.qub.ac.uk/schools/Schoolof_PoliticsInternationalStudiesandPhilosophy/FileStore/EuropeanisationFiles/Filetoupload,38405,en.pdf (Accessed 2 April 2012), 3

⁹ Ibid, 1

¹⁰ Ibid, 1-3

providing for a better insight into the complex web of factors intervening when approaching policy compliance as well as the positive and negative outcomes of an intended European policy. Thirdly, it allows for the study of the impact of the EU on its member states as a top-down dynamic but in relation with the bottom-up one. Fourthly, by understanding how internal change happens as a direct effect of EU's policies it develops further insight into the evolution of the European nation-state, and may contribute in explaining the discrepancies in member states' response to EU's growing influence and provides an important perspective over the specific impact of the EU in the former communist countries. Fifth and finally, Europeanization raises normative concerns regarding democratic accountability, and regarding the possibility of maintaining internal control over the integration process in the context of an internal shift in allegiance towards the EU.¹¹ These five levels of relevance are consistent in underlying why the study of Europeanization takes a central position in the present stage of EU studies. Furthermore, it also emphasizes the logic of the debate surrounding its conceptualization, embedding it into its diffuse usage.

Consequently, this inclusive approach to the relevance of Europeanization may lead to some confusion regarding the study tools it offers. While on the one hand, its diffused employment may converge in limiting the possibility for theorizing due to the dispersion of meaning of the term. While justifying the rise of the concept through the need for a better understanding of EU's influence on its member states and the problematic issue of their ownership on integration¹², the literature on Europeanization admits, the relative failure in providing for a definition and the parallel existence of several lines of approach.

¹¹ Ladrech, 2010, 2-3

¹² Tanja A. Börzel and Diana Panke, "Europeanization" in *European Union Politics*, 3rd edition, ed. Michelle Cini and Nieves Pérez-Solórzano Borragán (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), 406-407

1.1.1. Conceptualizing Europeanization

As already stated, defining Europeanization poses a series of problems considering that neither an universally-agreed definition, nor a single approach to the use of the term actually exists at this point. In this context, I will begin by referring to the existing conceptualizations of the term by reviewing a series of relevant studies. Further, I will seek to focus on the approach considered as the most relevant to the present research and justify that choice. The aim of this section is to set the conceptual framework of my approach to Europeanization and specify my choice in terms of its definition, in order to better position this study within the existing literature.

Among the earliest attempts to define Europeanization, a 1994 article by Robert Ladrech's explains Europeanization as "an incremental process reorienting the direction and shape of politics to the degree that EC political and economic dynamics become part of the organizational logic of national politics and policy-making".¹³ His definition was the first attempt to set the parameters of the concept and it is still approached as the basis for the subsequent studies.¹⁴

Set on acknowledging the variable evolution of the issue of definition, Olsen, in a study dated 2002, observed five possible uses of the concept of Europeanization. The first one refers to the "changes in external boundaries" involving the expansion of the European system of governance and the integration of the continent within a political space of its own. The second use of Europeanization refers to the development of institutions at the European level. Thirdly, the concept may be used to consider the "central penetration of national systems of governance", involving the logics of multi-level governance and the balance between local autonomy and

¹³ Robert Ladrech, "Europeanization of Domestic Politics and Institutions: The case of France", *Journal of Common Market Studies*, Vol. 32 no. 1, (1994), 69

¹⁴ Ian Bache, "Europeanization: A Governance Approach", (2002), <http://aei.pitt.edu/1722/1/Bache.pdf> (accessed 20 April 2012), 2

central coordination. In this context, Europeanization is thought to imply “adapting national and sub-national systems of governance to a European political centre and European-wide norms”.¹⁵ Fourthly, Europeanization can be conceived in relation with the export of certain forms of political organization and governance, typical for Europe to non-European countries.¹⁶ While Olsen does not specify it, according to Bulmer, “horizontal, intra-EU Europeanization needs to be incorporated under this heading”.¹⁷ Fifth, another use of the concept, as identified by Olsen, reflects a “political unification project” in all its dimensions.¹⁸

Approached within the context of European integration studies, Börzel and Panke mention the existence of three different definitions of Europeanization. The first one mentioned is the bottom-up definition, mainly concerned with the influence of the member states on EU’s policies, politics and polity. The research object for this approach is the European Union itself. The second definition refers to the top-down Europeanization and is mainly concerned with the influence of the EU over institutions, policies and politics of the member states and third countries. Those concerned with this approach to the concept assume that the EU can, with some exceptions, lead to adaptations of national policies, politics and institutions when incompatibilities between the internal and the EU level exists. The third and final definition of Europeanization reflects the attempt to unite the two previous approaches by focusing on the feed-back process as part of a long-term interest in the repeated interactions between the EU and its member states.¹⁹ Against this backdrop, the conceptual choice seems to be ultimately left in the hand of the researcher, who decides upon what path to choose when considering a study dealing with Europeanization.

¹⁵ Olsen, 2000, 923-924

¹⁶ Ibid

¹⁷ Simon Bulmer, “Theorizing Europeanization”, in *Europeanization: New Research Agendas*, ed. Paolo Graziano and Maarten P. Vink, (Houndsmills, Basingstoke, Hampshire:Palgrave Macmillan, 2006), 47

¹⁸ Olsen, 2000, 924

¹⁹ Börzel and Panke, 2009, 406-407

Thus, with the existing research approaching Europeanization within one or another of the mentioned definitions, Olsen may, in fact be right in contesting the relevance of the explanatory value of Europeanization and proposing instead to use it as an “attention-directing device and a starting point for further exploration”.²⁰ This idea is also supported by Lenschow, who is even more pessimistic about the usage of Europeanization and its capacity to provide answers in the context of the multiple number of variables than need to be studied concomitantly within what she approaches as the three major dimensions of Europeanization: top-down, bottom-up and horizontal.²¹ A solution to this problem is, however provided by Radaelli, who approaches Europeanization as a

*“processes of (a) construction, (b) diffusion, and (c) institutionalization of formal and informal rules, procedures, policy paradigms, styles, ‘ways of doing things’, and shared beliefs and norms which are first defined and consolidated in the making of EU public policy and politics and then incorporated in the logic of domestic discourse, identities, political structures, and public policies”.*²²

This definition, while broad enough to include most of the literature presently dealing with Europeanization, may solve part of the problems posed by the above conceptualizations and criticism.

Having established the main limitations to its employment, the next logical step of the analysis is to refer to the choice of approach to be taken by this thesis. Under these circumstances, considering that the present research is interested in the impact of the EU on its member states in the field of development cooperation, both the bottom-up and the inclusive approaches to the concept are visibly beyond the aims of this paper as the feed-back process, while absolutely

²⁰ Olsen, 2002, 943

²¹ Andrea Lenschow, “Europeanization of public policy” in *European Union. Power and policy-making*, 3rd edition, ed. Jeremy Richardson (London: Routledge, 2006), 67-68

²² Claudio M. Radaelli, “The Europeanization of public policy” in *The politics of Europeanization*, ed. Kevin Featherstone and Claudio M. Radaelli, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), 30

relevant to be considered and understood, would widen the research beyond feasibility. Moreover, in the specific case of development cooperation, the variables to be considered are both too vast and (perhaps) too recent to be identifiable. This second issue is due mainly to the relative novelty of development cooperation as a field of external action for the new CEE EU member states.

In light of the above, while giving the appropriate attention to Radaelli's conceptualization of Europeanization, this paper will understand it through its top-down definition, but in a narrower approach. It will thus take on the Schimmelfennig and Sedelmeier definition of Europeanization as "a process in which states adopt EU rules".²³ The choice for its employment is due to two main reasons. The first refers to the fact that it allows for a wide-enough approach to the empirical study of Europeanization and, as Horký explains, it "does not exclude ex-ante any relevant interpretation".²⁴ The second reason refers to the large employment of this definition throughout the main body of literature approaching Europeanization in the field of development cooperation in the new EU member states, thus granting common grounds for the debate.

1.1.2. The top-down approach to Europeanization

The top-down approach to Europeanization is considered to be mainly characteristic to the first generation of research in this field.²⁵ As already explained, its main relevance is the fact that it may account for the resurgence of development cooperation in the EU's Central and Eastern

²³ Frank Schimmelfennig, and Ulrich Sedelmeier, "Introductions: Conceptualizing the Europeanization of Central and Eastern Europe" in *The Europeanization of Central and Eastern Europe*, ed. Frank Schimmelfennig and Ulrich Sedelmeier, (New York: Cornell University Press, 2005): 1-28,7

²⁴ Ondřej Horký, "The Europeanization of development policy: Accommodation and resistance of the Czech Republic", Discussion paper 18/2010, German Development Institute, 3

²⁵ Bache, 2002, 6

European (CEE) new member states. In this context, a better focus on what exactly is the top-down approach and how its study has been approached by the existing literature is necessary at this point.

