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“European Accession and Democratic Consolidation: EU Aid to Developing Democracy in the Czech Republic and Slovakia”

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Introduction

In May 2004 eight Central and Eastern European Countries (CEECs) joined the European Union. In the years before EU accession their societies underwent considerable changes, partly guided by the prospect of EU membership. By linking membership in the Union to the fulfilment of certain criteria, the European Union tried to support the CEECs in their transition to liberal democracy¹. In addition to conditionality, the Union made use of the provision of financial aid to guide and support the countries in their reforms.

During the enlargement process the EU has applied several means at its disposition to influence the CEECs in order to support the consolidation of democracy in Central and Eastern Europe (CEE). Already in 1993 the European Council of Copenhagen set up criteria of formal democracy which had to be fulfilled. In the years which followed the Union elaborated its democratic conditionality, to include criteria of substantive democracy². In this paper I will examine the influence of the EU accession process on the democratic consolidation of the CEECs by focusing on three domains of deeper democracy: the fight against corruption³, the development of civil society, and the promotion of media independence.

A first part of my analysis focuses on the salience of democratisation in the enlargement process of two CEECs – the Czech Republic and Slovakia. After a short elaboration on the democratic developments in both countries, I take a closer look at how the EU has handled the topic of corruption, civil society and media in their accession process. An analysis is presented of the Unions principle tools of influence (Regular Reports, Short and Medium Term Priorities and Objectives, and PHARE financial aid projects).

In a second part I elaborate on the importance of national politics in defining the scope of EU influence during the accession process. The Czech and Slovak policies on corruption, civil society and media have determined to a considerable degree the developments within these domains in the years of EU accession. In this paper I present an analysis of the Czech and Slovak government programmes between 1998 and 2004, as well as an analysis of the manifestoes of the Czech and Slovak parties in parliament in the same period. These analyses allow me to draw conclusions on the domestic salience

¹ For a comprehensive overview of the motivations behind the Eastern enlargement process, see De Ridder *et al.* 2008.

² According to Kaldor and Vejvoda (1997) the process of democratic consolidation can be split up in two major levels: the formal level of democracy and the substantive level. The first implies the institutionalisation of democratic rules and procedures, which leads to the dissemination of new democratic rules, institutions, procedures and laws. Substantive democracy then concerns the practical implementation of formal democracy. It implies the deep entrenchment of democracy in a society, making democracy to endure as “the only game in town” (Linz and Stepan 1996: 5).

³ For a more extensive analysis of the influence of the EU accession process on the fight against corruption in the Czech Republic and Slovakia, see De Ridder 2009.

of fighting corruption, developing civil society and enhancing media independence in the period of EU accession.

In a final part I present preliminary conclusions on the dynamics which explain the developments in fighting corruption and developing civil society and media independence during the EU accession process of the Czech and Slovak Republics. In a later stage a further analysis of my data will allow me to draw more concrete and profound conclusions on the impact of the EU accession process on the consolidation of democracy in Central and Eastern Europe.

Consolidation of democracy in the Czech Republic and Slovakia during EU accession: the facts

In the years following the fall of the Berlin wall, the Central and Eastern European societies underwent fundamental changes. Besides a turnover in their economy, the different countries witnessed diverging developments with regard to their democratic consolidation. In order to reflect the democratic developments with regard to corruption, civil society and media in the Czech Republic and Slovakia during the years of EU accession, we use the different data sets elaborated by Transparency International, the World Bank and Freedom House.

Corruption in the Czech Republic and Slovakia

The most frequently used data-set on corruption is provided by Transparency International (TI). Since 1994 the civil society organisation draws up a ranking of different countries based on their level of corruption. The TI Corruption Perception Index is based on data sources measuring the overall extent of corruption in the public and political sectors (Transparency International 2007). Each country in the index is assigned a value between 0 and 10. The lower the level of corruption, the higher the value assigned.

A second data-set on corruption is offered by the World Bank. Its Worldwide Governance Indicators research project provides data on six aggregate governance indicators on 212 countries and territories, covering the years 1996 to 2006. One of the governance dimensions included in the study is control of corruption, which measures “the extent to which public power is exercised for private gain, including petty and grand forms of corruption, as well as ‘capture’ of the state by elites and private interests” (Kaufmann *et al.* 2008 : 10-11). Each country is assigned a percentile rank, which indicates the percentage of countries worldwide that rate below the selected country. Higher values thus indicate better governance ratings (World Bank 2008a and 2008b).

A third data-set on corruption is provided by Freedom House. Its Nations in Transit study analyses the progress of democratic change in 29 countries. Data are provided on seven democratic categories, including corruption. Numeric ratings are assigned based on a scale of 1 to 7, with 1 representing the highest and 7 the lowest level of democratic progress. In addition to TI, the World Bank and Freedom House, other data sources on corruption can be found. They have however not been included in this paper for reasons of countries covered and/or data accessibility.

The different data-sets on corruption offer us the following ratings on the levels of corruption in the Czech Republic and Slovakia in the years of their accession process⁴:

⁴ We have chosen 1998 as the year in which the accession process started. In this year some of the Unions principle tools of influence (Regular Reports, Short and Medium Term Priorities and Objectives) became operational. In addition the PHARE financial aid programme was reoriented in 1998 from a ‘demand-driven’ programme - in which the CEECs established the priorities for financial assistance - to an ‘accession-driven’ programme - which focused entirely on

Table 1: Level of corruption in the Czech Republic and Slovakia in 1998 and 2004

	Year	World Bank Rating	Transparency International Rating	Freedom House Rating
Czech Republic	1998	67,50	4,80	/
	1999	/	4,60	3,25 ⁵
	2000	64,10	4,30	/
	2001	/	3,90	3,75
	2002	68,00	3,70	3,75
	2003	68,90	3,90	3,50
	2004	66,50	4,20	3,50
Slovakia	1998	57,30	3,90	/
	1999	/	3,70	3,75
	2000	63,10	3,50	/
	2001	/	3,70	3,75
	2002	60,20	3,70	3,25
	2003	66,50	3,70	3,25
	2004	69,40	4,00	3,25

When taking a closer look at the developments in both countries we get a mixed picture. When we compare the level of corruption in the Czech Republic in 1998 with the level in 2004, little change can be noticed. The state of corruption at the time of acceding the European Union did not improve in regard to the period before the EU membership negotiations started. To the contrary, the TI, World Bank and Freedom House indexes all show a small deterioration of the Czech corruption record in the years in question.

