

THE ENLARGEMENT OF THE EUROPEAN UNION, THE CZECH REPUBLIC

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Introduction

After 1989 the countries of Central and Eastern Europe went through several significant processes. The most important one was from political point of view the transition from the authoritarian system towards multi-party parliamentary democracy, from economic point of view transition from centrally planned economy towards market economy. In foreign policy these countries claimed a popular slogan “Back to Europe”, what for most of them meant the joining of the North Atlantic Treaty and the European Community. *Transition* of the former Communist countries towards democracy became a topic of research of many political scientists, economists, historians, sociologists and many other social scientists and created the discipline called “transitology”.¹

The second most important process in Central and Eastern Europe represents the *accession* towards the European Union, the process, which started later, and had and has many dimensions. In fact the process of “accession” started definitely after the Copenhagen summit in 1993, when

¹ To name some: M. G. Roskin, *The Rebirth of East Europe*, Prentice Hall, London, 1991, Gale Stokes, *The Wall Came Tumbling Down*, Oxford, 1993, Rothschild, *Return to Diversity*, Oxford, 1993, Jiří Vykoukal, Bohuslav Litera, Miroslav Tejchman, *Východ, Vznik vývoj a rozpad sovětského bloku, 1944–1989* [East, The Creation, Development and the Fall of the Soviet Bloc], Libri, Praha, 2000 etc.

the member states of the EU decided “to widen” Europe and open the door to Central and Eastern European neighbors. The process of the *Enlargement* was launched.

These two processes: *the transition and the accession* went sometimes hand by hand sometimes they differ.

The transition process represents a dramatic and fundamental change of the countries, which experienced in general fifty years of totalitarian and authoritarian regimes [German occupation and the Soviet dominance], with a very limited experience of democratic development in the inter war period. Czechoslovakia from this point of view belonged to the happier ones. This process is meddling with every feature of the life of the society and influences the broad range of topics such as: the respect and the protection of human rights, behavior of political parties, creation of civil society, creation of a legal framework for the justice society, guarantee for the implementation of the laws connected with the reform of civil service etc. Another important aspects of the transformation process are connected with the economic development based on healthy legal environment.

The accession process, which stated clear criteria for the states who wish to join the EU, in fact helps to speed up the process of the transition towards democracy and market economy and helps the Central and Eastern European countries “to navigate” them through stormy waters of transition process.

The article is examining how the EU’s political condition effect the development in the Czech Republic and how thus this contributes to the process of democratic transition of the Czech society.

Europe and the Czechs

The independent Czechoslovak Republic was formed in 1918 and served as an example of democratic state till 1938 when Munich agreement allowed Hitler to annex parts of the country. After the split and formation of independent Slovakia in March 1939 Hitler occupied the rest of Bohemia and Moravia.

Czechoslovakia after WW II started to rebuild its nationhood and state again. Ruthinia was lost to the Soviet Union, German citizens expelled, Jews and Romas decimated in Nazi concentration camps. On limited basis

Czechs and Slovaks tried to make Masaryk's heritage once again truth. The results of the war, the sentiments of Czechoslovak citizens, [we could name many other reasons] led to the Communist coup in February 1948 and placed firmly Czechoslovakia to the Soviet zone of interest with all consequences.

Under Communism the image of Europe was perceived through the prism of class struggle. For the establishment Europe represented an enemy, the other side of an Iron Curtain. For dissidents and many citizens it was a hope.

The hope became truth in 1989 after the fall of Berlin Wall. When talking about "the return to Europe", a popular slogan after 1989, Václav Havel, President of Czechoslovakia, was stressing the values such as respect to civil rights and freedoms, political and economic pluralism, parliamentary democracy, decentralization of local government and self-government.²

Europe was understood as an idea, as a moral principle of humanity and democracy. Whenever in the history Czechs were referring in broad sense to "Europe" or "European" it always meant as synonym of moral, democratic and human.

Using criteria given by Professor Jean Blondel the Czech Republic can be characterized as a relatively stable multiparty political system based on parliamentary democracy.³ There are free elections held on regular basis and there has been a peaceful alteration of governments of different colors without any political earthquakes.⁴

When talking about transition towards democracy we can look at the theory of Dankwart Rustow⁵ especially referring to the last stage of the development of democracy, when democracy becomes the way of life of

² Václav Havel, *Letní přemítání* [Summer meditation], Odeon, Praha, 1991, p. 64.

³ "... in the five countries [Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland, Estonia, Slovenia – L. R.] and in most of Eastern Europe, political developments in the 1990s can be regarded as having been broadly satisfactory, especially given the economic and social difficulties which these countries underwent ... Support for democracy is widespread, although not overwhelming." Paper given by J. Blondel, *Democracy in the five candidate countries*, The Seminar "The New European Borders", Trieste, 27–28 November, 1998.

⁴ Compare with the case of Hungary in: Gabriela Ilonszki, *Consolidation of the Hungarian Democracy*, draft of the paper given at the International Conference "Perspectives of Democratic Consolidation in Central and Eastern Europe": Tallin, Estonia, November 19–22, 1998.