Firstly, as Börzel and Panke explain, a basic empirical puzzle for the research on top-down Europeanization refers to the fact that, while European norms can ease internal change, they are not conducive to convergence when it comes to domestic politics, politics and policies. Furthermore, another part of the puzzle reflects the impact of the EU's norms upon the member states leading to a permanent need for change.²⁶ This empirical puzzle, as translated to our specific case, assumes the positive effect of the European norms upon internal change and permanent need for adaptation to the EU-level changes.

In the light of an analogous interest for a top-down approach to Europeanization, Ladrech explains that the analysis of this process is rather complex. Problems emerge when considering several relevant aspects. Firstly, the existing or non-existing involvement of the domestic stakeholders in the creation of EU laws which, although may be considered part of the normal decision-making process, may also reflect the preferences or internal needs of individual EU member states. The point Ladrech attempts to make in emphasizing these ideas is that, by considering the top-down approach to Europeanization outside the internal context, the researcher may be led to “miss the empirical reality in any attempt to generalize”²⁷. However, the solution to this problem is suggested by the same author, who, citing Ian Bache's work, explains that the existing literature, while accepting the need for the two-ways approach, accepts it as having been

²⁶ Börzel and Panke, 2010, 408-409

²⁷ Ladrech, 2010, 21-22

mainly informed by a process of downloading.²⁸ This is particularly true in our case, considering that the new CEE EU member states have been quite absent in the elaboration of the most part of the general body of documents which can be approached as the both “soft” and “hard” norms when it comes to development cooperation, as will be stressed by the following chapter.

1.2. Development cooperation in the new CEE EU member states

The existing literature on Europeanization has mainly focused on approaching the effects of the EU over its member states in fields such as environment, social and regional policies.²⁹ Focus on development cooperation has only recently begun to grow with only a limited number of researches actually investigating this field in the new EU member states. Further, it is important to note that most researchers studying this domain are mainly interested in the performance of these countries and their progress towards achieving their finance-related commitments.

While comparative studies on Europeanization of development cooperation policies are even more limited in scope and number, several main milestone-studies deserve particular attention. Among the first researches published in this field, was a research by Balzs Szent-Ivanyi and Andras Tetenyifocused on the Vishegrad countries.³⁰ The paper was dedicated to analyzing some aspects of the aid assistance provided by these countries using a path dependency approach. The main conclusion of the authors was that the former participation of these countries in the type of

²⁸ Ibid, 22

²⁹ Tanja A. Borzel and Thomas Risse, “Europeanization: The Domestic Impact of European Union Politics” in *Handbook of European Union Politics*, ed. Knud Erik Jørgensen, Mark A. Pollack, Ben Rosamond, (London: Sage, 2006), 486

³⁰ Balázs Szent-Iványi and András Tétényi, “Transition and foreign aid policies in the Visegrád countries: A path dependent approach”, *Transition Studies Review*, Vol. 15, No. 3 (2008), http://unipub.lib.uni-corvinus.hu/374/1/SzB_TA_foreign_aid_CEE2.pdf, (accessed 20 April 2012)

aid promoted by the Communist countries before 1990 are clearly influencing the ways in which these countries have conducted and are adapting their development policies.

Further research performed by Simon Lightfoot and Lindenhovius Zubizarreta³¹ in 2008 through the use of interviews with a series of decision makers in all the new EU member states, focuses on both policies and perceptions regarding development cooperation. The paper identifies a series of problems with which the new member states were being confronted, including the development of the strategic approach but the analysis of the strategies per se is lacking, the authors focusing their attention to technical aspects, such as institutions and the planning for the financial targets. Furthermore, instead of providing for more complexity in the approach, the analysis is biased by the use of the personal opinions of the officials interviewed and the interpretation of those opinions.³² The analysis has also been rightfully criticized for treating the new member states as a uniform group, despite the characteristics situating some of them as outsiders from the main trend.³³

Further researches published by Simon Lightfoot, in 2010, and Ondrej Horky, in the same year, focus on the issue of Europeanization in the new EU member states. Lightfoot's article on *Europeanization of International Development Cooperation Policies: The Case of Central and Eastern European States* is of particular importance as it set some of the ground results in the comparative analysis performed over the ten CEE countries. In his article, Lightfoot,

³¹Lightfoot and Zubizarreta, 2008

³² This seems rather obvious when, for example, referring to Romania, the authors state that its strategic framework was limited to a four-pages-long document, although, at the moment of its adoption in 2006, the document was six-pages long and accompanied by an Action Plan aimed to ensure its implementation. For more information, see the Website of the Romanian Ministry of Foreign Affairs regarding the Official Assistance for Development, "Strategic Framework", <http://www.aod.ro/cadrul-strategic.html>, (accessed on May 20th, 2012)

³³ Lilia Krasteva, "Toward a better understanding of the Bulgarian Official Development Assistance", paper presented at the 13th EADI General Conference, University of York, (19-22 September 2011), <http://eadi.org/gc2011/krasteva-295.pdf>, (accessed 19 April 2012), 6

concentrating on the top-down approach combined, to a certain extent, with the bottom-up approach to Europeanization, explores in his article three areas of the “acquis” on development: the aid volume; its geographical focus; and the institutions responsible for the implementation of the policy.³⁴ Lightfoot finds that integrating EU principles into national strategies has been a big challenge for them but concludes that a major problem in this field is represented by the soft “acquis” and the shared nature of the policy, leading to its marginalization within the CEE foreign policies. While the study is of great relevance for the further studies in the field, a main shortcoming is reflected by the rather superficial approach to the strategic issue – the author simply assesses that by the time the article was published, all member states already had their strategies in place – and a too great focus on personal statements made by a series of medium-level officials.

Ondrej Horký³⁵ assumes a similar top-down approach in his consideration of the Czech Republic’s level of Europeanization in the field of development cooperation. His assessment of the Czech case is complemented by semi-structured interviews carried out with representatives of EU institutions and member states in Brussels. His approach of the Czech development cooperation is carried out at three levels: discursive, institutional and behavioral. His analysis finds the understanding of the EU in development cooperation discourse as instrumental and concludes that the Czech example reflects a shallow Europeanization related with the policy-makers’ focus on external aims and low support for the issue of poverty reduction in the South. While his paper is particularly complex in its approach, encompassing multiple levels of analysis, the general approach is not, however, aimed at a comparative study of the new member states’

³⁴ Simon Lightfoot, “The Europeanization of International Development Policies: The Case of Central and Eastern European States”, *Europe-Asia Studies*, Vol. 62 (2010), 330

³⁵ Ondřej Horký, 2010

approaches to development, an issue that may lead to radicalization of the criticism in the case of the Czech Republic by not considering its progresses in comparative perspective. Furthermore, some issues, such as what Europeanization entitles at national level are mostly taken for granted, not taking into consideration the critical literature on EU's approach to development cooperation. In fact, if this would be considered, criticism regarding the promotion of foreign goals through development cooperation should be drastically scaled down.

Finally, a recently published study by Horký and Lightfoot³⁶ on the topic of development cooperation in the ten new CEE member states, published as part of a special issue of the *Perspectives on European Politics and Society* journal, restates some of the opinions already discussed in their previous work, also underlying some of the themes and conclusions of the other articles included in the volume. Their conclusions focuses on the pragmatic approach to development as taken by the new member states, reconfirm the “shallow Europeanization” of the policy, the reduced impact of the EU's soft law in qualitative and quantitative terms, and the depth of the impact of the financial and economic crisis on this policy. Again, while their article has the merit of up-dating the previous analysis they performed, the superficial treatment of the strategic level is still an important issue left unaddressed.

In this context, the objective of the present study, i.e. investigating the Europeanization of the national strategic approaches to development cooperation of the ten CEE EU member states, provides an important contribution to the literature on Europeanization by setting the grounds for a better understanding of the nature and limitations of Europeanization in the field of development cooperation. In this context, it contributes in providing an important insight into

³⁶ Horký and Lightfoot, 2012

how the member states have understood their engagements by analyzing how their own strategic discourse reflects this understanding.

