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The Europeanisation of agri-environmental policy in Poland

Die Europäisierung der polnischen Agrarumweltpolitik

Anna Hadyńska

University of Birmingham, Edgbaston, Birmingham, UK

Abstract

This paper seeks to answer the following question: what are the impacts of European agri-environmental policy (AEP) on member states' policy patterns? The concept of Europeanisation is employed, as it relates to the adaptation of domestic policies and policy instruments to existing EU legislation. An analysis of the extent to which the European level of policy-making has affected the emergence and further development of the AEP in Poland will be undertaken. Additionally, the paper examines the way in which Poland has applied Agri-environmental Schemes (AESs) and what effects this has had on the relevant Polish institutions. Empirically, this research draws on semi-structured interviews with key administrative bodies and social actors involved in agri-environmental issues.

Key words

agri-environmental policy; Europeanisation; institutional adjustment; Poland

Zusammenfassung

Dieser Artikel befasst sich mit der folgenden Frage: Welche Auswirkungen hat die Europäische Umweltpolitik auf die Politik der Mitgliedstaaten? Hierfür wird das Konzept der Europäisierung eingesetzt, da es sich um die Adaption der nationalen Politik und der entsprechenden Politikinstrumente an die EU-Gesetzgebung handelt. Im Einzelnen wird untersucht, inwieweit die politische Entscheidungsfindung auf der Europaebene das Hervortreten und die weitere Entwicklung der polnischen Umweltpolitik beeinflusst hat. Des Weiteren werden die Art und Weise der Implementierung der Agrarumweltmaßnahmen sowie ihre Effekte auf die polnischen Institutionen analysiert. Empirisch stützt sich diese Forschung auf teilstandardisierte Interviews mit Schlüsselverwaltungsorganen und sozialen Akteuren, die mit Agrarumweltschutzaufgaben betraut waren.

Schlüsselwörter

Agrarumweltpolitik; Europäisierung; institutionelle Anpassung; Polen

1. Introduction

This study focuses on Poland's perspectives and argumentation for creating and supporting Agri-environmental Schemes. The AESs instrument, which relates to extensive production methods, including requirements for the protection and maintenance of natural landscapes, was initially recognised in Council Regulation (EEC) 2078/1992¹. In

light of this, the AESs' requirements that have been incorporated within two follow-up Rural Development Plans Regulations, (EC) 1257 (Articles 22-24) and 1698/2005 (Article 39), are examined.² This is an obligatory measure and, therefore, there exists great European pressure for governments to adjust. The investigation into factors affecting the development of domestic strategies towards the agri-environmental policy approach will be outlined. To what extent Poland responded to the adoption pressure, and how the transformation mechanism affected national institutional arrangements and policy-making will be assessed.

2. Area descriptions

2.1 Europeanisation as an analytical framework

Having explained the origins of AESs, one may proceed with arguing that the development and implementation of agri-environmental policy within domestic arenas should be understood in relation to the processes of both Europeanisation and domestication. On the one hand, this will explain how Europeanisation is driven at the national level, including negotiation, elaboration and implementation of AEP. On the other hand, it focuses on the way in which domestic actors affect the process of agri-environmental policy adaptation. For the purpose of clarity, the following meaning of Europeanisation is applied here: *The process of member states' adaptation to EU policy is understood as a mixture of the pressure exerted by European requirements and domestic factors responding to it.*

This paper disputes that the differences in adaptation strategies derive from domestic factors, thus the core assumption is: The Europeanisation of agri-environmental policy alters national political styles and structure, but prevailing domestic arrangements and factors affect the adaptation pattern, which is why the outcomes vary among member states.

Only recently have scholars addressed the Europeanisation of domestic policies (BÖRZEL, 2000; GOETZ and HIX, 2001; GREEN COWLES et al., 2001; KNILL, 2001; BULLER and GAMBLE, 2002). The majority of studies point to prevailing domestic institutions, practises, cultures and traditions as mediating factors for adaptation patterns (KNILL and LEHMKUHL, 1999; LADRECH, 1994). Thus, it is more

¹ OJ L 215 30.7.1992, p. 85. Regulation as last amended by Commission Regulation (EC) No. 2272/95 (OJ L 288 1.12.1995, p.35). Regulation rectified by Commission Regulation (EC) No. 1962/96 (OJ L 259,12.10.1996, p.7). The AESs provide financial support for farmers that maintain the natural heritage of agricultural land. The payments are provided to compensate for the income forgone while orienting agricultural production in a more environmentally-friendly direction. Farmers participate on a voluntary basis; thus, they receive

payments for providing environmental incentives and services exceeding the reference level of good farming practise.