⁵ Dankwart A. Rustow, *Transitions to Democracy, Toward a Dynamic Model*, in: *Comparative Politics*, Number 3, April 1970, pp. 337–364.

society. For instance the German example as well as Rustow's suggest that it takes one generation's time span to 'finalize' the transition towards democracy.⁶

The difficulty of the whole process of transition is described well in the paper given by Professor Blondel: "The overall picture at the level of the population as a whole is therefore one of attitudinal support for liberal democracy. The support which has more the characteristics of a gesture than of a way of life; while many appreciate the freedoms which they have gained, they are not truly engaged in the democratic process, perhaps not surprisingly given the history of the countries concerned."⁷

Transition towards Democracy

Professor Martin Potůček in his work "Not Only the Market" points out that: "... not only Czech society, but also Czech political representation in many ways did not cross the shadows of the past. Political slogans stating, that our country finished the transition towards market economy and a standard European democracy have to be filed in the archive of the quotations which are more generated by the propagandist needs of the moment than the realistic evaluation of the actual situation."⁸ The author points out that the role of the state was weakened which had a negative impact on many fields of the life of society such as: the growth of criminality, the weakness of legislature vis-a-vis privatization, corruption, conflict between public and private interests. The unfinished reforms of health care, social care and the alarming situation in education, which were considered as topics out of the agenda.⁹

It is also necessary not to underestimate the other danger in new democracies: "... a number of scandals have affected the political elite and the government: this has happened most recently in the Czech Republic, Slovenia and Estonia. This does not of course render these countries uni-

⁶ V. Dvořáková, J. Kunc, O přechodech k demokracii [About transitions toward democracy], SLON, Praha 1994.

⁷ Jean Blondel, *ibid.*

⁸ Martin Potůček, Nejen trh, Role trhu, státu a občanského sektoru v proměnách české společnosti (Not Only the Market, The Role of the Market, State and Civil Sector in the Changes of Czech Society), SLON, Praha, 1997, s. 167.

⁹ M. Potůček, *ibid.*, p. 167.

que, given what occurs in many parts of Western Europe and elsewhere in the world. However, repeated scandals may well erode the already rather passive popular support for democracy characterizing these countries.”¹⁰

Relatively stable, but still fragile democracies, with many remnants from Communist past are still in danger that the model of democracy as a plural multiparty parliamentary system can be deformed by corruption, non-effective civil service, divided society etc.¹¹

The transition process is far from being finished. This is not only quantitative process measured by the number of the elections, political parties, but also qualitative process. The aim is that democracy becomes “the way of life”.

There are several factors playing important role in forming and promoting democracy in the country such as economic prosperity, the constitutional and legislative framework, the development of civil society, as well as non-profit and non-governmental sector, ‘normally’ functioning and well structured political parties, stabilized and relatively consolidated political elite with no influential anti-system force etc.¹² All these entities are in general internal factors.

Referring to the Czech case we have to mention a very important internal factor – economic aspects. After being considered as a success story the Czech Republic slid down with its negative growth and unfinished economic reform, which did not result in establishing a prosperous modern economy yet.¹³ The state still supports ‘lame ducks’, big inefficient industrial enterprises, the privatization using the ‘voucher methods’ proved to be a failure, the lack of foreign investment replaced by the privatization “Czech way” led to the bankruptcies of many enterprises. The

¹⁰ Jean Blondel, *ibid.*, p. 4.

¹¹ See *Demokracie a ústavnost* (Democracy and Constitutionalism), Ed. by Jiří Kunc, Univerzita Karlova, Praha, 1996.

¹² See: Gabriella Ilonszki, *ibid.*

V. Dvořáková, A. Gerloch, *Krystalizace struktury politických stran v České republice po roce 1989*, Česká společnost pro politické vědy, Praha, 1996.

¹³ “The Czech economy is already doing badly; GDP fell by 2.9% in the 12 months to the third quarter of last year. It has yet to recover from its currency crisis in 1997, when interest rates were raised sharply to defend the koruna. The Czechs are also paying the price for half-baked economic reforms. Their privatization scheme put a premium speed rather than rational restructuring. The banks, still state-owned, have been repeatedly bailed out. Perhaps because they do not have a large foreign debt to service, the Czechs appear complacent about the need to shake up their economy further.” *The Economist*, February 13th, 1999, p. 84.

proud 'Captains of Czech industry' did not end up in the prison due to the holes in a judicial system.

After the recession in 1997–1999 the recent development shows more satisfying figures and suggests the improvement. According to the Economist the growth of GDP represents 4,4% and industrial production 6,5% in summer 2000.¹⁴

The unemployment, which used to be less than 4% was growing dramatically and the Minister of Labor and Social Affairs Vladimír Špidla expected an unemployment rate of 11% in 2000. What proved to be right. Faster implementation of modern technologies, which seems to be necessary for the economic reform will push away more employees. The Czech Republic will follow other European countries with its unemployment rate reaching 10%. How the society is going to cope with this unprecedented situation is not clear yet.¹⁵

All these internal factors play important role during the transformation process towards democratic prosperous society. Several mistakes and slow downs led especially before 1998 to the situation when the transformation process did not go in tune with the accession process towards the European Union.