Concluding, this chapter has shown that Europeanization, while confronted with its own contesters, provides an important framework for the approach of EU-determined changes at national level. Its understanding throughout this study reflects the approach taken by Schimmelfennig and Sedelmeier, who define Europeanization as “a process in which states adopt EU rules”.³⁷ Approached through a top-down perspective, the main body of literature assumes that the integration of the “acquis” through the process of Enlargement is leading to Europeanization by default.

When applied to the field of development cooperation, and merely to the new member states, the literature has mainly criticized the shallow Europeanization in the context of a self-interest-based approach of these countries to the policy and their overall lack of engagement. However, it is important to notice that existing studies lack an adequate analysis of the strategic framework for these countries’ aid policies. This is despite the fact that national strategies represent the main guiding point for the performance of these countries in the field.

Under these circumstances and within the framework of the already mentioned conceptualization of Europeanization, as applied in this paper, the next chapter is dedicated to the better understanding of development cooperation at the EU level and the identification of the “soft norms” to be considered as a direct result of Europeanization at strategic level.

³⁷ Schimmelfennig and Sedelmeier, 2005, 7

CHAPTER 2. DEVELOPMENT COOPERATION IN EUROPEAN CONTEXT

This chapter is intended to provide the necessary background information regarding the main principles guiding development cooperation at the European level. Its purpose is to establish the grounds for the analysis to be performed in the third chapter on the strategic documents of the Central and Eastern European (CEE) EU member states. In this context, after providing the relevant information, this chapter will focus on the main documents accounting for the principles and guidelines constituting the European “soft” norms characterizing the European approach to development cooperation.

2.1. The EU’s development cooperation³⁸

The EU’s approach to development cooperation situates this policy between the national and supranational level, with both member states and the Commission being involved in the promotion of separate policies in this field. This is, in fact, considered to be a domain of “parallel competence”.³⁹ A certain mechanism of co-management of the policy, is however in place, with the member states being obliged to report their aid to the Commission and having, at the same time, the ability to influence the Commission’s decisions regarding the allocations made from its aid budget.

³⁸ This section is an adaptation from an earlier paper for the course on ‘European Governance’ by Professor Peter Balazs (CEU, Winter Semester, 2012)

³⁹ Michael Emerson et al, *Upgrading the EU’s Role as Global Actor: Institutions, Law and the Restructuring of European Diplomacy*, (Brussels: Centre for European Policy Studies, 2011), 78

Considered from an historical perspective, development aid dates back to the Rome Treaty when articles 131 to 136 established the reasons, terms and approach of association between the European Economic Community (EEC) – as the EU was named at that time – and the overseas countries and territories.⁴⁰ As it was conceived, this association with the “non-European countries and territories which have special relations with Belgium, France, Italy, the Netherlands and the United Kingdom” was aimed to serve, first of all, the “interests and prosperity of the inhabitants of these countries and territories in order to lead them to the economic, social and cultural development to which they aspire”.⁴¹ These provisions constituted the basis for the creation of the European Development Fund (EDF), the EU’s first development aid ‘umbrella’⁴² instrument, in 1959.⁴³ The assistance granted by the Union, aimed exclusively at its early beginnings towards the ACP (Africa, Caribbean and Pacific) countries, was grounded since the independence of the former colonies on Association Agreements, as per Article 238 of the Treaty of Rome.⁴⁴ With the expansion of the EU, and especially after 1990, the focus of the EU’s development cooperation widened to include almost all countries on the OECD/DAC list of developing countries.

The Treaty of Maastricht (1992) provided the first legal basis for EU’s development cooperation by establishing three main objectives for the policy (tackle poverty, support development and support the integration of developing countries into the world market) and putting three principles (complementarity, coordination and coherence) at the core of the Union’s action in this

⁴⁰Website of the European Union, *The Treaty of Rome*, (25 March 1957), http://ec.europa.eu/economy_finance/emu_history/documents/treaties/rometreaty2.pdf, (accessed 3 April 2012), 46-47,

⁴¹ Ibid, 46

⁴² The EDF actually consists of several instruments and now includes budget support, various types of grants, risk capital, loans targeted at the private sector.

⁴³ Website of the European Union, “European Development Fund”, http://europa.eu/legislation_summaries/development/overseas_countries_territories/r12102_en.htm (accessed 3 April 2012)

⁴⁴Nico Schrijver, “The EU’s common development cooperation policy” in, *The European Union and Global Governance*, ed. Mario Telo, (New York: Routledge, 2009), 178

field.⁴⁵ To these, the Amsterdam Treaty (1997) added the principle of consistency without, however, operating major changes to the existing legal basis.⁴⁶

EU's approach to development cooperation, as transparent from the Rome Treaty, was thus based on the national interest of the original member states and has grown, in time, as the interest of other member states joined the Union. In fact, within these over 50 years which have passed since the initiation of EU's development cooperation policy, both the number of instruments and the financial allocations to this field have increased considerably. Besides the EDF, newer instruments were introduced, mainly within the last 20 years. These include both geographic instruments, such as the Development Cooperation Fund (DCI) and the European Neighborhood and Partnership Instrument (ENPI); and thematic instruments: the European Instrument for Democracy and Human Rights (EIDHR), the Nuclear Safety Cooperation Instrument (NSCI); the six DCI thematic instruments (DCI Environment and sustainable management of natural resources including energy; DCI Non-state actors and local authorities in development; DCI Food security; DCI Migration and asylum; DCI Investing in people; DCI Restructuring of sugar production), the EU Food facility; and, finally, the Instrument for Stability,⁴⁷ each accounting for either a specific partnership approach or a certain thematic focus.

To these funds, we should also add the resources the Commission spends as humanitarian aid and the sums allocated to the preparation of the accessing countries, funds also included under the

⁴⁵Website of the European Commission, "Treaty on the European Union", *Official Journal C 191*, (29 July 1992), <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/en/treaties/dat/11992M/htm/11992M.html>, (accessed 5 April 2012), Articles 130u-y of Title XVII on Development Cooperation, further renumbered as articles 177-181 of Title XX in the "Treaty of Amsterdam", <http://www.europarl.europa.eu/topics/treaty/pdf/amst-en.pdf>, (accessed 5 April 2012)

⁴⁶Website of the The Lisbon Treaty, "The Lisbon Treaty", <http://www.lisbon-treaty.org/wcm/the-lisbon-treaty/treaty-on-the-functioning-of-the-european-union-and-comments/part-5-external-action-by-the-union/title-3-cooperation-with-third-countries-and-humanitarian-aid/chapter-1-development-cooperation/496-article-208.html>, (accessed 5 April 2012)

⁴⁷ Website of the European Union, "Development and Cooperation – EuropeAid", under section 'How we finance', http://ec.europa.eu/europeaid/how/finance/index_en.htm (accessed 3 April 2012)

same category of development assistance, under the Criteria established by the Development Assistance Committee (DAC) of the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD).⁴⁸ Basically, these instruments provide, within the current Multiannual Financial Framework (2007-2013) aid to all developing countries of the world, with the exception of those refusing aid or failing to comply with the criteria for aid disbursement.

In institutional terms, this policy, although considered a shared policy, is really formed by independently conducted aid policies at two levels: that of the Commission and that of the member states. At the level of the Commission, the position of Commissioner for Development existed since the Hallstein Commission. However, this does not mean that the Development Commissioner was ever in charge of all aspects and instruments related to development cooperation. The Commissioner for Enlargement and European Neighborhood, the Commissioner for Humanitarian Assistance, and the Commissioner for Trade have continued to play important roles by either administering the existing instruments or by having an important role in the related negotiations,⁴⁹ thus creating the underlying problem of policy coherence, translated as the need to ensure that other policies (such as trade) are in accordance with the aims of development cooperation.

The main issues to be considered in light of this short introduction are the interest-driven character of the development cooperation policy, its four main principles, which were integrated into the “*acquis communautaire*” (complementarity, coordination, coherence and consistency), and its divided coordination. Firstly, while the interest of the first member states drove the focus

⁴⁸Website of OECD, “Is It ODA? Factsheet”, <http://www.oecd.org/dataoecd/21/21/34086975.pdf>, (accessed 27 March 2012)

⁴⁹ Such as the negotiations on the Economic and Partnership Agreements with the ACP countries where both the Directorate General EuropeAid (DGDEVCO) and the Directorate General for Trade (DG Trade) have important roles to play

of the policy towards Africa, a differentiation should be made between the historical focus of the policy and the legitimacy of its grounds. While the first justifies the literature considering that aid to Africa is part of the “acquis communautaire”, the second underlines the nature of this choice, denying to a certain extent the legitimacy of this focus in the new context of the enlarged European Union, with almost half of its member states interested in providing aid to the Eastern Neighborhood rather than in Africa.

