

**“Who are Europe’s Farmers?”**  
**Accession to the EU and Organized Professional  
Interests**

**Evidence from the Czech Republic**

*\* Draft, do not quote without the author’s permission\**

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In the research on European integration interest groups have been considered as main actors. However, there are few research studies on their structures and action in Central European post-communist countries. Their role has often been presented as elite identification rather than to a balance between representation and influence. Thus, it seems important to address the challenge of incorporating this relatively new body of research into the mainstream research on EU multi-level governance. We will present possibilities of linking two approaches, such as *path-dependence* theories in post-communist societies and theories on European integration. We employ the network approach and historical institutionalist theories to support our arguments.

This paper addresses the issue of intermediation of professional interests in Central and Eastern European Countries (CEEC) acceding to the European Union (EU). Specifically, the author traces and analyzes the agricultural professional interests in the Czech Republic in order to analyse the extent to which 'Europe' has been affecting organised interests in new EU member states. The goal is to define the complex and changing relationship between post-communist legacy and European incremental incentives influencing structures and identities of organised interest groups. As such, we are interested in the Czech Chamber of Agriculture and its two partner associations, from the creation until their accession of the Czech Republic to the EU.

During the past decade the Central and Eastern European countries (CEECs) have undergone dramatic changes. Two events are particularly important. First, with the collapse of state-socialism, most of the countries became committed to the liberalization of their political and economic systems. Hence, organized interests have been relatively new phenomena in the new environment. Their emergence has been considered as a requirement for democracy, or as an expression of plurality in the market economy. They have been perceived as a necessary step towards consolidation of civil society, democratic institutions, free market and efficient policy making. Thus, according to corporatist theories, professional intermediation can contribute to political stability and economic growth (Berger 1981). However, communist legacy during the transformation<sup>1</sup> period (Ost 1993, Fink-Hafner 1998) lead to a 'reinforced', 'transformative' (Iankova 1998) or 'illusory' type of corporatism (Ost 2000). Moreover other pluralistic theorists described interest groups and civil society in Eastern Europe as a system characterized by organizational instability and fragmentation, elite domination and passivity of participation, as well as absence in the policy making process (Padgett 2000). Some studies argue that transition to democracy in Central and Eastern Europe resulted in a systemic vacuum (i.e. a crisis of the system explaining the lack of representation of interests in the previous system and the proliferation of associations during the first years of change (Nielsen, Jessop and Hausner 1996) thus allowing it to introduce new models and institutions, while still being heavily influenced by communist legacy (Perez-Solorzano Borragan 2005).

Another important event in the past decade has been the accession of Central and Eastern European countries into the European Union ( EU). It brought challenges in terms of conditionality and asymmetrical relationship between old and new member states (Grabbe 2003).

Within this context, the process of accession has greatly influenced the development of organized interests. In other words, reports from the European Commission, Council of Europe, World Bank or OECD have also evaluated the level of involvement of civil society as an indicator of the level of change, social progress and democracy in a given country, and thus as the level of readiness to be part of the EU. As such, accession to the EU has been presented as an incremental process, a tool for the reform and an objective for the candidate countries (Agh 2004). In this sense, the study on interest groups in EU candidate countries is an important tool for understanding of mechanisms of Europeanization of non-governmental actors during the negotiations process and the role of interest groups in the policy making process. This will also allow us to question the teleological approach behind the EU negotiations process.

Thus I combine two approaches, the analysis of the effect of the European variable<sup>2</sup> (Olsen 2002) on domestic organized interests (Kohler-Koch 2002), as Radaelli describes it<sup>3</sup>, and the impact of social capital (Mihaylova 2005) - in terms of post-communist legacy<sup>4</sup> - in order to better understand hybrid innovations within structures and identification strategies of organized interest groups in Central Europe. The policy network approach, as a relationship between organized interests and state actors, can be fruitful in finding a more appropriate research model (Börzel 1997, Kohler – Koch 2002 ).

I have tried to assess how the combination of external and internal factors has articulated in the agricultural policy community at national level in terms of acceptance and legitimization of values (and the exclusion of competing values), and what the consequences are on institutions, organized interests, and group identities. Thus, an *agricultural policy community* refers to limited hierarchical membership of administrative institutions and interest groups, constant interaction between members through all aspects of a policy, high level of consensus on results and impacts, importance of inclusion and participation, in contrast with the excluded ones. It can be relatively flexible or closed. It has been a mechanism of exclusion or inclusion<sup>5</sup>. I

analyze national, transnational and supranational strategies during three different time periods, i.e. before the official opening of negotiations in 1998 (T1) and after the official launching of the process of accession to the EU (T2), until full membership of the Czech Republic in May 2004 (T3). I have selected the agricultural policy as the empirical context to examine the modalities of interest groups in the EU candidate countries using the analytical kit set out above. There are several reasons for this empirical selection. First, EU agricultural policy is characterized by deeply entrenched interests on national and supranational level. Key actors within the agricultural policy community include professional mediators, administrative agencies, governments, EU actors, experts, NGOs and advocacy groups, etc. Second, pressures for Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) reform and WTO obligations have brought forward new distribution of power and access. As such, the Common Agricultural Policy can be considered as a moving target.