The Role of the EU

Besides the internal factor Jean Blondel also emphasized the role of external factors, which may play a quite positive and stabilizing role.¹⁶ The most important and stabilizing factor for the development of democracy and prosperous economy seems to be the identification with Western values, which are expressed institutionally by joining of NATO and EU. The D-day for joining NATO was March 12, 1999. The Economists expressed

¹⁴ The Economist, August 5th, 2000, p. 100.

¹⁵ The Interview with the Minister of Labour and Social Affairs Vladimír Špidla, Mladá Fronta Dnes, 13. 2. 1999, p. 1, 15.

¹⁶ "Almost certainly, one important factor has influences these polities in the direction of a stable democratic path, namely the fact that they have wished to join the European Union as soon as possible: such a development occurred earlier in the case of Spain, Portugal and Greece. It is therefore critical that the Union should not delay the admission of the five countries to the point where they might show less goodwill." Jean Blondel, *ibid.*, p. 4.

the aiming at the European structures: “Central Europe’s long-term destination is not in doubt, even if its time of arrival is. Its closeness to the EU has already helped it to weather the recent financial storms. But it could become a worry if the EU economy takes a further turn for the worse. Poles, Hungarians and Czechs alike are looking west, anxiously.”¹⁷

It is more than obvious that the EU plays a very important role in the fourth stage [using Rustow’s theory] of the development of democracy in Central European countries, the stage when democracy becomes “the way of life”, not only a “gesture”.¹⁸

The official diplomatic relations between Czechoslovakia and the European Community were established in September 1988, in December the “Trade Agreement” on industrial products was signed. After the fall of Communism in May 1990 “A Trade and Cooperation Agreement” was concluded about trade and economic cooperation. An Association Agreement known as “Europe Agreement” was signed in December 15, 1991. After the split of Czechoslovakia a new European Agreement was ratified with the Czech Republic on October 4, 1993 including a liberalization of trade¹⁹, intensive political dialogue, economic and technical cooperation, cultural contacts, support for newly established industrial branches.²⁰

For Central and Eastern European countries a very important decision was taken at the European Council in Copenhagen in June 1993 when the discussion dealing with the two conceptions of the further development of EU “widening” or “deepening” was stated. The EU concluded that the associated countries in Central and Eastern Europe that so desire should become members of the Union. The accession could take place when the states will be able to assume the obligations of membership by

¹⁷ The Economist, February 13th, 1999, p. 84.

¹⁸ See Jean Blondel.

¹⁹ Czech Republic can export 70% of all Czech products without customs and restrictions, on the other hand 60% of European export is influenced by these restrictions. Due to the fact that the rate of agricultural products being 6%, in fact the Czech Republic has the most advantageous agreement among other Central/Eastern European countries. (Gerhard Sabathil, Česká snaha o přijetí do západních institucí a odpověď z Essenu, Mezinárodní politika, 1, 1995, s. 6).

²⁰ Gerhard Sabathil, Česká snaha o přijetí do západních institucí a odpověď z Essenu (Czech Effort to be Accepted to Western Institutions and an Answer from Essen), Mezinárodní politika, 1, 1995, p. 7.

satisfying the economic and political conditions.²¹ The ability to take on the obligations of membership, including adherence to the aims of political, economic and monetary union.

At Essen Summit in 1994 the EU suggested the strategy for associated countries called “The Pre-Accession Strategy”. The main tools were European Agreements which offered to the associated countries trade concessions and other advantages, “Structured Dialogue” which helps the associated countries to become familiar with the institutions and decision making process in EU and Program Phare providing them with grants targeting the reform process.²²

“The White Paper”, which was approved at the session of the European Council in Cannes in summer 1995 set out the legislation which candidate countries would have to implement to meet *the acquis communautaire*.²³ The European Council in Madrid in December 1995 referred to the need, in context of the pre-accession strategy, “to create the conditions for the gradual, harmonious integration of the applicant countries ...”²⁴

To meet the criteria of the EU the Czech government established in November 1994 the Government Committee for European Integration headed by Prime Minister Václav Klaus was established, the other member were Ministers of Finance, Industry and Trade, Agriculture and Foreign Affairs. The Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs chairs the Working Committee. A year later the Czech government approved and published the timetable for the accession “Priorities for the Implementation of the White Paper in the Czech Republic”. The need to change administrative structure, the administration of the environment, direct

²¹ Membership requires:

- that the candidate country has achieved stability of institutions guaranteeing democracy, the rule of law, human rights and respect for and protection of minorities; the existence of functioning market economy, as well as the capacity to cope with competitive pressure and market forces within the Union;

²² Předvstupní strategie Evropské Unie pro přidružené země střední Evropy (The Pre-Accession Strategy of EU for Associated Countries of Central Europe), European Commission, DG IA, p. 5.