While this is not always in line with the EU’s discourse in the field, focused on the need to contribute to the prosperity of developing countries, I tend to disagree with critics situating this discourse on an opposite basis with the main trends in the European approach. In fact, an important body of work approaching development cooperation policies of the old member states emphasizes their ultimate focus on national interest.⁵⁰ This issue is relevant in the context of the following analysis of the strategic frameworks for the new CEE EU member states.

Finally, the divided coordination of the policy, while it is not in the specific focus of this study, is relevant in preventing criticism related to the issue of divided approach at national level, at least when considered through the lenses of Europeanization.

2.2. Conceptualization of development cooperation

The concept of development cooperation,⁵¹ as understood by the present study, refers to

“those flows to countries and territories on the DAC List of ODA Recipients and to multilateral development institutions which are: (i) provided by official agencies, including state and local governments, or by executive agencies; and (ii) each transaction of which: a) is administered with the promotion of economic development and welfare of developing countries as its main objective;

⁵⁰ See, for example, Peter J. Schraeder, Steven W. Hook, Bruce Taylor, “Clarifying the Foreign Aid Puzzle: A Comparison of American, Japanese, French, and Swedish Aid Flows”, *World Politics* 50.2 (1998)

⁵¹ Also employed in this paper as “development aid” or “development assistance”

and b) is concessional in character and conveys a grant element of at least 25 per cent (calculated at a rate of discount of 10 per cent)".⁵²

When it comes to conditionality, a distinction is to be made between two “generations of conditionality”.⁵³ This definition, given by the Development Assistance Directorate of the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development’s DAC, is the main reference point for national experts when reporting development-related expenditures. While variations of this term exist at the level of the EU member states, with some opting for developing their own definition of the term, those variations are and should be seen as adaptations of this technical definition, rather than competing approaches to the term.

This conceptual issue serves to establish that all of the studied countries approach development cooperation within the same parameters, thus referring to the same issue. As such, it provides for the similar basic grounds for the study.

2.3. The EU’s approach to development cooperation: a matter of principles

In terms of approach to development cooperation, since the adoption of the UN Millennium Declaration and its Millennium Development Goals in 2000, the EU has promoted these goals as part of its development cooperation policy. Under the influence of World Bank research in the field of development cooperation such as Alesina and Dollar,⁵⁴ Burnside and Dollar,⁵⁵ which

⁵² Website of the OECD, “Is It ODA? Factsheet”, <http://www.oecd.org/dataoecd/21/21/34086975.pdf>, (accessed 27 March 2012)

⁵³ Hilde Selbervik, “Aid and conditionality: The role of the bilateral donor: A case study of Norwegian-Tanzanian aid relationship”, Published by the OECD (July 1999), , <http://www.oecd.org/dataoecd/8/58/35178610.pdf>, (accessed 29 March 2012), 12

⁵⁴ Alberto Alesina, David Dollar, “Who Gives Foreign Aid to Whom and Why?”, *Journal of Economic Growth*, Vol 5, (2000), 55-56

⁵⁵ Craig Burnside, David Dollar, “Aid, Policies, and Growth”, Published by the World Bank, (2000) http://www-wds.worldbank.org/external/default/WDSCContentServer/WDSP/IB/2000/02/24/000009265_3971023104021addition

impacted the field by determining a re-orientation towards the impact of the aid policies, thus leading to the resurgence of the idea of effectiveness, EU, as all major organizations in this field, re-orientated towards the need to ensure aid effectiveness. This new focus was assumed as promising to provide the grounds for a better use of the aid funds. In this context, in 2005, at international level was adopted the Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness,⁵⁶ a document based on five principles: ownership, alignment, harmonization, managing for results and mutual accountability. The EU transposed in 2006 the principles of this declaration into the 2006 European Consensus for Development.⁵⁷ This second document is at the basis of the post 2006 European strategic approach to development cooperation, becoming part of all the main EU declarations and strategic approaches to the field. The Consensus underlines the relevance of development: *eradication of global poverty, seen as moral obligation* but also as *beneficial to the international stability and prosperity*. It also notes that developing countries “have the prime responsibility for their own development”. The Consensus states the following common objectives of the EU development cooperation: “eradication of poverty in the context of sustainable development, including the pursuit of the Millennium Development Goals”; the inclusion within the notion of development of good governance, human and political rights, economic, social and environmental aspects; achievement of international goals in this field; policy coherence for development; continuation of support for all poor people in both MICs (middle-income countries) and LICs (low-income countries). Furthermore, member states are encouraged to focus their assistance in *areas and regions where they have “comparative*

[al/124524322_20041117141101.pdf](#), (accessed 25 March 2012), 32-33; and see Craig Burnside, David Dollar, 2004, “Aid, Policies, and Growth: Revisiting the Evidence”, World Bank Policy Research Paper 3251

⁵⁶ Website of the OECD, “The Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness (2005) and the Accra Agenda for Action (2008)”, <http://www.oecd.org/dataoecd/11/41/34428351.pdf> (accessed 12 May 2012)

⁵⁷ Website of the European Commission, “The European Consensus on Development”, *Official Journal of the European Union*, 2006/C 46/01, http://ec.europa.eu/development/icenter/repository/european_consensus_2005_en.pdf, (accessed on 10 May 2012)

advantages and can add most value to the fight against poverty". The principles enshrined in the Consensus are: *ownership, partnership; in-depth political dialogue; participation of civil society; gender equality; addressing state fragility*. In terms of delivery, the document mentions as principles: increasing financial resources; aid effectiveness; coordination and complementarity.⁵⁸ Other issues dealt with by the Consensus refer to the Policy coherence for development – i.e. the alignment of all other relevant policy areas with the objectives of development aid -, addressing global challenges through development – including the effects of globalization -, the focus on a differentiated and needs-based approach to beneficiary countries. Finally, the document establishes the coordinating lines for aid in the main areas for Community's actions.

In relation with the adoption of these documents and in line with the commitments made by international donors within the framework of the Monterrey Consensus on Financing for Development (2002), in 2005 the EU Council on General Affairs and External Relations committed to a series of differentiated aid targets to be reached by the member states by 2010 and 2015, respectively. While the targets are not of direct relevance for the present study, it is important to note that the document mentions EU's commitment to "increase its financial assistance for Sub-Saharan Africa and will provide collectively at least 50% of the agreed increase of ODA resources the continent while fully respecting individual Member States' priorities in development assistance".⁵⁹ This specific observation is of relevance because of its ambiguous nature. On the one hand, it is specified that aid will increase to Africa; on the other, no commitments to grant bilateral aid to Africa are expected from the member states as the respect of their national priorities involves the option not to give aid in that direction.

⁵⁸ These last two, as already mentioned before, have been part of the EU's approach to development ever since the Treaty of Maastricht (1993)

⁵⁹ Council of the European Union, "Press Release 2660th Council meeting General Affairs and External Relations, Brussels", 23 and 24 May 2005, http://www.consilium.europa.eu/ueDocs/cms_Data/docs/pressData/en/gena/85008.pdf, (accessed on 15 May 2012), 27

Furthermore, due to the special European context in the field of development cooperation, all countries must transfer funds to the budgetary line of the EDF, by far the largest aid instrument of the European Union. In this context, it seems to be at the level of each country to determine whether or not to provide bilateral aid to Africa.

Finally, the last document to be referenced at this point is the EU Code of Conduct on Division of labor in Development Policy.⁶⁰ The document, aimed at increasing the effectiveness and efficiency of aid. It recognizes that development cooperation is part of the donor countries' "foreign policy toolbox"⁶¹ and recommends the concentration of donors' activities, the reduction of priority countries.⁶² Other recommendations of the document refer to principles already mentioned in previously analyzed documents, such as guiding aid on the basis of comparative advantages and the need for impact-driven approaches (including addressing aid orphans, promote the division of labor, complementarity).⁶³

Within the context of this thesis, the norms enshrined in these documents, as well as in the basic treaties of the EU, as described in the previous section will be considered as "soft" norms, due to their guide-line-type status at the EU level. In fact, while engagements were made by donors to act in concordance with these principles, these engagements cannot be imposed. This is especially true in the context of the autonomy of national foreign policy, under which's umbrella, development cooperation is integrated.