In Slovakia the corruption record developed differently in the years of EU accession. Starting off worse than the Czech Republic, Slovakia has been able to book some success in its fight against corruption. The three corruption indexes indicate that the level of corruption in the Slovak Republic was lower in 2004 than in 1998. As a result the level of corruption in Slovakia in 2004 came close to that of the Czech Republic in the same year.

Civil society in the Czech Republic and Slovakia

To assess the development of civil society in the Czech Republic and Slovakia, we rely on data offered by Freedom House. Its Nations in Transit study includes civil society as a democratic category to which it assigns a ranking. A comparison between the Czech Republic and Slovakia provides us with the following data:

assisting the candidate countries in their accession preparations. Although the accession negotiations for Slovakia started only on 15th February 2000, the Unions tools were already operational. The Czech Republic belonged to the first group of candidate countries, which started their accession negotiations on 31st March 1998. Both countries joined the European Union on the 1st of May 2004, which marks the end of their accession process.

⁵ Freedom House assigns its first value on the level of corruption in the Czech Republic and Slovakia in 1999. No value is available for 1998.

Table 2: Level of civil society development in the Czech Republic and Slovakia in 1998 and 2004

	1998	1999 - 2000	2001	2002	2003	2004
Czech Republic	1,50	1,50	1,50	1,75	1,50	1,50
Slovakia	3,00	2,25	2,00	1,75	1,50	1,25

Source: Freedom House – Nations in transit study

The development of civil society in both countries during the EU accession period shows significant variance. The Czech Republic had a well functioning civil society at the time it was acknowledged as a candidate country. This did not change throughout the accession process. Slovakia on the other hand started of much worse, but underwent radical changes before joining the Union in 2004. The most fundamental change took place between 1998 and 1999-2000. By the time Slovakia joined the Union, the development of its civil society was assessed more positively than in the Czech Republic.

Media independence in the Czech Republic and Slovakia

In order to assess the level of media independence and its evolution over time in the Czech Republic and Slovakia, our analysis uses the numerical ratings provided by the Freedom of Press study drawn up by Freedom House. Since 1980 Freedom House has collected data on press freedom in an increasing number of countries all over the world. From 1980 until 1993 the press in each country was rated by categories, being “free”, “partly free” or “not free”. Since 1994 the study on freedom of the press contains numerical data, which allows for comparative analysis among the countries surveyed and facilitates an examination of trends over time. Based on the degree to which a country permits the free flow of news and information, it is assigned a rating between 0 (best) and 100 (worst). The number is assigned on the basis of a set of 23 methodology questions divided into three subcategories: the legal environment, the political environment and the economic environment. Including legal, political as well as economic criteria enables Freedom House analysts to provide an all-inclusive picture of the situation in which the media in each country operates. Countries scoring 0 to 30 are considered having free media, countries scoring 31 to 60 are considered having partly free media and countries scoring 61 to 100 are considered having no free media (info: <http://www.freedomhouse.org>).

Table 3: Level of press freedom in the Czech Republic and Slovakia in 1998 and 2004

	Year	Rating	Status
Czech Republic	1998	19	Free
	1999	20	Free
	2000	20	Free
	2001	24	Free
	2002	25	Free
	2003	23	Free
	2004	23	Free
Slovakia	1998	47	Partly free
	1999	30	Free
	2000	30	Free
	2001	26	Free
	2002	22	Free
	2003	21	Free
	2004	21	Free

Source: Freedom House – Freedom of the Press

In the Czech Republic we witness a slight deterioration of the freedom of the press in the years of EU accession. Starting off at a rating of 19 in 1998, the freedom of the Czech press worsened to 25, to end at 23 in 2004. In the overall period of EU accession the media inside the country has been assessed as being free.

In 1998 Freedom House assigned a numerical rating of 47 to Slovakia, which put the country in the category of partly free media. A big change for the better occurred in 1999, when Slovak press freedom received a rating of 30 and therefore was considered to be free. The situation continued improving during the EU accession negotiations. At the time of entering the Union in 2004 the media was assessed to be more free in Slovakia (21) than in the Czech Republic (23).

When we compare the ratings on corruption, civil society and media independence in the Czech Republic and Slovakia, and their changes during EU accession, we come across diverging developments in both countries. While the democratic records of Slovakia improved in the three democratic domains in question, the situation in the Czech Republic deteriorated or stayed the same between 1998 and 2004.

Table 4: Development in the democratic domains during the period of EU accession

	Fight against corruption	Civil Society Development	Media Independence
CZECH REPUBLIC	-	=	-
SLOVAKIA	+	+	+

Faced with these data and developments we are tempted to take a closer look at how the European Union has handled the question of democratic consolidation in the accession process of both countries. In what follows I present an analysis of the instruments at the disposal of the EU, focusing on their references to corruption, civil society and media independence. My analysis of the Unions tools of influence starts with the Commissions Regular Reports, followed by the Short and Medium Term Priorities and Objectives, to conclude with the PHARE financial aid projects.

Supporting democratic consolidation during EU accession: applying the tools

During the Eastern enlargement the European Union disposed of several tools to exert influence on the domestic politics of the CEECs. By linking membership in the Union to the fulfilment of certain criteria the EU has tried to guide the candidate countries in their democratic reforms. The basic (democratic) criteria drawn up in Copenhagen in 1993 have later on been detailed in the Pre-Accession Strategy. The latter contained several elements of conditionality which could provide the Union with a certain leverage on the domestic developments in the CEECs. Another tool used by the European Union to support and guide the countries in CEE was the provision of financial aid. In what follows I examine how the EU has made use of these tools to support the fight against corruption and the development of civil society and media independence in the Czech Republic and Slovakia.

Regular Reports

A first element in the Pre-accession Strategy, used by the European Union to influence the domestic politics of the candidate countries, were the Regular Reports published by the European Commission. These reports, drawn up annually since 1998, assessed the progress towards accession made by the CEECs. They were preceded in 1997 by an Opinion Report, in which the Commission gave a recommendation on the opening of the accession negotiations. The reports are unique in the Union's enlargement history, in the sense that they constitute a first active application of conditionality (Grabbe 2006: 13). By monitoring the progress made by each candidate country, the Union was able to differentiate between the various acceding countries and to influence internal developments through the ranking of the applicants (Grabbe 2006: 83). The different reports were made public, which increased the effect of naming and blaming.

In its Regular Reports the European Commission also assessed the state of corruption, civil society and media in the Czech Republic and Slovakia. The bulk of the references is to be found in the first chapter when the Commission reports on compliance by the candidate countries with its democratic criteria of accession. A smaller number of references is also to be found in the third chapter of the reports, which assesses the progress made by the candidate countries in taking over the *acquis communautaire*. The second chapters, addressing the economic criteria, do not include references to corruption, civil society, nor media independence.