The Candidate countries Eurobarometer 2002 report has presented an analysis of public opinion towards the EU in the 13 Candidate countries. The key findings indicate that, in terms of the CAP, farmers are more likely to believe that the accession will be favorable for farmers (68%) than for people with other occupations. But the informed farmers, who have heard about the CAP, are significantly more likely to expect negative consequences from EU accession. In the rural areas, people are more likely to expect EU-level agricultural policies to address the problems of farmers than the problems of the rural society ( CC-EB 2002.3). Finally, farmers in CEECs are more likely to expect that the agrarian policies would serve them rather than other – more general – purposes. The Czech standpoint is a very specific one, as the Czech Republic was among the least informed countries as far as CAP is concerned. At the same time, the Czech farmers fear that this policy will be more unfavorable than favorable for them and their farms. Is there a Czech specificity behind this opinion?

I would like to explore how the EU factor interacts with legacies of the past in post-communist countries thus building new resources for professional mediators. My

paper seeks to explain the impact of EU accession negotiations on organized interests in Central Europe. I address two sets of questions: the first one deals with actors and their structures, the second one deals with the role of the European agricultural policy in fostering a new professional identity and the extent to which it could contribute to a better understanding of European identity formation.

- First, how does the EU impact on organized interests in candidate countries? Is there a relationship between post-communist legacy and European influence in the organization of professional interests?
- Second, did CAP foster a new image of the farmers' profession after the fall of communism, and how? What is so different about farmers from 'Eastern Europe'? Was the reaction against/for Europe essential for the farmers' legitimacy, repertoires of actions and access to power in candidate countries?

The main arguments of this article are that domestic actors have used 'Europe' under EU pressure, but they have also used it even in the absence of adaptational pressure. My argument is that during the negotiations period, competing mediators have used the EU in order to strengthen their domestic identity, to mobilize resources and diversify repertoires of action. Europe builds a resource for interest groups while the latter are being affected by legacies of the past. Thus, specific domestic structures in the agricultural sector - a combination of social capital and size of farming companies - foster a specific path of development. In particular, the question this paper tries to answer is about the role of the EU accession negotiations on the formation of a belief system, identity characteristics, i.e. as a set of values, priorities and perceptions of the seriousness of a problem and of the efficacy of means of attaining those priorities.

The paper is organized as follows:

- Section 1 presents concepts and definitions on interest groups in Central and Eastern Europe ;

- Section 2 explains the empirical outline;
- Section 3 deals with the EU impact on structures and professional identities.

This paper presents the theoretical underpinnings, as well as some empirical results of our ongoing research project on how the European Union impacts on structures and identities of group interests. So the paper outlines the key features of an ongoing research project and, therefore, it should be read as work that is in progress.

### ***1. Concepts and Definitions***

The main objective of this study is to explore the ‘usage of Europe’<sup>6</sup> by mediators (Muller, 2005) - why use ‘Europe’ and what the mechanisms of this usage are. We are interested in the time period before the official opening of EU accession negotiations – *pre-accession process 1993 - 1997* (absence of adaptational pressure), and during the official *accession negotiations 1998 - 2004* (adaptational pressure).

The study requires an approach which accounts for the process of identity formation and the role of institutions. Identity is produced and reproduced in an interactive and cognitive process, where institutions, as the formal or informal procedures, routines, norms and conventions embedded in the organizational structure of the polity (Hall and Taylor 1996) are attributed a key explanatory role as promoters of norms, values, and aims. Through this interaction they affect the very identities, self-images and preferences of the actors (March and Olsen 1989). Social interactions among different professional mediators involve the motivated manipulation of symbols by their members and leading activists (through speech, appearance, behavior) that are strategically competing with one another to influence the frame of reference. The state is also a powerful identifier because it has the material and symbolic resources to impose the categories (Brubaker, Cooper 2000) and modes of social counting. However, it is not the only identifier that matters. Has this been done through the use of the EU accession process?

As an analytical tool, I use the term Europeanization describing the impact of a variable at the domestic level thus adapting it to a European model, logic or a constraint. C. Radaelli (2000) defines Europeanization as:

“A process of construction, diffusion, and institutionalization of rules, procedure, paradigms, styles, ways of doing and shared beliefs and norms, formal and informal, defined and consolidated first in the decision-making process of the EU and then incorporated in the logic discourses, identities, political structure and policies at the domestic level<sup>7</sup>”.

I define professional intermediation as specialized mediators invested in a monopoly of representation of collective interests. They take part in the decision making process as exclusive partners, and have the power to influence their members. Alan Cawson (1986) reminds us that interest intermediation is not equivalent to the notion of interest representation. The latter was used by Philippe Schmitter (1979) to explain reciprocity of relations between corporatist organizations and state agencies. As such, representation is not the unique objective of the action of the interest group; it can only be one part of its functions. By using the terminology of interest intermediation, Schmitter also insists on the fact that associations do not always translate their own interests and that often they do not respond to grassroots preferences while playing an important role in the learning process of their members of what their interests should be. So, an interest group is a self interested entity which seeks to represent particular collective interests and to influence the political process on a specific domain. Interest groups are not political organizations even though they can take part in the political action or they can have direct or indirect links with political parties. Concerning agriculture, links with political parties, parliamentary committees and political affiliation are crucial as they guarantee access, representation and participation.

During state-socialism, the most frequent type of organizations of professional interest were the corporatist organizations from the time of socialist regime, i.e. groups of technocrats (*nomenklatura*), trade unions and old apparatchiks in the

industrial sector. During these years, their role was transformed into a function of negotiation agents, within the framework of the central planning (Hausner et al.1995). So, the intermediation of economic and social interests was not totally absent. Hence, under state-socialism, state-run associations held a monopoly position. Nevertheless, during the transformation period, it became possible to build new forms of institutions even though they were highly influenced by the legacy of the previous system. Simultaneously, the role of the state has always been 'implicit'. The State has organized their structures and has often determined their limited political access. In the case new of professional associations, some of the structures already existed in the pre-1989 years. Consequently, they also had to adapt themselves to new rules and gain credibility. The rapid changes which interest groups have undergone in the past decade not only showed their dependency on the state but highlighted the weakness of their structures, the lack of resources and capital. New and old associations often competed ideologically with each other on the basis of their link to the state-socialist regime.