² The Agri-environmental Schemes have been recently implemented under two Regulations; Council Regulation (EC) No 1257/1999 on the support for rural development from the European Guidance and Guarantee Fund (EAGGF) and Commission Regulation (EC) No 1750/1999 on the methods of implementation of Regulation 1257/1999 and their successor Regulations (EC) No 1698/2005 and 1783/2005.

'domestic adaptation with national colours' (RISSE et al., 2001: 2). This paper further develops this issue by showing whether and how European agri-environmental policy transforms domestic policies and institutions.

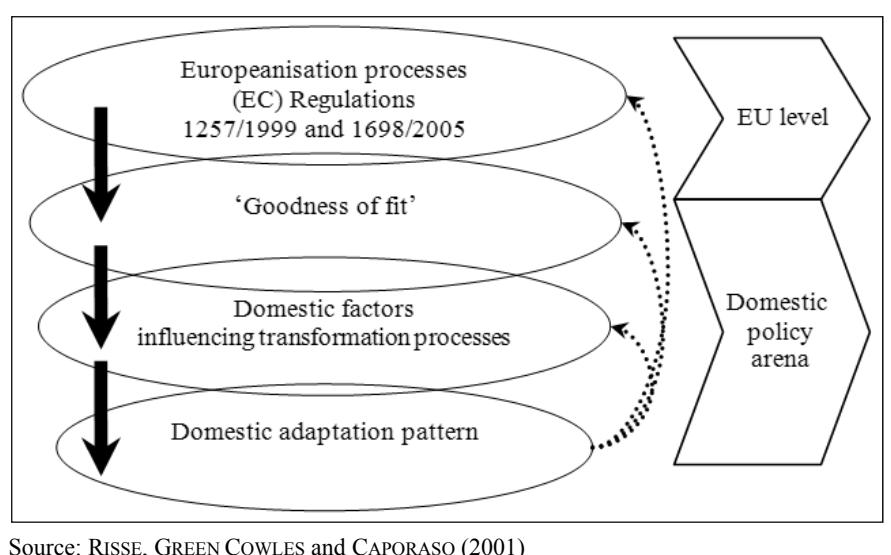
Following RISSE et al. (2001), the argumentation of this study will also apply the three dimensions of the explanatory model, namely the requirements deriving from EU policy, the level of incompatibility between existing domestic practises and policies, and finally the group of mediating factors prevailing in the national political and administrative arenas (see figure 1):

- Europeanisation at the EU level, identification of AESs requirements, including Regulations (EC)1257/1999 (Articles 22-24) and 1698/2005(Article 39).
- Goodness of fit: one needs to define 'mismatches' between the Europeanisation processes and national institutional arrangements to show the level of adaptation pressure that occurs in each country.
- Mediating factors: pre-existing national institutional arrangements and styles which matter for adaptation. Thus, it is crucial to identify intervening factors that impose structural changes upon the domestic arena. In this paper the following are considered: multiple veto points in the domestic structure; facilitating formal institutions; organisational and policy-making cultures; differential empowerment of domestic actors and social learning.

This three-phased approach, explained below, allows one to trace the impact of the Europeanisation mechanism on domestic adaptation change and to present its level. In this study, as with the majority of 'Europeanisation' studies, national adaptation is defined as institutional, procedural and policy transformation.

The notion of '*European adaptation pressure*' occurs when there is no compatibility between EU level institutional and policy arrangements and existing national practises. This paper concurs with KNILL and LENSCHOW (2001), as well as RISSE et al. (2001), that institutional compatibility of European and national settings must be taken into consideration in order to understand comprehensively the effects of European policies on domestic arrangements. It is well established that the bigger the gap of '*mis-fit*', the higher the level of domestic change it requires. Community legislation affects domestic policy-making. However, national policies and institutional structures respond to this factor; that is, they decide to what extent prevailing policy practises and structures will be transformed. The occurrence of '*mis-fit*' incompatibility between the European and domestic arenas is a conducive but not sufficient factor leading to change. The second set of circumstances causing adaptation pressure and which push for changes are facilitating factors (actors, institutions that react to the pressure) and a deficiency of hindering factors (domestic institutional veto points). Additional factors like the differential empowerment of actors, political and orga-

Figure 1. The link between Europeanisation and domestic change



Source: RISSE, GREEN COWLES and CAPORASO (2001)

nisational cultures, and finally policy learning are also taken into consideration.