Democratic conditionality

Corruption

In 1997 the first chapter of the Opinion Report on the Czech Republic and Slovakia both briefly mention the problem of corruption when reporting on the state of affairs in the civil service. A second small reference to corruption can be found in the general evaluation of the political criteria, where both reports point out to the necessity of intensifying the fight against corruption.

Where the Opinion Reports mention corruption in two single lines, the subsequent Regular Reports on both countries pay an increasing number of paragraphs to the issue of anti-corruption measures. The references to corruption in the Czech Regular Reports bear great resemblance with those in the Slovak reports. At times identical wordings are used to assess the situation in both countries.

In general the Regular Reports describe which steps have been taken by the national government in fighting corruption. Subsequently they identify the main obstacles which hamper an effective anti-corruption policy. In the course of the successive reports different topics are discussed when the Commission assesses the anti-corruption measures. Besides corruption and bribery, reference is made to the problem of money-laundering, fraud, economic crime, institutional theft and asset-stripping. The Regular Reports also mention the state of affairs in ratification of the several international conventions related to laundering, bribery and corruption, as well as briefly touch upon the perception of corruption by the public.

Reference to corruption can also be found in the Commission's assessment of the judiciary in the Czech and Slovak Republics. The Commission identifies the fact that the judiciary faces problems with regard to its independence and political neutrality, its weak performance in the fight against economic crime, and the lack of specialisation of judges and state prosecutors in the areas of economic crime, corruption and money laundering. Reference is made to the existence of a high level of corruption in the judiciary.

In the Opinion Report reference to the fight against corruption constitutes less than two percent of the description of the democratic situation in the Czech and Slovak Republic. In the subsequent years the attention for corruption grows, to reach a peak in the Czech Regular Report of 1999 and the Slovak reports of 2000 & 2001. The last reports on both countries dedicate almost 16 per cent of their description of democracy to the fight against corruption (see table 5).

Although extensive attention is paid to the fight against corruption, the largest part of the Regular Report evaluations contains a descriptive overview of the anti-corruption steps taken by the national government. The Commission points out that, in spite of some efforts undertaken, these do not provide a sufficient solution to the problem, since no major improvement can be found. Only rarely the Commission takes the issue a step further and details what exactly could be done or has to be done to tackle these problems. If the reports do touch upon future requirements, these remain mainly abstract in terms of 'stepping up efforts', 'improving law enforcement' and 'filling legislative gaps'. These recommendations are issued *ad hoc*, without a structural and well-defined approach towards necessary anti-corruption measures. In the end it is not clear what is expected to be done in the future by the domestic governments in order to comply with EU anti-corruption demands.

Civil Society

In the Czech Opinion Report no literal reference is made to the non-governmental sector. The report refers to the existence of freedom of association and freedom of assembly in the Czech Republic. Both freedoms are essential for the development of an active civil society, a link also made by the EU in its reference to the freedom of association. The Slovak Opinion Report on the other hand makes direct references to the state of civil society in its general introduction, where it calls out for a special focus on the establishment of civil society. The report also refers to the third sector when it takes a closer look at the country's executive powers, which are assessed negatively for seeking to extend its methods of exercising control over various sectors of civil society. As to the freedom of association and assembly, the situation in Slovakia is described less positively than in the Czech Republic. Some decisions of the legislative and executive powers in Slovakia seem to counteract the development of an active civil society. Both the Czech and Slovak Opinion Reports also contain indirect references to civil society when they assess the situation of the Czech and Slovak trade unions.

Parallel to the Opinion Report, the Czech Regular Reports pay little attention to the subject of civil society. References can be found in the 1998, 2001 and 2002 reports, which give an overview of the development of civil society, its funding, and the legal framework in which it operates. The bulk of the references to the third sector is purely descriptive. Two exceptions are to be found. The 1998 report notices that the non-governmental sector in the Czech Republic is not as developed as in a number of neighbouring candidate countries. And in the 2001 Regular Report the European Commission calls out to the Czech authorities to continue to develop a legal and fiscal framework which is favourable to NGO development and which promotes a responsible domestic donor culture. The subsequent 2002 report shortly mentions that some initial steps have been taken by the Czech authorities, without elaborating on their content.

For Slovakia direct reference to the state of civil society and NGO development can be found in the 1998-, 1999- and 2000-reports. As was the case for the Czech Republic they offer a brief description of the development of the third sector, its funding and the legislative framework which regulates its activities. In the Slovak reports more detailed attention is paid to the relation between civil society and the government.

Parallel to the Opinion Reports, the different Regular Reports on both countries provide information on the situation of Czech and Slovak trade unions. While the first Regular Reports on the Czech Republic (1999 & 2000) refer to the declining membership in the trade unions, the subsequent reports

focus on problems concerning trade union rights. As to the situation in Slovakia, the first Regular Report gives account of tensions in the social dialogue and tensions between the government and the Confederation of Trade Unions.

For the Czech Republic, as well as for Slovakia, the first two Commission reports (OR 97 and RR 98) pay more attention to civil society actors than the subsequent Regular Reports. One major exception is the Slovak Regular Report of 2000, which pays over 7% of its first chapter to the subject of civil society. While the entire reports themselves become more extensive over the years, this does not count for the attention paid to the subject of civil society. In half of the reports even less than two percent of the assessment of the democratic situation in the country is dedicated to the third sector (see table 5). These numbers suggest that civil society was not a mayor topic on the agenda of the Commission Reports.

As to the nature of the references, the bulk of the comments made on civil society consists of indirect references. The Commission elaborates more often on traits of individual civil society actors (e.g. trade unions) than she reports on the general situation in which the civil society finds itself. When civil society is mentioned in the different reports – directly or indirectly – the references are mostly purely descriptive. The European Commission gives an overview of the situation of the third sector inside the country. As was the case for corruption, she hardly ever takes the issues a step further by outlining what can or has to be done by the candidate country to improve the functioning of its civil society. This makes it difficult for the acceding countries to see how they can comply with the expectations of the European Union.

Media

The Opinion and Regular Reports on the Czech Republic and Slovakia refer to the freedom of expression and the state of affairs of the media inside the candidate countries. The Opinion Report on the Czech Republic acknowledges the existence of a pluralist media in the country. The same report however utters its concern with regard to the freedom of expression. This freedom is limited by a provision in the Criminal Code which prescribes a sentence of up to 2 years' imprisonment for defamation of the republic and its president. The report further criticizes the fact that the press is subject to outdated laws. At the end of the first chapter the European Commission presents a general evaluation of the democratic state of affairs inside the country. While the Czech Opinion Report acknowledges the republic as a democracy, the Commission mentions some issues which are a cause for concern. Weaknesses in the laws governing freedom of the press are included as one of the five problematic areas with regard to the state of democracy in the Czech Republic.