Up to now, my analyses have been based on theoretical and empirical research performed in the Czech Republic and in Brussels, Belgium. I have endeavored to achieve a strong empirical focus. I have been granted access to documentation and have been able to corroborate this material through interviews with different actors in the EU multilevel governance system. In the course of our fieldwork, I have concentrated on a number of semi-directive in-depth interviews with a great diversity of actors, such as farmers, NGO activists, regional officials, public and European administrators, researchers etc. These individuals have covered the full spectrum of opinions, mainly professionals and experts in agriculture as an economic activity. These semi-structured interviews have been conducted on three different levels of governance: local, national and European. We have worked on four different regions in the Czech Republic representing the diverse geographic, economic and agricultural contexts of the country<sup>8</sup>. We have also taken into consideration the functioning of the

EU policy making by performing the method of participative observation at the European Parliament, at the Agriculture Committee.

The second part of our empirical research is a questionnaire sent to activists, professionals who are farmers and at the same time representative of their association in their respective regions. The survey investigates their attitudes towards the CAP after the Czech accession to the EU and how this shaped a common identity of what a modern farmer is, and its place in Czech society. What is their perception of the state of Czech agriculture after Accession to the EU? Our sampling group is farmers, active members of the four general associations: Agricultural Association (big farming companies and former cooperatives), Association of private farming (small family farmers), Association of Young Farmers, Pro-Bio (organic farmers), and members of the Agrarian Chamber.

## ***2. Interest Intermediation: Empirical Outline***

Agriculture in the Czech Republic bears the legacy of a typically large collectivized sector. Czech interest groups in the field of agriculture have been chosen for this analysis because of the type of collectivized agriculture and privatization process. The type of process of transformation of economy predetermined the privatization of land, as well as the specific tensed State-group relations. Czech agriculture, with its small share of GDP, dual farm structure and competing agricultural associations, is the most typical case for analyzing the Europeanization of interest groups in the agricultural sector of new EU member states. Its agricultural sector is a small one, thus following current agricultural trends in Western Europe. First, the economic indicators are similar to those in the EU15 member states (see annex). The Czech Republic is also a country with a strong tradition in industry. Third, the population living in rural areas is mainly engaged in industrial activities and is not primarily related to the agricultural sector. During the transformation process, new forms of ownership have emerged from the former co-operatives and state farms. Nowadays, farm land is distributed as follows: corporate farms - 44%, co-operatives -26.3%;

individual private farms - 27.4%<sup>9</sup>. More than 80% of agricultural land is cultivated by big size farms (500 ha and more), i.e. 7.5% of the total number of farmers.

**Table 2. Size of Farms and distribution of agricultural land in Czech Republic**

<i>Size of farms (ha)</i>	<i>% of farms</i>	<i>% of agricultural land</i>
- 50	81,3	6,9
50 - 100	5,1	2,6
101 - 500	6,1	10,3
501 - 1000	2,9	15,8
1001 - 2000	3,0	31,0
2000 -	1,6	33,4

Source: Czech Agrarian Chamber 2001

We have observed the Czech Chamber of Agriculture and associations - partners from their creation until the accession of the Czech Republic to the EU. In this paper I present the two main professional associations in Czech agricultural sector; the Agricultural Association (AA), which represents mostly large-scale agricultural enterprises (more than 500 ha), and the Association of Private Farming (APF), which represents smaller individual farms (approximately 100 ha).

### **The Agrarian Chamber**

In 1991, the Czech parliament passed a law on professional chambers of commerce, industry and agriculture. Membership in the Agrarian Chamber (CAC) is voluntary but it used to be compulsory during the first two years after its establishment. In 1993, an amendment to the law was introduced to change the clause on compulsory membership. The Chamber encompasses 71 district agrarian chambers and 59 professional organizations, which include approximately 77,000 physical entities and 7,600 legal entities. Under this law, the new Chamber took over many tasks distributed among various government agencies: such as registration, regulation, or training. In co-operation with the Ministry of Agriculture, common commodity committees have been established to discuss the market situation in individual basic products and produce recommendations. The Chamber is also involved in the establishment of farmers' marketing organizations ([www.agrocr.cz](http://www.agrocr.cz)). Furthermore the Chamber was modeled on the Austrian/German system with compulsory membership

and strong regional representation. Another interpretation would be that it was actually a return to the more recent socialist model of top-down control of authoritarian/ state-corporatism (Ingleby 1996). The CAC is the main actor involved in constant negotiations with government officials, Research Institutes, Universities, Parliamentary Committees and the Ministry of Agriculture.