Differential empowerment of actors

While the structural changes are made, power is distributed among political, social or economic actors. It is now generally recognised that '*Policymaking in virtually all fields takes place within the context of a particular set of ideas that recognize some social interests as more legitimate than others and privilege some lines of policy over others*' (HALL, 1993: 292).

BÖRZEL and RISSE (2000) state that '*mis-fit*' provides actors with new opportunities and constraints that lead to the reallocation of resources and empowerment at the domestic level. However, actors must have the ability to use the opportunities and avoid constraints. The authors distinguish two factors that affect national reform capacities (RISSE et al., 2001):

- *Multiple veto points* existing within domestic institutional structure may strengthen the actors with diverse interests to avoid constraints and to prevent adaptation.
- *Facilitating institutions* have the ability to supply material and ideational resources necessary to increase European opportunities and promote domestic adaptation.

The prevalence of multiple veto points and formal institutions dictate whether the '*mis-fit*' gives power to domestic actors, who then change domestic processes, policies and institutions.

Therefore, one of the potential bottlenecks holding back adoption of EU requirements is the opportunistic approach of '*...relevant policy actors and their relative power or influence in the decision-making process*' (LENSCHOW, 2002: 16).

In this regard, it is essential to identify veto players in domestic systems in order to define the expectations of institutional arrangements. Furthermore, the more power and actors within the political system the more difficult it becomes to achieve the domestic consensus or '*winning coalition*' required to undertake institutional transformation. The prevailing multiple veto points in the policy-making struc-

ture are expected to impede or slow down adjustment to Europeanisation pressures (RISSE et al., 2001; THIELEMANN, 2000). One also needs to consider political and organisational cultures that frame actors' behaviour.

Political and organisational cultures

The process of structural change may also be driven by organisational and political cultures, together with entrenched, shared understanding of a proper behaviour within a prevailing formal rule structure.

Policy learning

The empowerment of actors and redistribution of power resources do not necessarily lead to changes of interests and identities. It is argued here that Europeanisation may also provide changes through the process of learning. Policy learning may have a positive influence over institutional change by allowing greater adaptation and flexibility in an indirect manner. Indeed, it does not necessarily improve the formal institutional capacities (resources, staff, fiscal and legal powers), but rather on the '*softer side*' it enhances the policy-makers' abilities to understand, disseminate and process information (FLYNN and KRÖGER, 2003: 151).

Since the analytical framework presented above does not provide one with a complete explanation of the process and types of political change, one needs to focus upon new institutionalist theories (NI). It is widely accepted that these 'middle range theories' offer important insights into the functioning of EU polity (BULMER, 1998; HIX, 1994; PETERS, 1999). These theories also offer an explanation for the behaviour of actors, along with the role of institutions, and for this reason one knows what type of change can be expected. Hence, NI complete the empirical 'puzzle' and provides one with clarifications of the results obtained.

2.2 New-institutional approaches as supporting theories for understanding the Europeanisation mechanism

The entrenchment of Europeanisation in the theoretical approaches has to be considered in order to understand in what manner change occurs. In this regard, it becomes clear that mediating factors like multiple veto points, together with facilitating institutions and the redistribution of resources are deeply rooted in the actor-based rational institutionalism (RI) approach. Although multiple veto points and facilitating formal institutions influence political actors in opposite ways, both are well matched with a '*logic of consequence*' belief in utility-maximising actors and in set interests and preferences, which is characteristic of RI (RISSE et al., 2001). This approach is based on opportunity structures (institutions), which can be beneficial or constraining for self-interested actors. Institutions affect actors' strategies to obtain their interests, yet they do not impact the process of their formulation (ROSAMOND, 2003). The aims of the political actors are organised hierarchically, and their interests shape their preferences and institutions. Intervening variables, however, do not change the preference functions, but have an impact on their approach, which leads to the persuasion of those preferences. Building on HALL (1993) and KOELBLE (1995: 236), *'Institutions shape preferences and goals of actors in the decision-making process and, by distributing power among players, help*

shape the outcomes of this process'. Increasingly, institutional dynamics and continuity can be explained in view of existing various interests and strategic interactions (KNIGHT, 1992). Hence, all types of change, as well as the prevalence of the existing domestic patterns may occur, and it is hard to foresee beforehand which of these options will be undertaken in particular cases.