⁶⁰ Commission of the European Communities, "Communication from the Commission to the Council and the European Parliament: EU Code of Conduct on Division of labor in Development Policy", Brussels (28.02.2007), COM (2007) 72 final, <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=COM:2007:0072:FIN:EN:PDF>, (accessed on 15 May 2012)

⁶¹ Ibid, 4

⁶² The document provides the good example of Netherlands which reduced its number of priority countries from 70 to less than 30. For more information see Ibid, 10

⁶³ Ibid, 10-11

To conclude, as this chapter has shown, the EU's development cooperation policy has been constantly evolving. While its starting point was cooperation with Africa, at its basic level, it always reflected an interest-based approach: cooperation with areas/countries of interest for EU member states. In its current phase, while Africa remains the main beneficiary of aid, a large focus is also put on the Eastern Neighborhood (through ENPI) and other areas of the world. Furthermore, in terms of the principles to be considered as the basis of our analysis, and considering that the general framework, as described in this chapter incorporates with predilection "soft" norms due to the special character of the policy and the precautions taken by the member states, their incorporation within the strategic framework of the ten member states is the main focus of the analysis on which this paper is based.

This being said, in order to analyze the strategic framework of the new member states on development cooperation, our main focus will be on identifying the main similarities indicating either transposition or a certain understanding of the principles and engagements stipulated in the above-mentioned main EU documents on development cooperation. Special attention will also be given to the way in which the policy is legitimized in order to better understand the nature of the commitments assumed by the member states, as translated at national level.

CHAPTER 3: THE STRATEGIC APPROACH TO DEVELOPMENT COOPERATION IN THE CENTRAL AND EASTERN EUROPEAN NEW EU MEMBER STATES

The departing point for our analysis is the historic contextualization of development cooperation. This chapter will further focus on analyzing each of the ten member states' development strategies with the primary aim to reflect on the level of Europeanization in this field. Further, the analysis will also consider their level of adaptation and flexibility of their strategic approach to development assistance.

3.1. Introduction to development cooperation in the CEE EU new member states

As already mentioned previously, development cooperation is not absolutely new to all the CEE new member states. In fact during their Communist years, these countries were highly involved in providing support to their “socialist brother” countries throughout the developing world⁶⁴. Most of this assistance of that time was directed towards Africa, as part of the Communist Block's support for the non-aligned countries. However, with the fall of the Communist system in the East, the ideological support for the assistance provided fell apart⁶⁵ along with the legitimacy of the policy. In fact, when referring to their development cooperation past, the current CEE EU member states could be approached based on two categories: (1) former donors and (2) non-former donors. In the first category, we include Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, Slovakia

⁶⁴ Lightfoot and Zubizarreta, 2008, 1-3

⁶⁵ Lightfoot, 2010, 1

(although it was, at that time part of Czechoslovakia), Hungary, Poland and Romania. The second category comprises the three Baltic states, which were before 1989 part of the Soviet Union and Slovenia, which was, at that point, part of Yugoslavia. While the first category did pursue aid policies, the second was in all intents and purposes new to the policy in the context of EU accession. This categorization, however, is contested by some authors. Lightfoot, for example, arguing his criticism by using the case of the Czech development policy, states that in this countries' case, officials explain that development cooperation policy is new and re-emerging at the same time "with the need to un-learn the old ways clearly a major priority".⁶⁶ Lightfoot thus considers that it makes sense to see all new member states as new donors. The problem with this approach, however, is that it might overlook part of the reasons why development cooperation in the new member states was framed a certain way and suffers from its present shortcomings. For example, by considering the Visegrad countries, the study by Szent-Ivanyi and Andras Tetenyi dated 2008 finds that these countries are to a large extent influenced by their communist past, having important difficulties in adapting the foreign aid practices of Western donors.⁶⁷

Another approach to categorizing the new aid donors was considered in a recent study by Horky and Lightfoot.⁶⁸ The two authors approach these countries based on their membership status in the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), 4 of them (the Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland and Slovakia) being members of the organization while the other countries did not yet acceded to this organization. However, a look at these countries and their specific circumstances shows that the general framework of their development cooperation policy

⁶⁶ Lightfoot, 2010, 3

⁶⁷ Szent-Iványi and Tétényi, 2008, 15

⁶⁸ Horký and Lightfoot, 2012

was mainly adopted in the context of the negotiations for EU accession⁶⁹. This consideration, while not undermining the need to take into account the influence and relevance exerted by the OECD, does underline the determinant role of the EU in them assuming the new role of donor states.

From the European Commission's point, these countries were only considered under the 2004 and 2007 waves of enlargement. A look on the Commissions' Opinions and Country Progress Reports⁷⁰ published in the end-90s and early 2000s underline the evolutions in the field of development and the special steps that must be taken by each country in order to advance this field enough as to be able to take on the commitments and practices of the EU. However, these documents mainly focus on legislation and institutions and grant no attention to the "soft" norms to be incorporated at national level by the policy.

In the same line of approach, another document published within the same context - *The Guide of the Commission on Institutionalization of the Acquis Communautaire* - mentions that the implementation of the development policy requires the establishment of either a department or a ministry handling development cooperation. Further, it mentions that another of the important issues to consider refers to the need for qualified personnel to take charge of the managing of the policy.⁷¹ It is important to note at this stage that, the expectations from the European Union were that these countries become a "specific type of donors, along the unique model and according to

⁶⁹ Maja Bucar et al, "Towards a Division of Labor in European Development Co-operation: Case Studies", German Development Institute Discussion Paper 11/2007, 3-30;

⁷⁰ For more information see the relevant reports for each country available online on the Website of the European Union, at http://ec.europa.eu/enlargement/archives/key_documents/reports_2003_en.htm and http://ec.europa.eu/enlargement/archives/key_documents/reports_2004_en.htm, (accessed 14 May 2012)

⁷¹ Website of the European Union, "Guide to the Main Administrative Structures Required For Implementing the Acquis", Update May 2005, http://ec.europa.eu/enlargement/pdf/enlargement_process/accesion_process/how_does_a_country_join_the_eu/negotiations_croatia_turkey/adminstructures_version_may05_35_ch_public_en.pdf (accessed on 15 May 2012), 98

the common objectives proposed by the European Union”.⁷² Nevertheless, it is correct to underline the fact that the European Commission was not expecting miracles and was quite aware about the problems facing the newcomers when it comes to the donor practices adopted at the EU level.⁷³

EU membership, triggering for all these countries the need, not only the switch from beneficiary countries to aid donors (although remaining in the same time beneficiaries of EU assistance), but also the need for them to become a specific type of aid donor, as previously showed. The basis for this change were set up in the years mounting up to the accession and even further with some of the states still not having their internal framework in place by that time. These countries were, actually, facing several challenges upon accession: adapting their policy and legal framework, their administrative structure, achieving their engagements in terms of ODA funding; positioning themselves in the donor community; cooperating with NGOs and raise public awareness.⁷⁴ To these I would also add rising political support for the policy, an issue that should not be taken lightly when approaching this field.

While the setting up of the institutional framework relevant for the implementation of a bilateral development cooperation policy does not represent a specific concern for this paper, it is important, however, to mention that, according to the analyzed documents, the structures, such as they were designed, are very much in accordance with the EU models, with all the countries establishing development cooperation departments within the structure of their Foreign Ministries

⁷² Mirela Oprea, *Development Discourse in Romania: from Socialism to EU Membership*, (Collezione AMS Tesi di Dottorato-AlmaDL-Universita di Bologna, 2009), <http://amsdottorato.cib.unibo.it/2228/> (accessed 20 May 2012), 52

⁷³ Lightfoot, 2010, 3

⁷⁴ Maja Bucar, Mojmir Mrak, “Challenges of development cooperation for the new EU member states”, prepared for the ABCDE World Bank Conference, Bled, Slovenia, (May 17-18, 2007), <http://siteresources.worldbank.org/INTABCDESLO2007/Resources/PAPERABCDEBucarMrak.pdf>, (accessed on 21 May 2012)

and with part of them establishing development cooperation agencies, such as it is the case of the Czech Republic, Poland or Slovakia. Inter-stakeholders cooperation is also provided for in the main strategic documents. However, a frequent criticism in the literature refers to the understuffing of the development cooperation departments and the lack of empirical functionality of the inter-stakeholders institutional set-ups.

In this context, and keeping in mind the fact that these countries cannot and should not be treated within the same parameters when it comes to development cooperation, both due to their historical backgrounds and level of economic development, the next part of the chapter will proceed with the analysis of the strategic documents guiding the development cooperation policies of these countries.