In the Slovak Opinion Report the Commission gives a description of the state of affairs of the media and freedom of expression inside Slovakia. The Commission mentions the fact that the public radio and television networks are considerably influenced by the government. The press is considered to be substantially varied, though the government-inclined "Slovenska Republika" receives substantial public finance.

All but one of the subsequent Regular Reports on both countries refer to the situation of the media in the Czech Republic and Slovakia. References to freedom of expression and the media are to be found in four out of five reports on the Czech Republic. In 1998 the Commission reports on an improvement of the freedom of expression by the decision to remove the section of the Czech Criminal Code prescribing prison sentences for defamation of the republic and the president. The reports issued in 2000, 2001 and 2002 all report on problems concerning the public service broadcaster Czech TV and the subsequent crisis in the Czech media, which revolved around political influence in the Czech media and a lack of independency. In 2001 the Commission calls for maintaining the spirit in which some legal changes have been taken in the aftermath of the crisis. This positive note at the end of this

report contrasts sharply with the tone of the subsequent 2002 report, which concludes that little progress has been made in tackling the lack of transparency and stability in the television sector.

For Slovakia, all of the five regular reports refer to the freedom of expression or the state of affairs of the media inside the country. The first reports refer to influence and control by the government over the public radio and television. The 1998-report does so in reference to the parliamentary elections which were held in the Slovak Republic in September 1998. The European Commission refers to a report of the OSCE, in which is concluded that State Television failed to fulfil its obligation to give a balanced picture of the 1998 election campaign and largely favoured the incumbent government.

While the 1998-report refers to cases of intimidation of journalists and media the subsequent two reports mention the fact that none have been reported. The 2001 report briefly concludes that there exist no particular problems with regard to the freedom of expression. In 2002 the report refers to a constitutional examination of the paragraphs of the Criminal Code which make defamation of the state president, the government and the constitutional court an offence. The last two reports no longer refer to control over or access to the media by the government and the opposition.

The Czech Opinion Report dedicated over six % of its chapter on democratic criteria to the subject of the media (see table 5). The subsequent reports, with the exception of the 2001-report, dedicate a more limited part of the chapter (between zero and 1,87%) to the media subject. In 2001 we have an increase of attention (up to 3,35%) because the report pays considerable attention to the crisis at Czech TV, which occurred at the end of 2000. In general the Slovak reports pay more attention to the subject of the Slovak media. The highest number of words dedicated to the media – 6,57% of the first chapter of the report – occurred in the 1999-report. This report includes more extensive references to the OSCE conclusions on the role of the media during the Slovak presidential elections.

References to freedom of expression and the media in the Czech 2000-report are purely descriptive. The other reports however offer a more critical appraisal of the state of affairs of the Czech media. In these reports the Commission points out to existing problems for the media and limitations or improvements to the freedom of expression. While at several occasions the Commission touches upon issues such as government control and intimidation of the media, the language used to report on the state of affairs of the Slovak media in the various Regular Reports is mainly descriptive. The words used to reflect on the situation of the media in Slovakia are less value-laden than those in the Czech reports, where the European Commission clearly depicts certain facts as limitations and problems to the freedom of expression and to the media. In general the language used to describe the situation of the media is more critical than the language used to refer to corruption and civil society development.

Table 5 : Reference to corruption, civil society and media in the first chapter of the Opinion Reports (OR) and Regular Reports (RR). Percentage of the total chapter dedicated to the relevant subject.

Czech Republic	OR 97	RR 98	RR 99	RR 00	RR 01	RR 02	Average
Corruption	1,87%	10,34%	18,77%	13,65%	11,12%	15,86%	11,94 %
Civil Society	4,07%	6,19%	0,29%	0,99%	1,78%	1,67%	2,50 %
Media	6,09%	1,87%	0,00%	1,12%	3,35%	1,11%	2,26 %
Slovakia	OR 97	RR 98	RR 99	RR 00	RR 01	RR 02	Average
Corruption	1,15%	6,58%	11,66%	17,33%	18,45%	15,86%	11,84 %
Civil Society	4,77%	5,30%	2,62%	7,24%	0,47%	0,39%	3,47 %
Media	3,85%	2,67%	6,57%	2,27%	0,49%	1,02%	2,81 %

When we compare the percentage of the first chapter of the Commission reports dedicated to the different democratic domains, we can conclude that corruption was highest on the agenda of the European Commission. Starting with a low percentage in the Opinion Reports, the topic received an ever increasing amount of attention in the subsequent Regular Reports. An inverse development can be noticed with regard to civil society development, where the first two reports expand more on the topic than the later reports do. The attention paid to media independence fluctuates over the years. The average attention paid to fighting corruption largely exceeds the attention paid to developing civil society and media independence.

When we compare the data on both countries, we see that an almost identical percentage of the first chapters of the Commission reports is dedicated to fighting corruption in the Czech and Slovak Republics. For civil society and media independence Slovakia received more attention, though with regard to the latter democratic domain the difference between both countries is minor.

Acquis conditionality

As mentioned some references to corruption and civil society are to be found in the third part of the Commission reports. This part assesses the progress of the candidate countries in complying with the *acquis communautaire*. The different chapters assess the progress made in legislative alignment and identify the gaps which remain in *acquis* adoption.

Corruption

Relevant with regard to the fight against corruption are the *acquis* chapters on free movement of services, free movement of capital, justice and home affairs and financial questions. All of the chapters report on the necessity of increased action in the domains of combating money laundering, fraud and corruption. The chapters on free movement of services and free movement of capital report *inter alia* on the state of affairs of the financial services supervision and the progress made in fighting fraud and money laundering. They also assess compliance with the EU Money Laundering Directive. The chapter on justice and home affairs repeats the necessity to undertake measures concerning the independence of the judiciary and the problems of accountability of the police as an important priority in the development of effective institutions free of corruption.

Civil Society

For the Czech Republic as well as for Slovakia no direct references to civil society and its development are made in the third part of the Commission Reports. Some indirect references to third sector actors (e.g. trade unions, professional associations, chambers, NGOs, ...) can be found in the chapters on education, training and youth (CZ), social policy and employment (CZ/SK), consumer and health protection (CZ/SK) regional policy and co-ordination of structural instruments (SK) and small and medium-sized enterprises (SK). The references to third sector actors are made in the context of *acquis* implementation and not with the aim of promoting the development of civil society as such.