### **The Agricultural Association**

The Agrarian Association of the Czech Republic (AA) is founded in 2001. It is the successor to the Association of Co-operative Farming. During state-socialism the association promoted state policies and communicated decisions among the farmers. The association was transformed several times in the 1990s. Even though in the first years, it did not succeed in influencing agricultural policy making, the election of the Czech Social Democratic Party (CSSD) in 1998 made it possible for the association to shape the agricultural policies through the participation of Jan Fencel, former chair of the Association, in the cabinet as Minister of Agriculture. The Association is also a member of the Tripartite body for social partnership, thus representing employers in the agricultural sector. In 2004, AA members cultivated 1,349,000 ha of agricultural area, which represented 37% of the total agricultural area in the Czech Republic ([www.zemsvazpraha.cz](http://www.zemsvazpraha.cz)). The association has about 1018 members; half of them are co-operatives, approximately one-third is joint-stock companies and around 15 %, limited liability companies (Bavorova, Curtiss, Jelinek 2005). The Association faces however a crisis of legitimacy being the main partner of the Chamber of Agriculture, its role is often associated with the one of the Chamber and membership in the Association has no value added.

### **The Association of Private Farming**

The Association of Private Farming of the Czech Republic (APF) is established in 1998. The aim of the association is to promote family farms and their role in modern agriculture and countryside. The APF has conservative orientation and ties with the right-wing Civic Democratic Party (CDP) and ODS members of Parliament. The APF

members covered around 300,000 ha of agricultural area in 2003, which corresponds with 7% of the total agricultural land. It represented approximately one third of the area cultivated by individual farmers. The association has about 3,100 members, which means that the average cultivated area per member farmer is approximately 100 ha. Many small individual farmers are not even registered in the local “Agricultural Register” as producers of food. The number of individual farmers who are registered in the “Agricultural Register” and who can be considered as market-oriented farmers, exceeds the number of APF members by ten times (Bavorova, Curtiss, Jelinek 2005; Lost’ák). Thus, free-riding is a larger problem for the association. The association organizes a competition titled “best individual farms of the year”, which serves as an information source for the association, as well as for the government ([www.asz.cz](http://www.asz.cz)). The APF is not a member of the Agrarian Chamber. It left the Chamber and adopted a strategy of an outsider because of ideological competition between the leaders and rival interests in the policy making process. Hence, the leader of the association is personally opposed to leaders in the other groups representing big agricultural structures and former cooperatives. Important disputes have arisen on issues regarding decollectivisation, former links with the communist party of the adversaries.

### ***3. Path dependent institutions and new associations***

I observed the evolutions of associations within the agricultural policy community during three different time periods in terms of organizational behaviour of interest groups. This allowed us to understand that influence of Europe has been different at each stage. I have assessed that the agricultural policy community has not evolved during that time under EU influence. It has rather been influenced by domestic political priorities: such as political party change, personal leadership and successions, geographical incentives and agricultural priorities. The factors that have caused variations in the dependent variable have been evaluated in three time periods. In 1993 and during the period of transformation of professional associations, the

mechanism of copying was predominant, while in 1998 with the opening of EU negotiations, coercion mechanisms widely contributed to the inclusion of associations within the agricultural policy community thus transforming their group identity. In 2004, accession to the EU triggered another role for professional associations, allowing them, through the diffusion of EU norms, to participate in the policy making process, on domestic or EU level.

### *1993: Preparations for Europe?*

During the first years of social and economic transformation, collectivized Czech agriculture was striving for survival under very heavy economic conditions. Competing rural and agricultural associations represented different interests at stake involved in the privatisation and transformation of cooperatives and land rights process. Hence, agricultural interested were articulated around the issue of land and property. Through out the period of decollectivisation, privatisation and consolidation of land rights a dual structure of farms has been put into place ( Doucha 2004 ). Contrary to expectations, small family private farming could not succeed, thus following trends in other Western European countries. Even if big companies or cooperative-type of farms were not competitive enough, they managed to restructure successfully. Thanks to control over land ownership or rent rights, they are nowadays the winners of the agricultural privatisation and consolidation. These are the main companies represented by the Agrarian Chamber. The influence of old type leadership, post-communist technocrats from cooperative and state farms is particularly important.

Hence, the model of the Agrarian Chamber has been influenced from the Austrian type of professional associations (corporatist and with compulsory membership, for the Czech Republic at least at the beginning)<sup>10</sup>. The Austrians were interested in presenting their model of agricultural intermediation and suggested it for implementation in the CEECs during several transnational conferences<sup>11</sup>. Not only it reflected the conviction that corporatist structures better respond to the needs of these

new free market societies, but it also showed the desire to introduce small scale family type of agriculture in CEECs. The creation of Agrarian Chambers in CEECs was at the same time influenced by the German neighbors: a regional structure was created and local representatives were put into place where they have never existed before. At the same time, the institutional copying also corresponded to the need of the centralized state to better supervise and regulate these elites, without taking responsibility for agricultural unbalances.

*1998 The pre-accession process : asymmetric relations*

The PHARE program, initially created to foster reforms engaged in Poland and Hungary, had become the main financial instrument of the European Community in the field of external cooperation with Central and Easter European Countries. At the beginning, PHARE mainly recruited teams of private consultants in order to organize the transmission of know-how. Its goal was to help candidate countries in their preparation for accession, according to their need of consolidating institutions and implementing the *acquis*. The other two financial instruments ISPA and SAPARD financed, on the one hand investments in the environmental and transportation sector in order to ensure better conformity to the European legislation, and on the other hand helped secure the implementation of the *acquis* concerning the CAP and other agricultural priorities. We argue that PHARE has been used for the transfer of informal norms from EU member states representing their sectoral and professional domestic cultures.