3.2. Strategic approach to development cooperation

In order to appropriately understand the limits of the process of Europeanization of development cooperation in the new CEE EU member states, the current sub-chapter is dedicated to a personal analysis of the strategic approach to the field. The aim of this analysis is two-fold: identifying the main characteristics of the national approach to development cooperation in the countries under analysis; and to provide the grounds for the comparative approach.

The analysis focuses on exploring the depth of the Europeanization's effects on the analyzed strategic frameworks and the way in which the commitments on development cooperation are understood at national level. I will thus center my attention on three main coordinates: the

motivation/legitimization of the policy; the contextual aim of the policy; the approach taken to the transposition of the “soft” norms within the strategic framework.

For the purpose of the analysis, this will be carried out following the separation of the countries into two groups. The first group will comprise the countries which joined the EU in 2004 (the Czech Republic, Hungary, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Slovakia and Slovenia) while the second will refer to the countries joining in 2007 (Bulgaria and Romania). This categorization is based on the fact that the last two countries have a more limited experience as aid donors than the rest, being, to a certain extent, at a different state of the process of the internal consolidation of their donor status.

The Czech Republic

In the case of the Czech Republic, for the purpose of this analysis, I will focus on the Development Cooperation Strategy of the Czech Republic 2010-2017⁷⁵ the main framework for its development cooperation policy. The analysis is also considered against other relevant documents constituting the Czech strategic framework on development.⁷⁶

Considering the main coordinates of analysis stated above, I will start with the issue of policy legitimization. In this context, the study of the Czech strategic framework points towards what I will call “legitimization through self-image”. In fact, the studied documents reveal that development cooperation has been take onboard by the Czech Republic in light of its belonging

⁷⁵ Website of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Czech Republic, “Development Cooperation Strategy of the Czech Republic 2010-2017”, http://www.mzv.cz/file/762314/FINAL_Development_Cooperation_Strategy_2010_2017.pdf (accessed 14 May 2012)

⁷⁶ See Website of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Czech Republic, “Guidelines on the Czech Republic’s Development Cooperation (2004)”,c http://www.mzv.cz/jnp/en/foreign_relations/development_cooperation_and_humanitarian/general_information/development_cooperation/index.html; (accessed 18 May 2012) and the “Transformation of the Czech International Development”, (2008), http://www.mzv.cz/jnp/en/foreign_relations/development_cooperation_and_humanitarian/general_information/transformation_of_the_czech.html, (accessed on 18 May 2012)

to the ‘club of the developed’ countries (a special reference being made to the EU, UN and OECD membership) and its acknowledgement of the need to share responsibility in global problems related to poverty.

The stated aim of the policy is the eradication of poverty. However, the approach to poverty eradication includes, in the Czech approach, the promotion of democratic forms of governance, economic growth, the integration of developing countries into the international system. Moreover, the policy is considered as an integral part of the country’s foreign policy, aiming to contribute to the achievements of its objectives.⁷⁷

The main principles enshrined within the strategy are “based” on the European Consensus on Development, the Paris Declaration and the Accra Agenda for Action, with particular reference being made to democratic ownership, partnership with developing countries, strengthening of their national systems and contribution to their capacity to takeover a more active role in the policy, harmonization and transparency of the policy.⁷⁸ However, a closer look to the countries and sectors to be considered for the granted assistance goes beyond the recommendations on the division of labor (as resulting from the assessment included in the previous chapter of this thesis) - with the Czech Republic having fourteen beneficiary countries on three continents – while the sectoral priorities are defined in terms of comparative advantages and are adapted to each of the partner country.⁷⁹

⁷⁷ Website of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Czech Republic, “Development Cooperation Strategy of the Czech Republic 2010-2017”, 7

⁷⁸ Website of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Czech Republic, “151 Act of 21 April 2010”, http://www.czda.cz/editor/filestore/File/Act_on_Development_Cooperation.pdf (accessed 14 May 2012)

⁷⁹ Website of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Czech Republic, “Development Cooperation Strategy of the Czech Republic 2010-2017”

While the strategy does reflect some degree of adaptation to the main changes in the field that occurred since the previous Strategy was adopted in 2002, and was in effect until 2007, a first point to make at this time reflects the rather lateness in the adoption of a new strategy, eight years having already past between the former strategic framework and the adoption of the new one. Conceived, as well, to cover a period of eight years, the Czech approach does seem, to demonstrate, however, little flexibility and adaptability to EU-level changes.

Finally, another aspect relevant for this analysis refers to the Czech understanding of its engagement in terms of geographic focus by choosing to provide aid in Sub-Saharan Africa.

Estonia

Estonia has adopted a series of documents framing its aid cooperation beginning in 1999. The previous strategic framework was provided for by the Strategy for Estonian Development Cooperation and Humanitarian Aid 2006-2010⁸⁰. The present framework is the “Strategy for Estonian Development Cooperation and Humanitarian Aid 2011-2015”. Based on the “Principles of Estonian development cooperation” (2009)⁸¹ the document marks an important image-building paradigm approaching Estonia’s interest to become a “unique donor” welcomed in and beneficial to developing countries. This approach seems to suggest the legitimization of the polity through its possible employment.

⁸⁰ Website of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Estonia, “Development Plan for Estonian Development Cooperation and Humanitarian Aid 2006-2010”, http://web-static.vm.ee/static/failid/344/Development_plan_2006-2010.pdf, (accessed 18 May 2012)

⁸¹ Website of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Estonia, “Principles of Estonian development co-operation”, (15 January 2003), <http://www.vm.ee/?q=en/node/8323>, (accessed on 18 May 2012)

The main goal of the policy, is to “contribute to the eradication of world poverty and to the attaining of the Millennium Development Goals.”⁸² Considered within the framework of its foreign policy, Estonia’s approach to is, however, developmental, being firstly and foremost in the interest of developing partners.

In terms of integration of the “soft” norms, the Strategy is quite well-embedded within the European framework, integrating to a large degree the provisions associated with EU “soft” norms on development cooperation. It respects the principles of differentiated approach, result-orientation, coordination and complementarity⁸³ and filters the integration of the other EU level principles into its approach. No direct support to Africa is considered by the strategic document.

Hungary

Hungary lacks, at present, an updated strategic framework addressing in a comprehensive way its development cooperation policy. Its approach to development cooperation is thus mainly considered on an annual basis. However, development cooperation has, in Hungary’s case been addressed in its External Policy Strategies. Keeping that fact in mind, the main resources for the present analysis are the Hungarian Policy for International Development Cooperation as published by the Hungarian Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA),⁸⁴ the Hungarian External Policy

⁸² Website of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Estonia, “Strategy for Estonian Development Cooperation and Humanitarian Aid 2011-2015”, http://www.vm.ee/sites/default/files/Arengukava2011-2015_ENG.pdf, (accessed 18 May 2012), 3

⁸³ Ibid, 5

⁸⁴ Website of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Hungary, “Hungarian Policy for International Development Cooperation (IDC)”, <http://www.mfa.gov.hu/kum/en/bal/Archivum/Archives/idc.htm>, (accessed 21 May 2012)

Strategy, as available on the MFA's website⁸⁵ and the latest available programmatic document "Tasks for 2008 in terms of Hungarian Development Policy".⁸⁶

The first document motivates EU's aid policy in terms of conformity to EU membership expectations and "national interests and characteristics". It is, thus a self-interest-based approach. The policy is, as in the case of the Czech Republic, embedded within the framework of its foreign policy.

The External Policy Strategic document (2011) posits Hungary as supporter of international efforts to respond to global challenges, first and foremost, the alleviation of poverty. Security and economic aims are at the forefront of the approach yet the European "soft" norms do not seem to be, for the most part, integrated into the Hungarian approach to development cooperation. The responsibility to address underdevelopment in Africa is considered by the Hungarian strategic approach, with Ethiopia as beneficiary country.⁸⁷ The rather large number of beneficiary countries and regions⁸⁸ is retained despite the EU recommendations in this field.

Hungary's case presents an important picture: for one, the pre-EU membership document (the first mentioned document for analysis) announces the framework for a rather inclusive approach to development cooperation. However, the lack of a new targeted strategic approach and the relatively low level of inclusion of the European-level principles into the more recent

⁸⁵ Website of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Hungary, "Hungary's External Relations Strategy", http://www.mfa.gov.hu/kum/en/bal/foreign_policy/external_relations_strategy/, (accessed 21 May 2012)

⁸⁶ Website of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Hungary, "Tasks for 2008 in terms of Hungarian Development Policy", http://www.mfa.gov.hu/NR/rdonlyres/06C1F916-0339-49F5-8903-85B444D9295D/0/1_2008nefeKB1hatEN.pdf, (accessed 21 May 2012)

⁸⁷ Website of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Hungary, "Report on the Hungarian International Development Cooperation Activities in 2007", <http://www.mfa.gov.hu/NR/rdonlyres/B7A232DE-1A66-4E74-9D94-C3BDE3334D5D/0/besz2007EN.pdf> (accessed on 21 May 2012)

⁸⁸ Website of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Hungary, "Tasks for 2008 in terms of Hungarian Development Policy"

programming of development cooperation indicate to a gap between the engagement with this policy in the context of the country's efforts to join the EU and the ones undertaken after joining.