Media

In the third part of the regular reports there is only one chapter relevant to the media: the chapter on culture and audiovisual policy. The principle aim of the media-related EU legislation in this chapter is to guarantee an effective and smooth functioning of the European single market, as well as promoting the European audiovisual sector. The *acquis communautaire* contains no provisions on issues of media independence. Therefore no references to media independence could be found in the third chapters of the Regular Reports on the Czech Republic and Slovakia.

Reference to corruption, civil society and media independence in the third part of the Regular Reports is considerably smaller than the attention paid to the subject in the first parts, which assess the democratic progress of both countries (see table 6). While references to corruption in the third

chapters are relevant with regard to fighting corruption, those to civil society actors are of no meaning with regard to the development of an active third sector. References to media independence are even nonexistent in the third chapters.

Table 6: Reference to corruption, civil society and media in the third part of the Opinion Reports (OR) and Regular Reports (RR). Percentage of the total chapter dedicated to the relevant subject

Czech Republic	OR 97	RR 98	RR 99	RR 00	RR 01	RR 02	Average
Corruption	3,29%	5,37%	5,70%	4,83%	4,02%	4,08%	4,55 %
Civil Society	0,82%	0,81%	0,54%	0,74%	0,48%	0,31%	0,62 %
Media	0 %	0 %	0 %	0 %	0 %	0 %	0 %
Slovakia	OR 97	RR 98	RR 99	RR 00	RR 01	RR 02	Average
Corruption	2,37%	4,47%	5,24%	4,64%	4,20%	4,05%	4,16 %
Civil Society	0,94%	0,25%	0,50%	0,59%	0,57%	0,92%	0,63 %
Media	0 %	0 %	0 %	0 %	0 %	0 %	0 %

A quick comparison of tables 5 and 6 reveals the relative importance of both report chapters for promoting substantive democracy. The first chapter, assessing compliance with democratic criteria, is most relevant. While the third chapter bears meaning with regard to the fight against corruption, the obligation of taking over the *acquis communautaire* has no influence on the development of civil society and media independence in both candidate countries.

Short and Medium Term Priorities and Objectives

The Short and Medium Term Priorities and Objectives are council decisions which, which form part of the Accession Partnerships. They highlight the priority areas which had to be addressed by the candidate countries in order to prepare for accession. They determined for each country individually the particular needs on which pre-accession assistance would be targeted. The documents established explicitly the achievement of the objectives as conditioning the degree of financial assistance granted. A separate chapter on conditionality even mentioned that failed progress in implementing the accession partnership could lead to a decision by the Council on the suspension of financial assistance (Council of the European Union 1998a: 0044). The Short and Medium Term Priorities and Objectives were expected to influence the dynamics of the negotiating process with the different CEECs.

Short and Medium Term Priorities and Objectives have been drawn up for the Czech and Slovak Republics in 1998, 1999 and 2002. In line with the Copenhagen Criteria the Council decisions contain political, economic, *acquis*- and administrative criteria. For the Czech Republic a total of 254 priorities and objectives has been set up. For Slovakia a total of 287 were drawn up. The bulk of the priorities and objectives was linked to the third Copenhagen criteria, the obligation of taking over the *acquis communautaire*. The number of priorities and objectives with regard to the second, third and fourth Copenhagen Criteria is comparable for the Czech and Slovak Republics. For Slovakia a double number of political priorities has been drawn up with regard to the Czech Republic.

Table 7: Total number of priorities and objectives drawn up for the Czech Republic and Slovakia

	Political criteria	Economic criteria	Acquis criteria	Administrative criteria	TOTAL
Czech Republic	13	20	204	17	254
Slovakia	25	23	223	16	287

The fact that the number of acquis-related priorities largely outnumbers the political ones is of importance to the promotion of democracy. As we have seen in the description of the regular reports, the obligation of taking over the *acquis communautaire* proved to be a weak to powerless tool to promote democratic consolidation in the candidate countries. The *acquis* criteria was only relevant for the fight against corruption, while issues of civil society development and media independence were only covered by political conditionality.

The same can be noticed when we take a closer look at the Short and Medium Term Priorities and Objectives. Corruption-related issues were mentioned as *acquis* objectives, as well as covered by political criteria, while media and civil society were only mentioned as democratic priorities. For both countries corruption has been identified literally in each of the council decisions as an area of urgent attention. Additionally several corruption-related issues, in line with those identified in the Regular Reports (public procurement, bankruptcy laws, independence of the judiciary, financial control, money laundering, ...), were marked as priority areas which required immediate action by the candidate countries. For the Czech Republic civil society has never been identified as an area of urgent attention. For Slovakia one reference to the third sector is made in 1998, where the council identifies the strengthening of NGOs as a medium-term priority. The number of references to media independence is the same for the Czech Republic as for Slovakia. The 1998 Short and Medium Term Priorities and Objectives on both countries contain each one reference to the strengthening of media independence as a medium-term political priority.

Table 8: Reference to corruption, civil society and media independence in the Short and Medium Term Priorities and Objectives, drawn up for the Czech Republic and Slovakia

CZ	Democratic domain	Priority or Objective
1998	Corruption ⁶	- Develop policy and implement reform in regard to organised crime and corruption
	Civil society	/
	Media	- Strengthening of laws which guarantee press freedom
1999	Corruption	- Implement policy on organised crime, corruption and economic crime; ratify the OECD convention on bribery; sign the European criminal law convention on corruption - Continue the fight against organised crime and corruption
	Civil society	/
	Media	/
2002	Corruption	- Pursue efforts to more effectively fight against corruption and economic crime - Establish a framework for cooperation between different law enforcement agencies, especially concerning the fight against financial crime and corruption
	Civil society	/
	Media	/

⁶ Only those priorities and objectives which refer directly to the fight against corruption have been included in the table. Indirect references (e.g. to the independence of the judiciary, legislation on public procurement, bankruptcy laws, financial control, money laundering, ...), have been left out.