Contacts with agricultural associations were organized through COPA-COGECA (the Committee of Professional Agricultural Organizations in the European Union, the General Confederation of Agricultural Co-operatives in the European Union<sup>12</sup>), and this almost exclusively within the framework of twinning programs between different partners, national administration and experts in neighboring countries. Being the only legitimized partner to the European Commission<sup>13</sup>, COPA-COGECA had a privileged position which it sought to keep after the 5th enlargement. Indeed, since 1995, COPA

has been anticipating it and has been interested in consolidating agricultural associations in Central and Eastern Europe in order to better integrate them afterwards. The above mentioned associations were in a crisis situation, threatened by the enlargement of the EU, while the Eastern Europeans were also facing a crisis of representation and reconstruction. We argue that the relation of Eastern and Western associations through a common model of behavior is asymmetrical during the first years of transformation (copying of structures, procedures and behavior) but that later, it becomes double sided and operated mutually (from both sides). Thus, Europeanization of associations in CEECs was not vertical, i.e. coming from a higher EU authority but was rather horizontal, created through a common learning process in terms of lobbying techniques, access to information, influence and repertoires of action. Priority has been given to bilateral exchanges between two partners even though the first selection have been operated with the help of national ministries of agriculture and the European delegation in the country concerned. COPA-COGECA made the choice to integrate several associations per country<sup>14</sup>. Domestic models of interest intermediation have been transferred through institutional learning and conveyed by translational networks<sup>15</sup>. There has not been any institutional transfer of an EU model of interest intermediation.

#### *2004 Accession to the EU: usage of 'Europe'*

Accession to the EU did not change the trend of development of agricultural associations. The Chamber of Agriculture and the Agricultural Association are the main interest groups representing major economic interests in the Czech agricultural sector. Then the Association of Private Farming still manages to have recognition and to be accepted at the negotiation table. Leadership and personal networks are of course important. What is more important is that the AFP has managed to be effectively involved at the local level and to be a mediator with local officials and leaders. At the same time, even though the interests and grass root members are different, the AFP is able to create common positions with its adversary when dealing with issues at the EU level.

Have these evolutions contributed to a different representation of the associations? Did the CAP foster a new image of the farmers' profession, and how?

#### ***4. Representation and identification: influence of EU agricultural negotiations***

I have examined institutions that shape how actors define their interests and organize their relations of power. We would like to study the practices, symbols and meanings that are the properties of a group. So, it is particularly appropriate to study the process of change through the usage of 'Europe' within the agricultural professional identity. However, identity tends to mean too much and too little ( Brubaker, Cooper 2000). Identity implies high degrees of *groupness*, a sharp distinctiveness from non members, and a clear boundary between inside and outside (Brubaker, Cooper 2000). Moreover, it is also related to the individual's perception of its own belonging to a social category. Henri Tajfel introduced the concept of social identity "the individual's knowledge that he belongs to certain social groups together with some emotional and value significance to his of this group membership" (1982). Thus, here we consider identity as a social and historical construction, based on perceptions and values embedded in an institutional system, developed by a discourse, and conveyed by individuals. We would privilege here an approach which takes into account the self-definition of the mediators' own place in society, through the identification of a clear boundary between insiders and outsiders. Hence, being a farmer (*zemedelec*, or *rolnik* in Czech<sup>16</sup>) is a social category within which one falls, and to which one feels one belongs. It provides a definition of who one is, in terms of the defining characters of the category. Thus, different social identifications within Czech farmers are evaluative. It is also defined according to the attitude towards the outside, be it actors or environment.

In terms of a common belonging to a group, social and economic transformations in the agricultural sector throughout the years have perpetrated the division between small and big farmers, between collective farms, companies and individual agriculturalists. The current trend emphasizes this separation and condemns small

farmers to disappear if they do not reshape their identity and repertoires of action. The state-socialist period had deeply reshaped the Czech countryside (both geographically and socially). Collectivized agriculture had fostered the development of a new type of agricultural worker, less related to traditional values and detached from land and countryside. Thus, farmers had a different identification. After the fall of communism, it was expected from them to behave as family farmers - entrepreneurs. In this sense, identity is a circular dynamic. Positive identities are emerging from the past, and collective memories. Positive images are thus created as alternative negative characteristics of the past (be it communist past or pre-war legacy).

It is considered by some that communist period had brought modernization to the countryside. Because of EU influence, there has been a complete shifting. What will be its impact? Policies and incentives are not perceived in a similar way. Rural shift in the CAP is considered negative by some CEECs farmers as they do not perceive it has a role in the modernization of the countryside. In some way, from a Czech point of view, European Agro-rural policy does not correspond to the Czech 'reality' in the countryside. Others see the CAP as an artificial support policy worse than the communist planning schemes. In the case of the Czech associations, the new EU policy on multifunctional agriculture<sup>17</sup> has served the agricultural mediators to reconstruct their identity and interests, and to redirect their action within institutions (Muller, Jobert 1987). The newly operated shift in the agricultural paradigm of the professional mediators has served them to legitimize interactions with state administration and members, through the consolidation of a new identity for modern farmers. The two main Czech agricultural associations have created two alternative institutional paths for developing their identity, legitimizing their political action, and organizing their participation in the policy making process. Both used similar mechanisms of 'use of Europe' through transfer of social capital.

-The AA does support a competitive liberalized agricultural sector coupled with financial support measures to farmers, equivalent to the one given to the West

European counterparts. In economic terms, it represents the biggest part of Czech agriculture.

-The APF recommends a type of agriculture more related to rural life, protection of environment and social role of farmers at the countryside. Because of great free-riders effect, it does not represent the majority of individual and family farming.

