

The Evolving Role of Central Europe in the European Union

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What was the role of European integration in economic transition?

- The Copenhagen conditions: market economy, capacity to cope with competitive pressures in the single market
- Washington Consensus built into conditionality
- The implicit *acquis communautaire* built for enlargement

Lessons since 2004

- EU influence dwindles on politically hot topics once the accession date is guaranteed – but compliance on laws and policies is surprisingly long lasting.
- Democratic transition is not necessarily linear or a one-way street.
- Democracy does not guarantee good governance or rule of law.

Lessons since 2004

- Transformation of economy and state depends on a self-sustaining dynamic between domestic reforms, the accession process and economic prospects (conditions absent in the Balkans and Turkey)
- Foreign direct investment is a powerful catalyst
- EU's transformative power depends on consistency and credibility, which diminish as political contestation grows
- Vital to resolve status questions and bilateral disputes before accession – but EU has not found a way to lay the ghosts of history to rest

Political challenges in many democracies

- An open international economy is opposed by populists who appeal to voters on the right who want protection and voters on the left who want economic justice.
- Economies need rule of law at a time when illiberal democracy and capitalist authoritarianism are rising.

Europa tak, ale jaka?

- What kind of Europe does Poland want? Divisions in elite and public opinion
- Rule of law crisis as an unexpected driver of integration?