SK	Democratic domain	Priority or Objective
1998	Corruption	- Fight organised crime and corruption
	Civil society	- Further steps to foster and strengthen the functioning of the institutions of democracy, non-governmental organisations (NGOs), independence of the media and the policies and institutions protecting the rights of minorities
	Media	- To foster and strengthen the independence of the media (in particular radio and television)
1999	Corruption	- Ratify the European Convention on money laundering, the European criminal law convention on corruption and the OECD Convention on bribery - Continue the fight against organised crime and corruption
	Civil society	/
	Media	/
2002	Corruption	- Step up the fight against corruption and economic crime, in particular ensure the timely and effective implementation of the action plan to combat corruption
	Civil society	/
	Media	/

Financial aid

A third instrument used by the EU to support the CEECs in their transformation to liberal democracy was financial and technical assistance. In 1989 the OECD set up a major project of financial aid, known as PHARE (*Pologne, Hongrie: aide à la Reconstruction Économique*). The coordination of the PHARE programme was assigned to the European Commission. Taking into regard the amount of financial aid, the PHARE programme had great potential for influencing the CEECs (Smith 2004: 70ff).⁷

The financial assistance not only provided a stimulus for the massive reforms which had to be carried out, but in addition the granting of financial aid was linked to the fulfilment of certain democratic criteria (Smith 2004: 70-71). To be eligible for the financial support, five political conditions had to be met: commitment to the rule of law, respect for human rights, the establishment of multi-party systems, the holding of free elections, and the implementation of economic liberalisation. This conditionality formed the basis on which financial support was provided, at least on paper. The democratic criteria linked to the PHARE Programme were mainly criteria of formal democracy. Fulfilling the Short and Medium Term Priorities and Objectives however was a prerequisite for receiving financial help. Since these documents mention corruption, and to a lesser degree civil society and media, as a priority area for both countries, stepping up efforts in these domains became *de facto* a condition for financial assistance.

The PHARE funds were distributed through several programmes, depending on the beneficiary countries involved. Most important were the *National Programmes*, which were developed for each candidate country separately and elaborated on the financial aid for the year in question. They focused on a limited number of key priorities, identified on the basis of the Regular Reports, the Short and Medium Term Priorities and Objectives and the provisions of the National Programme for the Adoption of the Acquis.

⁷ PHARE is only one of the three pre-accession financial instruments which the Commission developed to support the membership preparation of the CCs. In 1999 two additional financial instruments were created: ISPA and SAPARD. ISPA (Instrument for Structural Policies for Pre-Accession) focused on the improvement of the environmental and transport infrastructure, while SAPARD (Special Accession Programme for Agriculture & Rural Development) supported the agricultural and rural development in the CCs. Both structural instruments took effect from 2000, as a result of which PHARE no longer financed projects in these areas.

Corruption

In the framework of the Czech National Programmes, the Commission dedicated two projects – worth 4,10 M€ - solely to the fight against corruption. In a parallel way the European Union has provided financial help to the Slovak Republic to support its fight against corruption. Four projects, for an amount of 7,78 M€, have been dedicated directly and solely to the fight against corruption in Slovakia.

Civil Society

When analysing the PHARE financial aid allocated to the Czech and Slovak Republics, we come across several projects which have been dedicated to civil society. For both countries projects were elaborated to support the general development of the third sector in the country. They provide grants for the support of the sustainability of the non-profit sector or to improve the efficiency of the activities performed by civil society organisations. In the framework of the Czech National Programmes, the Commission dedicated four projects, worth 7,25M€, solely to the development of Czech civil society. For Slovakia only one project, for an amount of 2,50M€, was set up with the principle aim of supporting Slovakia's third sector.

Media independence

Under the PHARE Programmes the EU has elaborated several projects which involve the media in general, or media actors such as the press, television and radio. The inclusion of media (actors) in these projects however is never done with the principle aim of supporting the independence of the media. Nor for the Czech Republic, nor for Slovakia a single PHARE (sub-)project has been set up which was dedicated to supporting or promoting media independence inside the candidate country.

Table 9: PHARE financial aid dedicated to the Czech Republic and Slovakia to support the fight against corruption, the development of civil society and the promotion of media independence

CZECH REPUBLIC	Number of projects	Money allocated	Per cent of total amount
Total of PHARE projects elaborated under the Czech National Programmes (1998-2006)	200	380 M€	100%
Projects dedicated under the Czech National Programmes to support the fight against corruption	2	4,10 M€	1,08%
Projects dedicated under the Czech National Programmes to support civil society development	4	7,25 M€	1,91%
Projects dedicated under the Czech National Programmes to support the independence of the media	0	0 M€	0 %
Total of projects dedicated to development of consolidation in our three democratic domains	6	11,35 M€	2,99%

SLOVAKIA	Number of projects	Money allocated	Per cent of total amount
Total of PHARE projects elaborated under the Slovak National Programmes (1998-2006)	169	330 M€	100%
Projects dedicated under the Slovak National Programmes to support the fight against corruption	4	7,78 M€	2,36 %
Projects dedicated under the Slovak National Programmes to support civil society development	1	2,50 M€	0,76 %
Projects dedicated under the Slovak National Programmes to support the independence of the media	0	0 M€	0 %
Total of projects dedicated to development of consolidation in our three democratic domains	5	10,28 M€	3,12%

The provision of financial aid was one of the most powerful tools at the disposition of the EU to influence the domestic developments of the CEECs. An analysis of the projects dedicated to the Czech and Slovak Republics allows us to draw some conclusions. When we compare the PHARE projects elaborated for both countries, we find out that for both candidate countries an equal share of the PHARE funds was dedicated to support the three democratic domains. While for the Czech Republic 2,99% of its funds was dedicated to fighting corruption and supporting civil society development and media independence, for Slovakia 3,12% of the total PHARE funding was dedicated to these issues.

For both candidate countries projects have been elaborated to support the fight against corruption. For Slovakia a double number of projects (4/2) has been set up, worth almost double the amount of money (7,78 M€/4,10 M€). This makes sense when taking into regard the higher corruption rates in Slovakia compared to the Czech Republic during the period of EU accession.

Less logical seems the fact that the EU has dedicated more projects and money to the Czech Republic to support its civil society development, than it did to Slovakia. While Bratislava received 2,5 M€ to develop its third sector – granted through one sole project - Prague received trice the amount of money, spread out over four projects. This is remarkable when we take into account that civil society in Slovakia between 1998 and 2004 was much worse developed than in its neighbouring country. While for corruption the amount of money and number of projects dedicated to the candidate country seems proportional to the democratic development in the country, this is not the case for support to civil society development. In the latter case the European Commission did not proportionally diversify according to the level of development inside the acceding country itself.

With regard to supporting media independence we found out that nor for the Czech Republic, nor for Slovakia a single PHARE project has been elaborated which addresses the issue. Therefore we conclude that the financial aid provided to both candidate countries under the PHARE project has had no influence on the independence of the media in the Czech and Slovak Republics.

The power of national politics

When we assess the influence of the European Union on the democratic consolidation of its candidate countries, there is a meaningful domestic factor which has to be taken into account. Several authors (Schimmelfennig and Sedelmeier 2004 and 2005a; Vachudová 2001) point to the importance of Central and Eastern European domestic actors, which determine the level of compliance with EU demands. Schimmelfennig and Sedelmeier claim that domestic change as a result of complying with conditionality criteria set by an external actor is a costly operation for a target government. This follows the simple logic that, in case domestic change would not be costly, it would have been carried out without its formulation as a condition. A weighing up of the different costs experienced by the different domestic veto players, whose agreement is necessary to bring about domestic change, determines the compliance level with the required criterion (Schimmelfennig and Sedelmeier 2005a: 16-17).