Both of them, the AA and the APF, representing farmers as entrepreneurs and modern businessmen, fit into the global image of what the role of a competitive agricultural sector should be in the Czech Republic's liberal economy. This is not a peasant's identity which we might observe in Poland. Czech farmers portray themselves as managers and businessmen. The differences are organized around the issue of the accession to the EU and the different usage of 'Europe' in the domestic context ( see annex Typology). The Czech Agrarian Chamber (CAC) aimed at organizing, uniting the whole agricultural profession and dealing with administrative management, registration and statistics, training and regulation of agricultural activities. It was also meant that it would represent the agricultural sector at the EU level in a unified platform. Nonetheless, from 1995 the political scene became more complex. First, a new Chamber was created by some economic opponents to defend the interests of the agro-food industry. Then, the Agrarian Chamber was divided because the Association of Private Farmers had left its umbrella structure. The Chamber could not become the unique representative of farmers in Czech Republic, though its place as a mediator with the state agencies is still exclusive. The conflict has developed in search of a mediation monopoly through the usage of different discursive images of the two main agricultural associations. It is determined by several factors, such as:

- different farm structures ( dual agriculture)
- political links and alliances
- inclusion or exclusion in the agricultural policy community

- level of involvement in local / national / EU level of decision making
- relation/ attitude towards communist past.

The Agricultural Association (AA) has strong historical roots before 1989. Its legacy comes from modernized cooperatives. Simultaneously it also tries to show an image of a modern interest group inspired by big farmers' associations such as the National Farmers Union (NFU) in the UK<sup>18</sup>. Success of the AA is guaranteed through the careful combination of domestic and external resources. The European influence has been used in combination with social capital, and ex-communist elite networking. The adaptational pressure coming from the urge to implement the CAP has been successful because the AA served as a mediator in the learning process of its members, and as a mediator to the State, helping to legitimize reforms which greatly benefited big farm structures and corporatist product chains. As the main beneficiary of SAPARD and direct aid support programs, the AA placed itself as the main partner and mediator.

While the AA is the most influent member of the Agrarian Chamber, its adversary, the Association of Private Farmers (APF) left the Chamber because it refused to admit its representativity perpetrating the myth of the unity of the Czech farmers and the over-representation of big farmers. These concerns were also very much influenced ideologically by the leaders of the associations and personal and economic conflicts among them. Thus, the organization was excluded from the agricultural policy community and adopted a marginalized conservative strategy. At the same time, it also adopted a pro-European discourse, and thus complied with the new model of European agriculture. Thanks to its participation in the European networks (COPA), after 2004 it has been included in the policy making process. The APF used the European resources in a different pattern, which would help it to be more active on the political scene. It did not succeed in promoting an image based on peasants' identity, traditions and rurality but it transformed its discourse in favor of rural development policy. Being excluded from the agricultural policy community and not

being able to benefit from SAPARD<sup>19</sup>, compels the APF to find alternative paths, such as: better EU representation (a special office established in Brussels); shift of the paradigm (what role should small private farming have in the rural society); improve the value-added of farmers: defendants of ‘public services’; diversification of actions, broadening of the agenda, interest in other issues ( environmental concern, local governance)<sup>20</sup>.

## **6. Concluding remarks**

This paper has suggested studying domestic change in the field of interest intermediation in CEECs and the influence of the EU integration process. Domestic actors have used ‘Europe’ even in the absence of direct EU pressure.

Structure, identity, power and repertoires of action of a given association is related to its position within the agricultural policy community at the national level (see table 1 in annex). Actors within the agricultural policy community have shown a substantial consensus on issues pertaining to the policy core, and less so on secondary aspects. Associations who have had links with the previous regime (in terms of communist legacy) have proven to be more successful. They have converted inherited social capital and managed to transfer it towards other more reliable EU-pragmatic resources. At the same time, at the local level discourse and attitudes remained eurosceptic, and at the national and EU level they are pro-European.

Influence of Europe can be found in the differentiated use of discourse on European multifunctional agriculture ( about definitions of MFA see annex figure 1) and the shaping of two competing agricultural identity paradigms. Thus, small associations involved in local activities would seek to promote a ‘rural’ role of the profession related to recent reforms of the CAP, while bigger farmers would seek to promote an image of entrepreneurs, thus taking advantage of the export schemes of the CAP. As a result, The Common Agricultural Policy has been mobilized as an external belief system of values, priorities and perceptions and contributed to consolidate a proper

agricultural attitude in the Czech Republic. The Common Agricultural Policy, being the first communitarized policy of the EU, and still the one where decisions are entirely influenced by national interests, has proven to shape agricultural professional attitudes in the domestic context and to restrain access of non-professional actors.

Thirdly, it was suggested that in order to succeed an association has to combine external and domestic resources, i.e.:

- i) strong membership, good structure, linked with economic weight,
- ii) legitimacy carried out through institutional transfer and conveyed by transnational, European networks
- ii) elite participation in the integration of beliefs corresponding to cultural domestic preferences (agriculturalists perceived as businessmen and not as traditional farmers)
- iii) inclusion in the domestic policy community (i.e. in the field of agriculture, it is organized around the activities of the Agrarian Chamber and is empowered through preference links with political parties).

On the basis of this observation, we think that interest groups in the agricultural sector have used European norms, discourse and structures in order to transfer valuable capital towards a collective identity triggered by a 'European agricultural model'. In a constructivist approach of the agricultural interest groups, we consider that, in the EU context, these actors are embedded in and affected by the social institutions in which they act. Without coercive impact on the agricultural associations, the accession process has produced in itself a specific European agricultural identity which has had a differentiated impact on the domestic level according to different domestic structures, their legacy and historical capital. This study can thus contribute to a better understanding of the mechanisms of formation of a specific European identity within the EU.