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ “particular through:

- the development of market economy,
- the adjustment of their administrative structure,
- the creation of a stable economic and monetary environment.” Agenda 2000, p. 2.

and indirect taxation, personal data protection and social policy was expressed.²⁵

During the last five years a great progress in the development of mutual relations between the Czech Republic and the European Union occurred. The export from the Czech Republic to the EU countries grew from 4,9 to 11,7 billion ECU and import from 6,1 to 15,8 billion ECU. The Czech Republic improved its trade relationship with the EU, which represents 60% of its trade exchange.²⁶

The change in the relationship, and a new quality of relations were also expressed in the participation of the Czech Republic in the programs of the EU such as SOKRATES, LEONARDO DA VINCI, KALEIDOSKOP, MATTHEUS. The implementation of the programs ISPA and SAPARD are intended to be a structural help in the pre-accession period. In 1990–1997 the Czech Republic received a contribution of 493 million ECU in the framework of PHARE program for the support of the system transformation in all sectors: protection of the environment, support of enterprises, harmonization of law, social policy, cross border cooperation etc.²⁷

Applying for the EU membership

In January 1996 the Czech Republic submitted its application to join the EU and was invited by a Luxembourg Summit of European Council in December 1997 to be one of the first six countries to start the negotiation.²⁸ Screening started in April 1998 with the first six countries.²⁹ “Screening is the first phase of discussion on accession to the Union, prior to the negotiation itself. European Communities’ legislation has been divided into 31 chapters; during the screening, the individual legal norms are

²⁵ Agenda 2000, Commission Opinion on the Czech Republic’s Application for membership of the European Union, Brussels July 15, 1997.

²⁶ Gerhard Sabathil, Příprava české republiky pro vstup do EU (The Preparation of the Czech Republic to the EU), *Mezinárodní politika*, 1, 1999, p. 10.

²⁷ Gerhard Sabathil, *ibid.*, p. 10, 11.

²⁸ Barbara Lippertová, Strategické otázky rozšiřování Evropské unie na východ po lucemburském summitu (The Strategic Questions of the Enlargement of European Union to East after Luxembourg Summit), *Mezinárodní vztahy*, 2, 1998, pp. 17–27.

²⁹ Pavel Telička, Tempo jednání o přistoupení závisí na dořešení vnitřních problémů EU (The Speed of Negotiations about Joining Depends on Solving Internal Problems of EU), *Mezinárodní politika*, 1, 1999, p. 4, 5.

being examined in multilateral and bilateral discussions. Legal analyses are carried out and Czech legislation is scrutinized regarding its compatibility with EU norms.”³⁰ The screening process was supposed to be finished in the summer of 1999.³¹

“*The Regular Report from the Commission on the Czech Republic’s Progress towards Accession*” was published in November 1998.³² The Report followed how the Czech Republic was progressing in the light of the Copenhagen criteria and especially the rate at which it was adopting the Union acquis.³³

The EU as an external factor in influencing the transition towards democracy played here a crucial and direct role. It was sort of a cold shower for Czech politicians and Czech society to read in Political Criteria: “The Accession Partnership with the Czech Republic mentions as medium term priorities ‘further work on the integration of the Roma; strengthening of laws which guarantee press freedom; further attention to ensuring equal access to public services.’”³⁴ The evaluation was far from satisfactory. The Commission stated further that: “The change in Government has not resulted in any major shift in the country’s policy towards the European Union.”³⁵

³⁰ Petr Greger, *K vybraným právním aspektům a souvislostem Amsterdamské smlouvy* (To Selected Judicial Aspects and Connections of Amsterdam Treaty), *Mezinárodní vztahy*, 2, 1998, pp. 5–16.

³¹ EU Membership Talks Launched, An Interview with Pavel Telička, Deputy Czech Minister of Foreign Affairs and the chief negotiator for accession of the Czech Republic to the European Union, November–December 1998, p. 1–6.

³² Petr Greger, *Český právní stát v bruselském prizmatu* (Czech Rule of Law in Brussels’s Perspective), *Mezinárodní politika*, 1, 1999, pp. 8, 9.

³³ “In accordance with the guidance provided by these Council Conclusions, the progress report on the Czech Republic follows the same structure as the Opinion. It

- describes the relations between the Czech Republic and the Union, particularly in the framework of the European Agreement;
- analyses the situation in respect of the political conditions set by the European Council [democracy, rule of law, human rights, protection of minorities];
- assesses the Czech Republic’s situation and prospects in respect of the economic conditions mentioned by the European Council [functioning market economy, capacity to cope with competitive pressure and market forces within the Union];
- addresses the question of the Czech Republic’s capacity to adopt the obligations of membership, that is, the acquis of the Union as expressed in the Treaty, the secondary legislation and the policies of the Union.

Regular Report from the Commission on Czech Republic’s Progress Towards Accession, Brussels, November 1998.

³⁴ Ibid.

³⁵ Ibid.