Latvia

In Latvia's case, a rather large number of strategic documents have been adopted since 2003, including two mid-term policy documents and a series of Development Cooperation Policy Plans⁸⁹. The most recent available of the two document regarding its strategic approach to development cooperation is the Development Cooperation Policy Program of the Republic of Latvia, available for 2006-2010.⁹⁰ However, no document aimed for the period following 2010 was yet added to that list.

According to the latest mid-term strategic document, Latvia's approach legitimizes its development cooperation through the obligations assumed by the country at joining the European Union and by the opportunities for an increased role at international level. Its selection of priority countries is based on national interest while the basic principles are a combination of objectives (for example poverty reduction) and principles enshrined in the main development-related documents framing the European approach to development cooperation.

While a full integration of the European Consensus on Development is not achieved, an important point for the strategy is its results-oriented approach. In terms of geographic focus, Latvia has provided assistance to Africa but only through multilateral channels, no African country being a priority partner of its development cooperation.

⁸⁹ Bucar et al, 2007, 14

⁹⁰Website of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Latvia, "Development Cooperation Policy Program of the Republic of Latvia 2006-2010", <http://www.am.gov.lv/en/policy/DevelopmentCooperation/BasicDocuments/Programme/> (accessed 20 May 2012)

Lithuania

Lithuania's development cooperation policy is currently framed by the "Development Cooperation Policy Guidelines of the Republic of Lithuania for 2011-2012."⁹¹ Before this document was adopted, the strategic framework of its aid policy was also framed by multi-annual strategic papers.⁹²

The most recent strategic document justifies the policy through its naturalization by proclaiming it "integral part of the foreign policy of developed states". This assertion testifies to a self-image based approach.

The main strategic scope for this country's assistance is the contribution to poverty reduction, and its objectives are considered to be the implementation of the MDGs, democracy, security and stability and the strengthening of ties with the partner regions. The European principles on development cooperation are rather integrated but the approach to them is filtered only to a low level. Furthermore, as in various previous cases, there are certain shortcomings in integrating EU's approach to the principles framing the division of labor among donors, both in terms of number of priority fields and number of countries. Africa is not approached as a priority for the assistance provided.

⁹¹Government of the Republic of Lithuania, "Resolution No10 of 12 January 2011 On the approval of the Development Cooperation Policy Guidelines of the Republic of Lithuania for 2011-2012", http://www.orangeprojects.lt/site/newfiles/files/doc/oficialus_vertimas_EN.pdf (accessed 20 May 2012)

⁹² Bucar et al, 2007, 19

Poland

In Poland's case, the most actual document on development cooperation is the Development Cooperation Act of September 2011.⁹³ Its technical nature does not, however, make it adapt for our particular analysis. With the first Strategy for Polish aid drafted in 2003 and the failure of this country to adopt a new Strategy even if one was drafted to address the period 2007-2013. The Polish strategic approach is considered on a year-by-year basis since 2006.⁹⁴ Under these circumstances, in order to identify the coordinates needed in the context of the present study, our analysis will refer mainly to the Development Cooperation Plan for 2012,⁹⁵ under the consideration that the document reflects the main principles and lines of approach of the Polish aid.

Firstly, in terms of motivation for Poland's implication in development cooperation, while the analyzed document does not mention it, the 2003 Strategy postulated aid provision as being in Poland's own interest.⁹⁶ This situates the country on a similar position as the one assumed by countries such as Hungary or Estonia, legitimizing its development cooperation policy within the framework of self-interest.

⁹³Website of PolishAid, "Development Cooperation Act of 16th September 2011", http://www.polishaid.gov.pl/files/dokumenty_publicacje/PL%20Development%20Coop%20Act_2011.pdf, (accessed 19 May 2012)

⁹⁴ Ilona Ilowiecka-Tenska, Marta Pejda, "Polish Official Development Assistance and Peacebuilding", PDCI, http://www.initiativeforpeacebuilding.eu/pdf/Polish_Official_development_assistance_and_peacebuilding.pdf, (accessed on 24 May 2012), 6

⁹⁵Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Poland, "Development Cooperation Plan for 2012", http://www.polishaid.gov.pl/files/Dokumenty_i_Publicacje/Plan_wspolpracy_2012/plan_2012_final_eng.pdf, (accessed on 26 May 2012)

⁹⁶ Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Poland, "Strategy for Poland's Development Co-operation, Adopted by the Council of Ministers on 21st October 2003", <http://www.msz.gov.pl/files/polskapomoc/Strategy%20for%20Polands%20Development%20Cooperation.pdf> (accessed 19 May 2012), 3-4

Poland's approach to development cooperation was from early stages based on poverty reduction in the context of the Millennium Development Goals⁹⁷ and included African countries. The Plan filters and incorporates the general principles of European development cooperation including the differentiated and adapted approach to development cooperation and the inclusion of cross-cutting issues. However, it is of importance to take note of the rather large number of beneficiary countries, which goes against EU's recommendations towards a better focalization of aid.⁹⁸

In the case of Poland, thus, again, we can notice the difficulty to adapt the national strategic framework to the evolution of EU-level "soft" norms. The incorporation of the main principles, while filtered, is only partial. Furthermore, it is mainly based on the country's own external interest, going outside the EU's recommended way of action.

Slovenia

Two main documents have been adopted by Slovenia since its accession to the EU, with the first document "International Development Cooperation of the Republic of Slovenia Act"⁹⁹ adopted in 2006 and the second, the "Resolution on International Development Cooperation of the Republic of Slovenia until 2015" adopted on July 2008.¹⁰⁰ Within the framework of these documents, Slovenia's strategic approach to development cooperation is motivated by its developed status which led it to assume a "share of responsibility for the progress of the less developed regions of

⁹⁷ Ibid

⁹⁸ Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Poland, "Development Cooperation Plan for 2012", 11

⁹⁹ Website of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Slovenia, "International Development Cooperation of Slovenia", http://www.mzz.gov.si/en/foreign_policy/foreign_policy/international_development_cooperation_and_humanitarian_assistance/international_development_cooperation_of_slovenia/ (accessed 17 May 2012)

¹⁰⁰ Website of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Slovenia, "Resolution on International Development Cooperation of the Republic of Slovenia until 2015", (7 April 2008), http://www.mzz.gov.si/fileadmin/pageuploads/Zunanja_politika/RA/Resolucija_MRS_eng.pdf, (accessed on 17 May 2012)

the world.”¹⁰¹ This approach, largely posit Slovenia within the category of the countries legitimizing the policy in accordance with their self-image.

The main objectives of Slovenia’s development cooperation policy include reducing poverty, and providing for peace and security (approached through the lenses of human security), education and strengthening relations with priority countries. The main principles of the European Development Consensus are integrated to a certain degree, filtered and adapted to the specific context of the Slovenian aid. However, as it is the case with some other new donors, Slovenia does seem to have a rather large number of beneficiary, also indicating a personalized approach to what European “soft” norms should be considered and which should be dismissed. A noteworthy observation is the association between developing countries and Africa¹⁰² when considering the beneficiary countries, despite the fact that the geographical focus also enlists countries in the Western Balkans, Eastern Europe, Caucasus and Central Asia, all of them categorized by OECD/DAC as “developing countries”.

Slovakia

Slovakia’s general approach to development cooperation is presently enshrined in the Medium-term Strategy for Official Development Assistance of the Slovak Republic for the years 2009-2013.¹⁰³ The Slovak previous strategic framework reflected the period 2003-2008. A main conclusion at this point reflects the capacity of this country to adequately renew its strategic framework.

¹⁰¹ Ibid

¹⁰² Ibid, 5

¹⁰³ Website of SlovakAid, “Medium-Term Strategy for Official Development Assistance of the Slovak Republic for the years 2009-2012”, <http://eng.slovakaid.sk/wp-content/uploads/2010/12/Medium-Term-Strategy-2009-2013-EN.pdf>, (accessed 23 May 2012)

The strategic document for 2009-2013, in a manner similar to the case of the Czech Republic, legitimizes its donor status through its belonging to the developed group of states, mentioning among the given reasons, shared responsibility, interest to be an active member of the donor community and moral duty and obligations resulting from its membership in international organizations, first of all, the EU. The document underlines the responsibility of developing countries in their own development and situates the general framework of the policy within the context of the European Consensus on Development through a rather unfiltered approach. Two of its selected beneficiaries are in Africa.