## Annex 1: Agricultural Sector in the EU

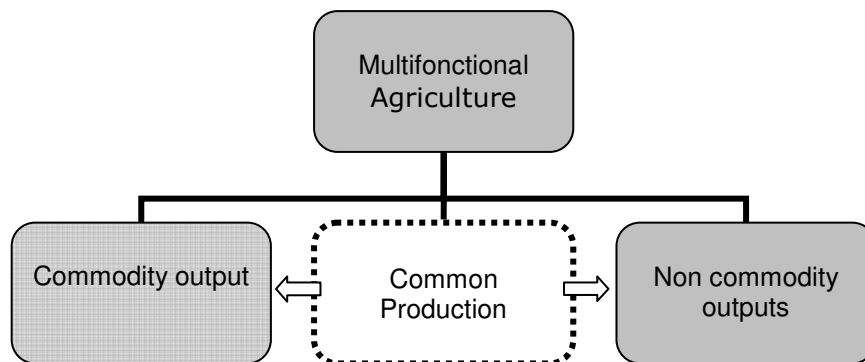
(2000)

	UAS Utilised Agricultural surface		Brut Value Added In Agriculture		Agri Employment		Food Expense s
	x1000 ha	% of total surf	million €	% PIB	x1000	% total	% total
<b>Bulgaria</b>	5582	50,3	2054	16	795	26,2	53,5
<b>Cyprus</b>	134	14,5	329	3,5	14	9,2	18,6
<b>Estonia</b>	891	19,7	254	4,7	46,1	7,6	37,5
<b>Hungary</b>	5854	62,9	1913	3,9	227	6,0	26,6
<b>Latvia</b>	2488	38,5	306	4,0	118	13,5	44,9
<b>Lithuania</b>	3489	53,4	836	6,9	262	19,6	44,4
<b>Malta</b>	12	38,1	78	2,0	3	1,9	
<b>Poland</b>	18220	58,3	4965	2,9	2698	18,8	36,9
<b>Romania</b>	14811	62,1	4564	11,4	4861	42,8	58,0
<b>Slovakia</b>	2440	49,8	560	4,5	119	6,7	31,8
<b>Slovenia</b>	491	24,2	847	2,9	81	9,9	23,5
<b>Czech Republic</b>	<b>4282</b>	<b>54,3</b>	<b>1846</b>	<b>3,4</b>	<b>208</b>	<b>4,5</b>	<b>26,8</b>
<b>Candidate countries-12</b>	58808	54,1	18552	4,5	8950	22,0	39,1
<b>UE-15</b>	<b>131619</b>	<b>40,6</b>	<b>167197</b>	<b>2,0</b>	<b>6767</b>	<b>4,3</b>	<b>17,4</b>
<b>UE-27</b>	190427	44,0	185748	2,2	15717	7,9	19,5
<b>New MS 2004</b>	38301		11934		3776,1		
<b>UE-25</b>	169920		179131		10543,1		

Source: European Commission, *Agricultural Situation in the Candidate Countries*, Country Reports,

July 2002.

## Annex 2: Multifunctional Agriculture



“The key elements of multifunctionality are i) the existence of multiple commodity and non-commodity outputs that are jointly produced by agriculture ; ii) the fact that some of the non-commodity outputs exhibit the characteristics of externalities or function poorly.” OECD (2001).

### Annex 3: Farm structure in the Czech Republic( use of agricultural land ) by type and size ( 1998 )

Category	Number of entities	000 ha	%	Average size of holding (Ha)
Physical persons *	32365	850	23,7	26
Legal persons	2146	1452	40,6	677
Cooperatives	875	1235	34,5	1411
<b>Others</b>			<b>1,2</b>	

\*Registered as farmers

### Size structure of agricultural farms (1998 )

Size of farms	Number of farms		Land	
	Total	%	Ha	%
- 10 ha	12,812	49,4	64,044	1,8
11- 50 ha	8,271	31,9	182,548	5,1
51- 100 ha	1,320	5,1	92,556	2,6
101 – 500 ha	1,575	6,1	369,812	10,3
500- 1000 ha	762	2,9	566,325	15,8
1001- 2000 ha	781	3,0	1,108,973	31,0
Over 2000 ha	403	1,6	1,196,850	33,4
<b>Total</b>	<b>25,924</b>		<b>3,580,850*</b>	

\* Total is less than total agricultural land due to exclusion of family gardens

Source : Data from the Agricultural Association

### Development of the entrepreneurs' structure in the Czech Republic Agriculture

	No. of business entities	The farm land		Average size of the farm land (ha)
		ha	%	
Legal persons total	2 974	2 654 236	73,0	1 000
Of which: co-operative farms	698	987 792	27,2	1 466
Companies - total	2 110	1 628 817	44,8	886
Of which: - companies Ltd.	1 448	788 234	21,7	631
- joint-stock companies	662	824 482	22,7	1 488
Other legal persons	166	37 827	1,0	267
Physical persons- total	35 446	982 816	27,0	29
<b>SUMMARY</b>	<b>38 420</b>	<b>3 637 052</b>	<b>100,0</b>	<b>99</b>