The critical tone of the Report continued: "There has been virtually no progress in public administration reform since July 1997."³⁶ This is not only to wish of the Commission. Functioning civil service is considered to be the precondition for functioning of democracy, a factor guaranteeing the functioning of market economy [for instance the control of capital markets, economic competition, functioning of financial offices etc.], a factor of institutional cooperation at all levels of the internal market and a key condition for the adoption of *acquis communautaire*.³⁷

It was necessary to consider as a serious warning the critique of the Czech Republic in handling the problem of human rights. The General Evaluation stated that: "Developments in the Czech Republic confirm the Opinion that the Czech Republic fulfils the Copenhagen political criteria. Nonetheless the Czech Republic needs to devote continuing attention to the reform of the judiciary, to fighting corruption more effectively and to improving the situation of the Roma."³⁸

New minority government, which came to power in June 1998, applied much more open policy towards the accession of the Czech Republic towards the EU and European card became the true priority. European dimension stopped being a question of foreign policy and became the domestic issue. *Transformation* process and the *accession* process went with some small exception hand by hand.

A year later in October 1999 the European Commission published a new annual report "*The Regular Report of the European Commission on the Czech Republic for 1999. The Progress in the Accession*"³⁹

It was of course quite hard to overcome quickly the heritage from the past and there was not too much wonder that in the introduction the Commission stated that the Czech Republic's progress was very unbalanced. The positive development occurred in the economic field. The export from the EU to the Czech Republic grew from 11,8 to 14,7 billion EURO. The export from the Czech Republic grew 11%. The trade exchange with the EU represented 60% of the Czech foreign trade.⁴⁰

³⁶ Ibid.

³⁷ Petr Greger, *Český právní stát v bruselském prizmatu*, Mezinárodní politika, 1, 1999, p. 9.

³⁸ Regular Report from the Commission on Czech Republic's Progress Towards Accession, Brussels, November 1998.

³⁹ http://www.euroskop.cz/rc_pripravacr_zprava1999.html.

⁴⁰ Ibid.

The Pre-Accession aid was done through the program PHARE. 30% were used for the strengthening of the institutions, which were involved in the implementation of the acquis [for instance twinning], e. g. Institution Building. 70% were directed to the investments needed for the restructuring of the economy as well as for the support of the economic and social cohesion.

The budget PHARE for the Czech Republic in 1990–1999 represented 629,1 million EURO. The budget for 1999 was 21 million EURO, which were used in these spheres:

- the strengthening of the democratic system, judicial state, the protection of human rights and rights of minorities, especially of Roma [0,5 million EURO]
- the economic and social cohesion including the support of small and middle sized companies and support of employment [5,35 million EURO]
- The strengthening of the abilities of the institutions and civil service to implement acquis especially in the field of public finance, phytosanitary norms, protection of health and security at the work place and the environment [5,8 million EURO]
- Justice and internal affairs including the struggle against the organized crime and economic criminality, protection of the frontiers and strengthening of the judicial system [4 million EURO]
- Participation in different programs of the EU [4 million EURO] and the program TEMPUS [1 million EURO]

Another financial sources were devoted to cross border cooperation and for international programs such as TAIEX, programs for small and middle sized companies and projects for the building of infrastructure ...⁴¹

In the fall 1999 when the Report was published eight chapters of the negotiations were closed and seven were still open.

The Report was very critical to the slowness of the adoption of the acquis, which was complicated due to the long procedures at the ministries, three readings at the Parliament, the position of the minority government and the reluctance of the previous governments to the whole process.

The Report was also very critical when referring to the reform of the civil service. This very long and painful process started soon after 1989.

⁴¹ http://www.euroskop.cz/cr_pripavacr_zprava1999.html. s. 9 of 74.

Several teams were established to prepare the proposal. It was supposed to be accepted in 2002.⁴²

In the part dealing with minorities the Report stated that the situation of Roma people did not change very much. The special schools for slow children were attended by 70% of Roma children, the unemployment among Roma population was reaching 70–90%. The governmental action plan from 1997 helped to establish at the ministries, district councils and schools Roma advisors and assistants. Preparatory schools for Roma children were founded. The Interdepartmental Commission for Roma Questions was already in place, but health and boarding situation of Roma population did not improve.

The micro-economic situation according to the Report stayed uneasy, the real GDP was decreasing, the unemployment grew and the real income went down. The recession showed to be much more serious, deeper and longer. The outlook was not more optimistic.⁴³

The Report from 1999 plaid quite 'educational' role, Czech political elite headed by the government put a tremendous effort to reach again the position of the ship flag of the countries negotiating their full membership in the EU. This effort was mentioned in the document of the European parliament "*The Czech Republic and the Enlargement of the European Union*", March 2000.⁴⁴

The Briefing of the European Parliament mentioned that the minority government of Miloš Zeman renegotiated and amended the opposition agreement between governing social democratic party and the major opposition party ODS, led by Václav Klaus. Part of it was a clause dealing with more collaboration on preparation for EU accession. In spite of the fact that there was an increased effort from the side of the Czech government the Briefing of the European Parliament repeated many reservations stated earlier by the Commission.

⁴² In 1998–1999 I took part in the Board of Advisors for the Reform of Civil Service. The author took part in preparation of one of many proposals for the establishment of the Institute for Public Administration, sort of Civil Service College. The project was paid by PHARE money. At present the author is a part of another team preparing the teaching modules for the training of civil servants.