The latter is particularly true for issues of substantive democracy. In these domains the European Union has, during the entire accession process, presented the CEECs with very little concrete criteria to comply with. In its Regular Reports, the European Commission has called upon the candidate countries to improve the situation, though never offered clear standards nor benchmarks. Therefore the acceding countries remained largely free to decide how to tackle the problems with regard to fighting corruption, developing civil society and enhancing the independence of the media.

These insights lead me to the decision to take a closer look at the salience of fighting corruption and developing civil society and media independence in the Czech Republic and Slovakia in the years of EU accession. In order to gain insight in the democratic policies of both candidate countries, I have analysed the Czech and Slovak government programmes, as well as the party manifestoes of the parties in parliament in both countries during the period of EU accession. For all documents a word count has been carried out of those parts dedicated to corruption, civil society and media independence. To get an idea of the proportional salience of these issues in the different programmes and manifestoes, the numbers of words dedicated to the three domains have been expressed in per cent of the total number of words of the entire programmes and manifestoes.

Government programmes

The importance of corruption, civil society and media independence in the Czech Republic and Slovakia is reflected in the government programmes of both countries. These programmes were submitted to the national parliament in order to receive an approval for the cabinet. The Czech Republic has had three different governments in the period of EU accession. After the fall of the Klaus Government at the end of 1997, the country was lead by a caretaker government for seven months. This cabinet was replaced by a new one in July 1998, with the appointment of Miloš Zeman as Prime Minister. He was in turn succeeded in July 2002 by Vladimír Špidla, who headed the government until after EU accession. In their programmes the latter two touch upon issues of corruption, civil society and media independence. The programme of the Tošovský government only mentions to fight corruption, but fails to refer to issues on civil society and media independence (see table 10).

Slovakia then has had two successive governments during EU accession. Both were lead by Prime Minister Mikuláš Dzurinda. The programmes of both governments include the issues of fighting corruption, developing civil society and enhancing media independence in the country.

Table 10: Reference to corruption, civil society and media independence in the Czech and Slovak government programmes

Czech Republic	Tošovský government	Zeman government	Špidla government	Average
Corruption	1,382 %	1,836 %	1,858 %	1,692 %
Civil society	0 %	0,288 %	1,073 %	0,454 %
Media independence	0 %	0,507 %	0,452 %	0,320 %

Slovak Republic	Dzurinda I government	Dzurinda II government	Average
Corruption	1,423 %	6,000 %	3,712 %
Civil society	1,573 %	0,675 %	1,124 %
Media independence	0,067 %	0,447 %	0,257 %

A first glance at the data shows that the issue of fighting corruption has been high on the political agenda in both countries. Fighting corruption however appeared to be more salient in Slovakia, than in the Czech Republic. While references to corruption remain the same in the Czech Republic, the attention for corruption issues in Slovakia grows considerably. Especially striking is the high level of attention paid to the subject by the second Dzurinda government, which dedicates six per cent of its programme to fighting corruption. These differences between both countries might explain the diverging development of the Czech and Slovak corruption records between 1998 and 2004.

The same conclusion could be drawn from the data on civil society development, in the sense that the topic has been more salient in the Slovak government programmes than in those of the Czech Republic. However, when comparing with the data on corruption, we find a diverging development with regard to the development of the democratic domain over the years. While the development of civil society becomes more important in the Czech programmes, the attention paid to the topic in the Slovak versions decreases. The biggest change in civil society development in Slovakia however took place between 1998 and 1999-2000. The Nations in Transit rating allocated to 1999-2000 marks an improved of 0,75 points in regard to the year 1998. In the subsequent four years before accession an annual improvement of 0,25 points is recorded. So the biggest improvement of Slovak civil society development coincides with the period in which the country pays most attention to the topic in its government programmes.

When we compare the issue of media independence in the programmes of both countries, we come to a different conclusion. Although the difference is minor, the topic has been more salient in the Czech Republic, than in Slovakia. When comparing this democratic domain to the two previous one, media independence proves to be the least salient of the three.

Party manifestoes

A similar analysis has been carried out on the manifestoes of the Czech and Slovak parties represented in parliament⁸ between 1998 and 2004. For the Czech Republic the period of EU accession was spread over two parliamentary terms. The first ran from July 1998 until July 2002, the second from July 2002 until August 2006. Between 1998 and 2004, the following parties have been represented in the Czech parliament:

ODS:	<i>Občanská Demokratická Strana</i>	Civic Democratic Party
ČSSD:	<i>Česká Strana Sociálně Demokratická</i>	Czech Social Democrats
KSČM:	<i>Komunistická Strana Čech a Moravy</i>	Communist Party of Bohemia and Moravia
KDU-ČSL:	<i>Křesťanská a Demokratická Unie – Československá Strana Lidová</i>	Christian Democratic Union - Czech People's Party
US:	<i>Unie Svobody</i>	Freedom Union
Koalice:	<i>Koalice</i>	Coalition

An analysis of their party manifestoes and the attention they pay to issues of fighting corruption, developing civil society and enhancing media independence, results in the following data:

Party	Year party manifesto	Corruption	Civil Society	Media Independence
ČSSD	1998	3,214 %	1,088 %	0 %
ČSSD	2002	0,755 %	3,178 %	0 %
ODS	1998	0,608 %	- 0,456 % ⁹	0 %
ODS	2002	3,449 %	0 %	0 %
KSČM	1998	1,835 %	3,018 %	0,420 %
KSČM	2002	0,747 %	4,846 %	0,479 %
KDU-ČSL	1998	5,109 %	1,067 %	0,168 %
US	1998	0,836 %	1,142 %	1,029 %
Koalice	2002	6,671 %	3,495 %	1,275 %

⁸ The Czech Republic has a bicameral parliament, consisting of a Chamber of Deputies and a Senate. For the analysis only the party manifestoes released for elections to the Chamber of Deputies have been used.

⁹ When a party proposes in its manifesto measures which hamper a further consolidation of the democratic domains, a negative percentage has been allocated.