Sources: Data from the Agricultural Association

#### Annex 4: Typology Interest Groups - Institutional Change and EU accession

Association	Place in APC*	Identification	Type of association	Territorial differentiation	Temporality
<b>CAC</b>	<i>Core member: high profile</i>	Legitimizer Unifier	Western type of regionalized semi-public agency Institutional Copying	Local : eurosceptic National: euro-pragmatic	Bifurcation during accession process (T2)
<b>AA</b>	<i>Core member insider</i>	Modern European Farmers Entrepreneurs <i>Zemedelci</i>	Transformed association: form post-comm to a western type of lobby	Lobby group at national level	Change during T1 Change during accession process (during T2)
<b>APF</b>	<i>Ideological Outsider, Potential Insider</i>	Modern European Farmers Entrepreneurs <i>Ronlici</i>	Institutional Copying	Implemented at local level Local and national pro-European Anti-communist	Bifurcation after accession to the EU ( T3)
<b>Young F</b>	<i>Periphery insider</i>	Modern European Farmers Entrepreneurs	Institutional Copying	---	Created during T1
<b>Pro-Bio</b>	<i>Niche insider</i>	'Alternative' Farmers	New structure, created by Ministry	---	T1
<b>VUZE</b>	<i>Active insider</i>	'Norm entrepreneur'**	Transformed into Think tank	---	Gradual Change ?... ( <i>incomplete</i> )

\*agricultural policy community, \*\* Dorota Dakowska

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## Endnotes

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<sup>1</sup> In this paper, we refer to the notion of ‘transformation’ instead of transition i.e. to processes through which are introduced new elements combining adaptations, rearrangements, permutations and reconfiguration of institutional pre-existing forms. David STARK (1992), « Path Dependence and Privatization Strategies in East Central Europe”, *East European Politics and Societies*, (6)1, winter, p.22. For a critical approach of transitology: Michel DOBRY (2000), « Les voies incertaines de la transitologie – Choix stratégiques, séquences historiques, bifurcations et processus de path dependence», *Revue française de science politique*, vol. (50), 4-5, August - October pp. 585- 613.

<sup>2</sup> Johan Olsen (2002) compares different uses of the term Europeanization and the use of the notion of ‘Europe’ with reference to the European Union and its members. He argues that this understanding of the europeanization dynamics can be quite limited. However, EU integration is currently the core project on Europe. Having in mind this, by using the term ‘Europe’, we would analyze the European Union, in terms of judicial pressure, soft adjustment and discourse, as the main frame of reference for this paper.

<sup>3</sup> For a definition, see below.

<sup>4</sup> For a critical assessment of literature on social capital : Dimitrina MIHAYLOVA (2004), *Social Capital in Central and Eastern Europe, A critical assessment and Literature Review*, Policy Studies Series, CEU, Budapest.

<sup>5</sup> For an overview of the policy network literature, see MARSH, David and R.A.W. Rhodes (eds), *Policy Networks in British Government* (1992), Oxford, Clarendon Press.

<sup>6</sup> Usages are defined as “practices and political interactions which adjust and redefine themselves by seizing the EU as a set of opportunities be they institutional, ideological, political or organizational” (Jacquot and Woll 2004).

<sup>7</sup> C. Radaelli, “Whither Europeanization? Concept Stretching and Substantive Change”, European Integration on line Papers (IPO), 4:8 2000. <http://eiop.or.at/texte/2000-008a.htm>. Other more restrictive definitions have also been put forward to highlight the incremental process (Ladrech 1994) and its interactive dynamics (Bulmer, Burch 2000; Bulmer, Lequesne 2002). It can be a source of pressure for policy change, according to Risse, through the process of ‘fit’ or ‘misfit’ between European and domestic policies (Green Cowles, Risse, Caporaso 2001). However, to a great extent, this model insists on legal frameworks and does not take into account the role of actors in the process (Jacquot, Woll 2003).

<sup>8</sup> Sredecsky, Plzen, Olomouc, Pardubicky and Hradec Kralove.

<sup>9</sup> Ministry of Agriculture of the Czech Republic (2003), *Summary Report*.

<sup>11</sup> Within the meetings at the Council of Europe, these conferences have been organized by COPA-COGECA.

<sup>12</sup> Recently the Employers Group of COPA – GEOPA – also joined the confederation.

<sup>13</sup> Until 1980s when the European Farmers Coordination (CPE) was included in the dialogue.

<sup>14</sup> Project organized within the agreement concerned, COPA-COGECA and two consultancy agencies, with in the framework of the “Business Support Programme”, which organized exchange programs, and foresaw the unification in one body of all the general professional associations in each post-communist country, Sabine SAURUGGER (2003), *Européaniser les intérêts ? Les groupes d’intérêt économiques et l’élargissement de l’Union européenne*, Paris, L’Harmattan.

<sup>15</sup> Interview with Dominique Souchon, Director for Strategies, COPA-COGECA, June 2004.

<sup>16</sup> *Zemedelec* and *rolnik* in Czech have different connotations and express different representations of the image of a farmer.

<sup>17</sup> “The key elements of multifunctionality are i) the existence of multiple commodity and non-commodity outputs that are jointly produced by agriculture ; ii) the fact that some of the non-commodity outputs

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exhibit the characteristics of externalities or function poorly.” OECD (2001), *Multifunctionality: Towards and Analytical Framework*, Paris, Chapter 2, 2.2.1.

<sup>18</sup> Interview with the AA representative in Prague who asked to stay anonymous, 2002.

<sup>19</sup> Because of a limit in hectares for companies eligible to receive farmers’ financial support.

<sup>20</sup> Interview with Michal Pospisil, Secretary of the APF, Brussels, December 2003.