⁴³ Fortunately it did not prove to be right. The slow improvement occurred in the first half of 2000. See *The Economist*, 4th August, 2000, p. 100.

⁴⁴ "The Czech Republic and the Enlargement of the European Union", Briefing no. 4, European Parliament, Luxembourg, 22 March 2000.

The Czech political élites and Czech media were eagerly waiting for the “2000 Regular Report from the Commission on the Czech Republic’s Progress towards Accession”.

The Report viewed the relations between the EU and the Czech Republic. Besides PHARE other two programs were introduced.⁴⁵ SAPARD provides aid for agricultural and rural development and ISPA finances infrastructures projects in the field of environment and transport.

PHARE support for instance projects promoting the sustainability of civil society organizations in the field of training for treasures for charities, fundraising activities, educational support groups to anti-racial events, the development of Roma education program, support for Roma community centers etc. Other sources are used in the field of human resources development, environment sector, the second largest ever [34 ml EURO] the Pan-European rail corridor, which runs from Berlin to Vienna.⁴⁶

The evaluation of criteria for membership started with political criteria. The Report accepted positively that the Parliament improved its functioning by introducing a fast track for EC related draft laws. Since 1999 a significant acceleration in the legislative process was noted. The main failure is considered to be the absence of the Act on the Civil Service. The anti-corruption measures do not prove to be efficient enough. The judicial reform and training of the judges was not finalized yet.

The Czech government also adopted a document “Concept of the Government Policy towards Members of the Roma Community” focusing on the key areas of education, employment, housing and the fight against discrimination of the Roma. The schools included to their syllabus multi cultural educational programs and made thus information concerning Romany culture more available. The positive steps were also done in the field of housing, Roma assistants and preparatory schools for Roma children.⁴⁷

In the part dealing with economic criteria the Report stated that the macroeconomic situation has improved and the three years recession came to an end in the middle of 1999. The Czech Republic also accelera-

⁴⁵ In the framework of PHARE Czech Republic will receive in 2000–2002 79 million EURO annually, 2000 Regular Report from the Commission on the Czech Republic’s Progress towards Accession, p. 9.

⁴⁶ Ibid., p. 11.

⁴⁷ Ibid., pp. 25, 26.

ted structural reforms, an example can be seen in the processing of sale of the Czech Saving Bank [Česká spořitelna] and the preparation of privatizing of the largest commercial bank in the country [Komerční banka] in 2001.

The improvement of the situation is indicated also by the increase of foreign direct investment, which in 1999 represented an inflow of 4,79 billion EUR what represents 9.2% of GDP and was more than the double the level of 1998.⁴⁸ This all is connected with the fact that the overall business climate in the Czech Republic has improved.⁴⁹

The chapter dealing with the ability to assume the obligations of membership is divided into 29 parts. These are structured in accordance with the list of twenty-nine negotiating chapters dealing with four freedoms, sectoral policies, economic and fiscal affairs, economic and social cohesion, innovation, quality of life and environment, justice and home affairs, external policies, and financial questions.

The main reproof was regarding the fight against fraud and corruption where was still a lack of qualified staff and inter-institutional co-operation in the area.⁵⁰ Bad loans represent 26% of GDP and stay to be a serious problem.

In general the Report for the year 2000 acknowledged the progress done in many fields, but also draw the attention to many problems such as the reform of civil service, judiciary and the protection of human rights.

High expectations of Czech politicians and the professionals in the area of European Integration were hurt by one part of the document "The Strategy of the Enlargement" which accompanied the Report. The document stated that Czech economy "could be considered" to be market economy. The economy of countries such as Poland, Hungary and Estonia "are market economy".⁵¹ The disputes between the representatives of the EU and the Czech government were overshadowed by the results from Nice Summit, which were welcomed by the Czech officials.

⁴⁸ For more detailed economic evaluation see: Transition Report 2000 published on November 14, 2000 by the European Bank for Reconstructing and Development [<http://www.ebrd.com>].

⁴⁹ Ibid., pp. 28–38.

⁵⁰ Ibid., p. 90.

⁵¹ Diplomáté si hodlají na EU stěžovat, Diplomats intend to complain on the EU, Mladá Fronta Dnes, November 11, 2000, p. 6.

Czechs and the EU

Regular reports and comments of the EU addressing the Czech government and society help the country in the process of further democratization during its transition period until democracy becomes “the way of life”. To make the process truly democratic citizens have to make their decision with the full knowledge of such a process. The other important feature influencing the attitude of Czech citizens and political élites towards EU is the level of support for the enhanced accession of the Czech Republic joining into the EU.⁵²

The positive development of the attitude of Czech citizens towards the EU can be encouraged by a more open approach of the government itself which was not always the case in the past. ⁵³ The result of an increase of information about the EU is a growing support for the membership.⁵⁴

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs “has specified the aims, principles and tools of the Communication Strategy and defined target groups... We carry out some projects, with for example, Czech TV, regional dailies and specialized magazines. We issue various publications ... we plan to launch specialized Internet sites⁵⁵.” As pointed out by the main negotiator for the accession Pavel Telička.⁵⁶

⁵² “... although the level of knowledge of these issues still remains rather low among the public. This, of course, is not a fault of the public; rather it is a result of the current state of our relationship with the EU. There is mostly a lack of information about the most important matters, about the actual impacts of approximation to the EU on individual areas of people lives.” [An Interview with Pavel Telička, Deputy Czech Minister of Foreign Affairs and the Chief Negotiator for accession of the Czech Republic to the European Union, EuroInfo, November–December 1998, pp. 4,5.]