Bulgaria

In the case of Bulgaria, while no de facto strategy exists yet, a “Concept on the Policy of Bulgaria for participation in the international development cooperation” was endorsed in 2007 by the Council of Ministers.¹⁰⁴

According to this document, Bulgaria adopted the principles at the core of the European Consensus for Development. Its sectoral priorities reflect its assumed know-how while being wide enough to allow for a rather inclusive category of financed projects, yet in this context, goes against the principles addressing division of labor between donors.¹⁰⁵ In terms of motivation for granting development cooperation Bulgaria states the membership obligations at the basis of its undertake of the policy. By considering the EU Accountability Report 2011 on Financing for

¹⁰⁴ Euroresources Website, “Bulgaria”, http://www.euroresources.org/guide/donor_profiles/bg_bulgaria.html, (accessed 22 May 2012)

¹⁰⁵ Ibid

Development: Review of progress of the EU and its Member States, we find that Bulgaria, as does not consider to have assumed a direct obligation to provide bilateral aid to Africa.¹⁰⁶

Romania

In the case of Romania, the national Strategy on development cooperation, dated 2006, presents a certain peculiarity by not having an “expiration date” like in most other cases already analyzed. The document has not yet, however, been renewed since its adoption in 2006.

Romania motivates granting development cooperation as part of the obligations resulting from it joining the European Union. In this context, the limitations of Romania’s engagement with the policy are clear with the Strategy mentioning that its process of becoming an international donor will take into consideration the economic level of the country and its own needs in order to ensure its own sustainable development. Its approach is “in line” with the major EU documents in the field while its funding principles basically reiterate the main principles recognized at the EU level, reflecting a rather un-filtered inclusion of the principles and objectives of the European Development Consensus and the Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness.¹⁰⁷ Its primal objective is poverty alleviation, however, as in many of the previous cases, the choice of development partners is based on its external policy objectives. The priority areas do not encompass Africa.¹⁰⁸

¹⁰⁶European Commission, “EU Accountability Report 2011 on Financing for Development: Review of progress of the EU and its Member States”, Vol I, http://ec.europa.eu/europeaid/how/accountability/eu-annual-accountability-reports/documents/working-document-vol1_en.pdf, (accessed 24 May 2012), 15

¹⁰⁷Website of TRIALOG, “The National Strategy on International Development Cooperation Policy”, http://www.trialog.or.at/images/doku/strategie_pcd_forma_finala-eng.pdf (accessed on 23 May 2012), 2

¹⁰⁸ Although development cooperation projects in support of African countries (mainly North-African) were reported on the Website of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Romania, “New donors can make a difference: Romanian Aid”, (2010), http://mae.ro/sites/default/files/file/2010/brosura_oda_2007-2009.pdf, (accessed on 23 May 2012)

Summing-up

Based on the above analysis of the strategic approach of the studied EU member states, four main issues are worthy of particular emphasis. On the one hand, it is of note that not all of these countries have a strategic approach to development cooperation. Furthermore, even in those countries when one exists, the analysis still underlines the reduced flexibility of the framework to adapt to the European-level changes in the policy. Furthermore, while in the vast majority of countries went through a flourishing period during their preparations to join the Union or just after their integration, the initial enthusiasm with the field appears to have rather cooled down in the following period. Important exceptions to this rule are the Estonia, Lithuania, Slovakia and, to a certain extent, Slovenia

Secondly, the motivation/legitimization of the policy encompasses three main approaches: self-image, characterized by their perception as aid donors (the Czech Republic, Slovakia, Slovenia and Lithuania); self-interest, i.e. approaching their donor-ship status as being useful for their external image and interests (Poland, Hungary, Latvia, and Estonia); and imposition, i.e. considering this status as a conditioned outcome of them joining the Union (Romania and Bulgaria). These approaches reveal the nature of these countries' commitment with development cooperation

Thirdly, in terms of the understanding of their commitments, the countries seem to vary between taking in, through a mere process of replication, the EU “soft” norms of development cooperation and a selective filtering of what should or should not be specifically taken onboard, based on their understanding regarding assumed engagements. The unfiltered approach, however seems to dominate. Within this framework, the engagements themselves seem to be approached rather

“personally”. For example, these countries chose either to understand their commitment as imposing the need to grant bilateral aid to Africa, or as an option to do it if their priorities allow it.

CONCLUSION

As stated in the introduction, the main aim of this paper was to consider understand *how development cooperation strategies of the new CEE EU member states reflect the transposition of European “soft” norms at national level*. In order to answer this question, the basis for the analysis were set in the context of the existing literature, through a comparative study of strategic documents accounting for the official approach to development cooperation in the envisaged countries.

Considering the findings of the last chapter, the analysis reflects several series of inconsistencies between the member states related to the motivation and understanding of development cooperation. A main issue at this point is the reasons invoked by the member states for becoming a donor country, which can be largely considered along the three already-identified main lines: self-image, self-interest and imposition. In terms of relevance, the legitimization of this policy reflects the true level of internalization of the European “soft” norms in this field by underlying the perception of these countries with regards to the reasons why they decided to assume commitments in this field.

It is thus visible from the analysis that, while some of the member states have internalized their commitment with the policy and integrated it into their external approach, a lower level of integration is visible mainly in the case of the two countries joining the Union in 2007, where the promotion of the policy needs to be legitimized through the use of the EU. The middle category, while having internalized the policy, has done it through what can be considered an adaptation of

the foreign policy discourse, demonstrating, in its own turn a specific understanding of the reasons why aid is being provided.

Further, the analysis emphasizes a low degree of adaptability of the policy in the context in which strategies seem, for the most countries, hard to renew, and for some of the countries, hard to even develop. The literature's lack of attention and too hasty conclusion on the standardized strategic approach robs those papers of a very important source of analysis. Moreover, the country approach to the strategy-making, while consistent and important for a detailed analysis may reveal different results when put in a comparative perspective as. In this sense, what at national level may seem as superficial Europeanization, may, in fact, reveal a larger degree of Europeanization if compared to other member states (see, for example, the case of the Czech Republic).

A second set of inconsistencies, related with the general strategic framework, reflect the main problems underlined also by existing literature in the field of development cooperation when approaching the new member states. However, while the literature postulates amongst the problems the lack of understanding and commitment with the policy from the part of the member states, I believe, as my own analysis concurred in underlining, that such an approach is rather biased towards an idealistic/outsider' perspective regarding these countries' commitments. In fact, what the analysis showed is rather the existence of a gap between the external assumptions regarding these countries' commitments in the field and their own understanding of their commitments. This also explains why the CEE member states continue to approach their experience as new donors in such a favorable way. Within this context, while criticism for non-compliance with assumed financial targets may be justified, criticism concerned with non-compliance with European-level assumed engagements towards Africa may not be justifiable if

considered through the perspective of the donor countries and in light of the ambiguous nature of the “soft” *acquis* in the field.

This being said and returning to this paper’s theoretical framework, the analysis has thus demonstrated the important insight that a comparative study of the strategic frameworks of the Central and Eastern European new member states can reveal to the research in the field of Europeanization of development cooperation. The main results reflect, in line with the main body of literature on the top-down Europeanization, the different levels of integration of the European norms. However, they also underlining the close link between the level of Europeanization and the nature of the norms it aspires to promote. In the specific case of Europeanization through “soft” norms, their impact, as explained above, is highly dependent of the way in which they are formulated and the degree in which they are considered relevant/compulsory by the member states, thus attesting to the fact that the ownership of this process can be identified at the level of the nation states rather than at EU level.

Concluding, what this analysis has attempted to show is the need for the existing literature to adequately reflect the role and relevance of the strategic approach of the new member states when considering the process of Europeanization in the field of development cooperation, with adequate attention provided to the national perspectives of assumed engagements. Furthermore, it has emphasized the need for a comparative approach to the strategic discourse in order to better understand the main factors affecting the Europeanization of the policy. While a widely comprehensive study was not in our intention, the present analysis could serve as a starting point for further research in the field, improved by more detailed comparative analysis on development cooperation strategies, considered in a wider European context that might focus not only on the

new member states, but take into consideration the evolution of the strategic approaches of the older member states.

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