Also in Slovakia the period of EU accession was covered by two legislative terms. The first electoral term run from October 1998 until October 2002, the second from October 2002 until February 2006. Between 1998 and 2004, the following parties have been represented in the Slovak parliament:

HZDS:	<i>Hnutie Za Demokratické Slovensko</i>	Movement for a Democratic Slovakia
KDH:	<i>Kresťanskodemokratické Hnutie</i>	Christian Democratic Movement
SNS:	<i>Slovenská Národná Strana</i>	Slovak National Party
SDK:	<i>Slovenská Demokratická Koalícia</i>	Slovak Democratic Coalition
SDKÚ:	<i>Slovenská Demokratická a Kresťanská Únia</i>	Slovak Democratic and Christian Union
SDL':	<i>Strana Demokratickej Lavice</i>	Party of the Democratic Left
SMK-MKP:	<i>Strana Maďarskej Koalície – Magyar Koalíció Pártja</i>	Party of the Hungarian Coalition
SOP:	<i>Strana Občianskeho Porozumenia</i>	Party of Civic Understanding
Smer:	<i>Smer</i>	Direction
ANO:	<i>Aliancia Nového Občana</i>	Alliance of the New Citizen
KSS:	<i>Komunistická Strana Slovenska</i>	Communist Party of Slovakia

An analysis of their party manifestoes and the attention they pay to issues of fighting corruption, developing civil society and enhancing media independence, results in following data:

Party	Year party manifesto	Corruption	Civil Society	Media independence
HZDS	1998	0,220 %	2,408 %	0,198 %
HZDS	2002	1,488 %	0,851 %	0 %
KDH	2002	5,429 %	0,928 %	0 %
SNS	1998	0 %	0,777 %	1,383 %
SDK	1998	1,159 %	1,728 %	0,680 %
SDKÚ	2002	2,496 %	1,289 %	0,103 %
SDL'	1998	1,512 %	4,111 %	0,471 %
SMK-MKP	1998	0,839 %	3,101 %	0 %
SMK-MKP	2002	6,176 %	0 %	0 %
SOP	1998	1,514 %	6,100 %	0 %
Smer	2002	5,249 %	1,686 %	0 %
ANO	2002	1,710 %	1,087 %	0 %
KSS	2002	0,944 %	0 %	0,590 %

In order to get an idea of the relative importance of corruption, civil society and media independence in the party manifestoes to the 1998 and 2002 elections, an average has been taken of the party manifestoes, proportioned according to the number of seats each party disposed of in parliament¹⁰ after the elections. This allows us to get an idea of the dedication of a legislature to the democratic domains in question.

¹⁰ Division of seats in the Czech parliament in 1998: ČSSD 74, ODS 63, KSČM 24, KDU-ČSL 20, US 19.

Division of seats in the Czech parliament in 2002: ČSSD 70, ODS 58, KSČM 41, Koalice 31.

Division of seats in the Slovak parliament in 1998: HZDS 43, SDK 42, SDL' 23, SMK-MKP 15, SNS 14, SOP 13.

Division of seats in the Slovak parliament in 2002: HZDS 36, SDKÚ 28, Smer 25, SMK-MKP 20, KDH 15, ANO 15, KSS 11.

Table 11: Dedication of the parliament to fighting corruption, developing civil society and enhancing media independence, based on an analysis of the manifestoes of the composing parties

	Time	Corruption	Civil Society	Media
Czech Republic	1998	2,191 %	0,836 %	0,165 %
	2002	2,452 %	2,647 %	0,296 %
	Average period of EU accession	2,322 %	1,742 %	0,231 %
Slovakia	1998	0,835 %	2,716 %	0,448 %
	2002	3,304 %	0,927 %	0,062 %
	Average period of EU accession	2,070 %	1,822 %	0,275 %

When taking a closer look at these data, some provisional conclusions can be drawn. When placing the analysis of the party manifestoes next to the analysis of the government programmes, some striking parallels are found.

The data on fighting corruption show an evolution parallel to the one we found after analysing the government programmes. While the attention to fighting corruption remains stable in the Czech Republic, interest in the topic grew considerably in Slovakia. This evolution confirms the development of the corruption records of both countries: while corruption remained stable in the Czech Republic, the situation improved in Slovakia.

As was the case for the government programmes, developing civil society has been more salient in the Slovak party manifestoes than in the Czech ones. The difference between both countries however is less outspoken when it comes to the party manifestoes. Again an evolution parallel to the conclusions of the government programmes can be noticed: while the attention paid to the topic of civil society in the Czech manifestoes grew over time, it decreases in the Slovak manifestoes. In the Slovak party manifestoes considerably more attention is paid to the subject in 1998 than in 2002. As seen above 1998 proved to be a decisive year for the development of Slovak civil society.

The analysis of the manifestoes with regard to media independence shows that the issue has been more salient in the Slovak documents compared to the Czech ones, but again the difference is only minor. Striking is the almost absence of the topic in the Slovak manifestoes to the 2002 elections.

When we compare the attention paid to the different democratic domains, we can see that - parallel to the government programmes - the topic of corruption is the most salient of the three. Civil society comes second, while attention to media independence has been minor in both countries.

Conclusion

During the Eastern enlargement process the European Union decided to support the CEECs in their transformation towards liberal democracy. The EU made use of several means to trigger domestic change in CEE and to guide the countries in their democratising reforms. The main instruments at the disposition of the Union were the use of conditionality (applied in the Regular Reports and Short and Medium Term Priorities and Objectives), and the provision of financial aid.

In my paper I have analysed how the Union has used these tools in the Czech and Slovak accession process in order to support democratic consolidation in the domains of fighting corruption, developing civil society and enhancing media independence. The EU has applied its means with a

varying intensity in view of supporting the different democratic domains. The European Commission has touched upon all three issues in its Regular Reports. But while the topic of corruption has been adequately covered in the Short and Medium Term Priorities and Objectives, this tool was used less intensively to support the other two domains. PHARE financial aid has been allocated to both countries to support the fight against corruption and to a lesser degree the development of civil society, while media independence has been void of financial support.

The domestic changes in an acceding country however may not be put down merely to European Union support. The developments in the CEECs during the Eastern enlargement can not be disconnected from the candidate countries' domestic policies, for the level of compliance with EU demands is highly determined by domestic politics. As Heather Grabbe has mentioned, the EU can provide the tools to bring about change, but 'these are of no use unless they are taken up by national leaders' (2006b: 3).

An analyses of the government programmes and party manifestoes of the Czech and Slovak Republic has allowed me to map out the domestic policies on corruption, civil society and media independence between 1998 and 2004. At times these data offer a valuable confirmation of the developments of corruption, civil society development and media independence in both countries during the EU accession process.

As mentioned before this paper constitutes a first presentation of my research results. A further analysis of my data is planned to get a deeper insight in the dynamics of democratic consolidation in the Czech Republic and Slovakia during EU accession. This will allow me to draw more profound conclusions on the impact of the EU accession process on the consolidation of democracy in the CEECs.

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