⁵³ Peter Bugge, České vnímání perspektivy členství v EU, Havel vs. Klaus (Czech Perceptions of the Perspective of Eu Membership), Politologická revue, 2, 1998, pp. 76–110.

⁵⁴ The Support for the Entry to EU in %:

V. 93	III. 96	XI. 96	I. 97	IX. 97	II. 98	
YES	66	42	51	58	58	61
NO	12	21	26	23	22	1
DOES NOT KNOW	22	37	23	19	20	24

Pramen: IVVM

Zpráva o vývoji české společnosti, 1989–1998 (The Report about the Development of Czech Society, 1989–1998), Editor Jiří Večerník, the research team led by Petr Matějů, p. 319. The slogan “back to Europe” is founding its real shape and structure.

⁵⁵ www.euroskop.cz.

⁵⁶ An Interview with Pavel Telička, p. 5.

All these activities are supposed to prepare the citizens for the referendum and to give them knowledge necessary to make their choice freely and democratically.

The Czech internal debate about European integration can be divided into three periods:

1. 1989–1991 – mainly connected with a slogan “back to Europe”.
2. 1991–1997/8 – forming of the political attitudes of Czech subjects vis-a-vis EU.
3. 1997/8 – forming the attitudes towards different aspects of European integration.⁵⁷

The main support for joining the EU comes from young people, with higher education and right orientation. The best-informed social groups are young people and entrepreneurs from small and bigger companies. The less informed are old people, housewives and people living in the country.

Do you trust the European Union?				
Age	18–29	30–44	45–59	60–
Yes	21%	17%	13%	8%
More yes	48%	46%	40%	38%
More no	24%	28%	33%	35%
No	7%	9%	14%	19%

58

Do you trust the European Union?				
Education	basic	apprentice	High school	University
Yes	9%	12%	19%	27%
More yes	35%	45%	46%	50%
More no	37%	30%	29%	18%
No	18%	13%	6%	5%

59

⁵⁷ Miroslav Mareš, České politické strany a evropská integrace [Czech Political Parties and European Integration], *Integrace*, 1/2000, p. 15.

⁵⁸ STEM, *Trends* 2/2000, p. 3.

⁵⁹ STEM, *ibid.*, p. 3.

The most desired expectations of Czech society are:

- the improvement of economic situation
- cooperation on European level
- the freedom of movement of persons, capital, services and goods
- the improvement of legislature

But there are also worries connected with joining the EU such as:

- the cost, higher taxes
- unequal position of the Czech Republic
- the loss of sovereignty
- the economic dependence
- the influx of foreigners
- the growth of unemployment
- the hard competition for Czech enterprises
- the elimination of agriculture
- the fall of industry⁶⁰

The analysis done by the governmental team for the Communication strategy came to the conclusion that the knowledge about the EU among Czech is quite vague. Only 46% of population have a general idea what the EU is about. There is a crucial role to be played by media, but only 26% of them give a professional picture.⁶¹

There is also an important role for the government itself. According to the First Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs and the main Negotiator of the Czech Republic Pavel Telička there was a 'curing' effect of The Regular Report of the Commission in the fall 1999 criticizing heavily the slow attitude of the Czech Republic towards the Accession. We can talk about the 'turning point' in Czech political approach, the will to reach consensus within Czech society and political elite. European integration became the topic number one and is functioning as a unifying element in the country. The proof can be the agreement between the main political parties: ODS and social democrats which speeded up the process of the adoption of the legislature of the EU.⁶²

⁶⁰ Communication Strategy of the Czech Government, Presentation of STEM and Sofres-Factum, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Prague, March 3, 2000.

⁶¹ Ibid.

⁶² Pavel Telička, The Negotiation Process and Internal Preparation of the Czech Republic for the Membership in the EU, Integrate, March, 2000, in: www.integrate.cz.

Public Debate

Till recently the main protagonists of the debate dealing with Europe were President Václav Havel and the former Prime Minister Václav Klaus. Havel presents himself as a federalist, politically and economically integrated Europe is for him a natural framework for the vital development of the Czech nation.⁶³ In his speech in Strasbourg in February 2000 Havel stressed the necessity of further democratization of Central Europe and the “Europeanization” of the area connected with the development of civil society. He also proposed the creation of a European Constitution, what was accepted quite warmly by EMPs. The proposal to create the upper House of the European Parliament was not getting so much support.⁶⁴

Václav Klaus, the former Prime Minister who submitted the Application of the Czech Republic to EU and the President of the Parliament is claiming himself to be a ‘eurorealist’, many perceive him more as a ‘euro-sceptic’. Klaus stresses the role of a national state as a space for political sovereignty. Klaus sees the EU as an inter-governmental organization cooperating mainly in the framework of liberalization of market and trade.⁶⁵

