

*Europeanization of political parties and interest groups
in selected Eastern Partnership countries
and candidate states to the European Union*

The objective of this book is to present an in-depth theoretical and empirical analysis of Europeanization process with regard to domestic political, economic and civil society actors in countries that are not members of the European Union, do not have an official membership perspective, or those that do have a formal accession perspective but the latter is not politically credible. It is assumed that, despite similarities in terms of instruments of the European Neighbourhood Policy and enlargement policy, current candidates and neighbourhood (association) countries are subject to different forms, patterns and results of Europeanization in comparison with Central European countries that joined the EU in 2004 and 2007. These divergences result from the specificity of the domestic institutional context, both political and socio-economic, as well as from distinct character of incentives offered by the EU (association instead of accession or lack of credibility of the accession perspective). The research objective is to reflect on Europeanization patterns in different institutional contexts. It seems that the crucial question concerns the limits of Europeanization, as well as transformation of Europeanization impulses by domestic actors that are willing to use the EU resources in order to build their own position and pursue individual political and economic interests, while exploring additional sources of internal and international legitimization in the process. Finally, the aim is to pursue empirical verification of the adopted theoretical concept in a comparative perspective, while looking at Europeanization process of political parties and interest groups (business and civil society organizations) in selected countries.

The book is divided into three parts: one theoretical and two empirical.

The first part consists of two chapters of theoretical character. Chapter one outlines a broad theoretical perspective of external Europeanization in Eastern Partnership countries that do not have a candidate status but voice such aspirations, and in countries that are official candidates to membership, but where accession process is stalled. It deals with ambiguities of the Europeanization phenomenon and attempts to define it; it also deals with basic Europeanization mechanisms (conditionality and socialization) and their determinants in light of the institutionalist approach (rational choice and sociological institutionalism respectively). Moreover, the problem of effects of external Europeanization is analyzed, while looking at paradoxes or pathologies of Europeanization in the context of transformation and consolidation of hybrid political regimes that are typical for all the countries analyzed. Chapter two deals with the potential of the socialization approach in researching the EU impact in the process of external Europeanization. It features hypotheses regarding potential impact of various forms of transnational cooperation of political parties, business and civil society organizations on goals, strategies and actions that these actors pursue.

Parts two and three (chapters three – twelve) are dedicated to empirical verification of the actual patterns and results of external Europeanization. In the empirical parts each chapter is dedicated to one case study of political parties and interest groups respectively. Case studies concern three countries covered by the ENP and Eastern Partnership (Ukraine, Moldova, Georgia) and two candidate countries (Turkey and Macedonia). Two chapters in part one are of theoretical character.

Political parties and interest groups can be both objects and agents of Europeanization. It was assumed that socialization within transnational networks constitutes a potentially important mechanism of Europeanization (change). In case of political parties, socialization takes place during intensified cooperation within the European party federations or in the context of inter-parliamentary cooperation. Major dimensions of Europeanization (areas where effects of this process can be observed) include party programmes, organizational structures, strategies and behaviour. EU matters can, in the process of Europeanization, become an important aspect of domestic political game, but transnational cooperation can also be actively used by domestic actors to transfer local political conflicts to the European level. Europeanization of domestic political competition can take various forms,

depending on specific national conditions. These conditions notably include the role of parties in the national political systems (parties as networks of political and economic interests gathered around leaders and not arenas of aggregation and articulation of citizens' interests). Other aspects concern mutual relations of parties and public opinion and the question to what extent parties are Europeanization agents for citizens, or rather citizens are Europeanization agents for the political parties.

Transnational socialization networks of interest groups, both business and civil society organizations, include European platforms and business associations, but also formal institutions such as the Eastern Partnership Civil Society Forum. Europeanization concerns goals and mission of interest organizations, their structures and domestic strategies, both towards other organizations and institutions of the state. Patterns and effects of Europeanization are determined by the form of relations between the government and non-state actors (whether they are based on the autonomy principle or subject to political/ state control) and participation of organizations in local clientelistic networks. It is worth remembering that participation of interest groups in domestic public life and transnational networks crucially depends on resources at their disposal. In the countries analyzed these resources come mainly from the state or from foreign (European or American) donors, the latter being important agents of Europeanization.