Civic Democratic Party [ODS] led by Václav Klaus was always claiming the membership in the EU as the target of Czech foreign policy. Under the influence of the Chairman ODS is also quite reserve to some postulates such as “Europe of regions” or “social state”. Jan Zahradil, the Chairman of a Parliamentary Committee for the Foreign Policy and a Shadow Foreign Minister wrote: “European integration in Czech mass media is one sided. It aims to the only possible ‘happy future’... we have to keep to the terms: advantageous, non advantageous, practical, non practical, works, does not work.”⁶⁶

In spite of the fact that several top politicians of ODS headed by Václav Klaus himself are quite careful and ‘suspicious’ vis-a-vis the EU the party as a whole is very pro-European.⁶⁷

⁶³ Peter Bugge, České vnímání perspektivy členství v EU – Havel versus Klaus, *ibid.*, p. 103.

⁶⁴ Kateřina Šafaříková, Václav Havel ve Štrasburku opět navrhl některé změny Evropské Unie [Václav Havel again Suggested Some Changes of the EU], *Lidové noviny*, 17. 2. 2000, p. 3.

⁶⁵ Peter Bugge, *ibid.*, p. 103.

⁶⁶ Jan Zahradil, Na unii s růžovými brýlemi? [About Union with Rosy Glasses?], *Mladá fronta Dnes*, 2000.

⁶⁷ According to opinion polls those who trust European Union according to political parties are:

Social democrats (ČSSD) used to criticized eurosceptic approach of their conservative counterparts in ODS. ČSSD as a governmental party is at present feeling responsibility for both negative evaluations of the Czech Republic done by the Commission and they try to speed up the whole process of accession. The approach of ČSSD seems to be based on shared values with other socialist, social democratic and labor parties and their idea of Europe with social dimensions.

The Union of Freedom [US] which was formed after the split of ODS in 1997 is claiming its politics as euro-optimistic. They support further deepening and widening of the EU and try to make 'European card' one of the differences between themselves and ODS.

Christian and Democratic Union – Czechoslovak People Party (KDU-ČSL) understand the EU as a fulfillment of their Christian democratic values.

The Communist Party (KSČM) has an ambivalent approach towards EU, the members in general [who are mainly representatives of older generation] are not extremely keen on the accession towards EU, and the leadership of the party is more open.⁶⁸

Do you trust the European Union?		
Membership in Communist Party		
	Member before 1989	Never was a member
Yes	10%	16%
More yes	32%	47%
More no	37%	28%
No	21%	9%

69

From the beginning of 1999 sort of lethargic Czech society became more aware of the necessity of an open discussion about the Czech membership in the EU. Several NGOs which were created supported in their

ODS	79%
US	81%
KDU/ČSL	83%
ČSSD	52%
KSČM	24%

Source: STEM, Trendy February, 2000.

⁶⁸ See: Miroslav Mareš, *ibid.*, pp. 15–20.

⁶⁹ STEM, Trends, 2/2000, p. 5.

program the accession of the Czech Republic towards the EU [Impuls 99, Děkujeme, odejděte! etc.] The number of discussions in mass media is growing. This is not only due to the increasing impact of the governmental Communication strategy, but also the persuasion of common citizens that the membership in the EU is going to influence their lives.⁷⁰

Who are the main resources of information about the EU?

Direct communication: political elites
journalists
social networks including NGOs
Undirect communication: civil servants and trainers
Professionals⁷¹

The main topics, which are communicated, are more general dealing with the foundation, functioning and aims of the EU and more concrete referring to the changes we can expect due to our membership. Only from the fall 1999 after the degrading Regular Report the discussion about internal aspects of the accession spread. Step by step the European Integration became the domestic issue not a foreign one.

Conclusion

“Europe” and the EU as an external factor are recently playing crucial role in the further democratization and modernization of the Czech Republic and Central and Eastern European region as a whole. Following the pre-accession strategy for the full membership in the EU the Czech Republic is getting closer to become a functioning and stable democracy with prosperous market economy and modern effective state serving its citizens. This anyway cannot be only the process involving exclusively Brussels’s officials and narrow strata of Czech political élites. The Czech

⁷⁰ According to opinion polls from February 2000 people in the Czech Republic trust:
EU 58%
NATO 53%
Czech government 24%
Source: STEM, Trendy 1994–2000.

⁷¹ Communication Strategy, Presentation of STEM and Sofres-Factum, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Prague, March 13, 2000.

society has this rare historical chance to manage its own life and to steer the country “back to Europe”. This process is not going to be easy. Czech citizens with the full knowledge have to make their own choices.

The process of transition towards democracy after 1989 went through quite dramatic and dubious road. There were successes and failures. The problematic voucher privatization, the unfinished transformation of big companies, the still missing clear legal framework, the lack of the reform of civil service are the most visible examples. Thus we can state that not always in the years 1989–1998 the transformation and the accession processes went hand by hand. From 1998 onward the accession process supports the transformation and helps the Czech Republic become the state where democracy is the way of life.