By contrast, the institution-based perspectives of sociological (SI) and historical institutionalisms (HI) refers to the incremental adaptation to changing institutional conditions, whilst discussing the issue of Europeanisation. These approaches are based on the logic of appropriateness according to which institutions offer actors a set of views and ideas. Actors are guided by a collectively-shared understanding of what constitutes proper behaviour in a given rule structure. That is, they are expected to fulfill social expectations rather than maximise their own demands (KOELBLE, 1995; MARCH and OLSEN, 1998; POWELL and DI MAGGIO, 1991). Therefore, change should be perceived from this perspective and one may predict the patterns of actors' behaviour (OLSEN, 1996). The adaptation patterns are characterised mainly by incremental and path-dependent changes, though well-entrenched processes are not challenged. Hence, domestic institutional arrangements take precedence over external pressure when explaining adaptation. Institutions endure over time, and *'It is only exceptional cases of fundamental performance crises or external shocks that the discrepancy between exogenous pressure and adaptive capacity becomes too big and old continuities are given up in order to create new continuities'* (KNILL, 2001: 22). In this sense, one may expect a low or high level of change. Thus, both the mediating factors of organisational and political cultures are 'thick' mediating instruments that shape actors' preferences by using 'the logic of appropriateness'. These factors, together with the issue of policy learning, relate to the sociological perspective of institutionalism. Last but not least, the issue of '*goodness of fit*' seems to particularly fit the assumptions of HI. Thus, it derives from the assumption that existing institutional structures and routines hold back straightforward adaptation to exogenous pressure merely because of the '*mis-fit*' between European and national procedures (KNILL, 2001).

The observations above indicate that NI theories provide one with an explanation of the type of changes that may be expected, i.e., incremental, gradual or fundamental transformation. Authors like BÖRZEL (1999, 2003), BÖRZEL and RISSE (2000), HÉRITIER (2001), RISSE et al. (2001), RADAELLI (2000) further advance this issue by identifying four levels of domestic change that may occur as a result of the Europeanisation process:

Absorption – European policies and ideas are integrated into the national polity. Thus, the process of change is seen as adaptation. Institutions are readjusted, even though existing policies and institutions are not fundamentally altered. A low degree of domestic change occurs.

Accommodation – Europeanisation pressure triggers the adaptation of existing processes, policies and institutions, but the essential features and underlying collective understanding is not changed. This may occur as a result of '*patching up*' new policies and institutions by adding new elements into existing ones without changing the latter, resulting in a modest/incremental degree of domestic change.

Transformation – This includes the replacement of present policies, processes and institutions with new, completely different ones. Thus, the existing ones are changed in a way that their essential features and underlying collective understandings are substantially modified. Thus, a high degree of domestic change takes place.

Inertia – No change occurs. This happens particularly when member states find that EU political architectures, choices and models are too dissimilar to those found at the domestic level. In the long-term, this should create a crisis that will evoke change.

The results of the empirical findings will show which type of change, defined above, have occurred in Poland with reference to the agri-environmental policy's implementation.

3. Methods

Empirically, this research draws on semi-structured interviews with key administrative bodies and social actors involved in agri-environmental issues. Based on the attitudes of respondents, the mechanism of the AES development, as well as administrative patterns within national arenas will be scrutinised. The timeframe of analysis encompasses the setting up and implementation of both EU Regulations 1257/1999 and 1698/2005.

In Poland, the Agri-environmental Schemes are implemented centrally and the scope of the programme is developed by the administrative body of the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development (Ministerstwo Rolnictwa i Rozwoju Obszarów Wiejskich, MARD). For this reason, interviews within the Department of Programming and Analysis (within the Rural Environment Section in particular) were carried out. At the national administration level, scientific enquiries were also made in the Ministry of Environment (Ministerstwo Środowiska, ME) and the Agency for the Restructuring and Modernisation of Agriculture (Agencja Restrukturyzacji i Modernizacji Rolnictwa, ARMA). Additionally, political actors including farm lobbying organisations, nature conservation NGOs such as the World Wildlife Fund (WWF) Poland and Germany, the World Conservation Union Office for Central Europe-Poland (IUCN), National Community of Birdlife International (Ogólnopolskie Towarzystwo Ochrony Ptaków), Nature Protectors Club (Klub Przyrodników) and the Polish Ecological Club (Polski Klub Ekologiczny) were interviewed. Finally, the representatives of scientific agri-environmental authorities, such as the Institute for Sustainable Development (Instytut Zrównoważonego Rozwoju, ISD) at the Life Sciences University of Poznań (Poznański Uniwersytet Przyrodniczy) and the Agricultural University of Warsaw (Szkoła Główna Gospodarstwa Wiejskiego) were interviewed.

4. Results and discussion

4.1 Poland: compliance deriving from resisted transformation

Poland is characterised by a centralised structure, hence the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development is responsible for the elaboration of the AES. In addition, the Agri-environmental Scheme is horizontal and applied throughout the country. The policy process related to the elaboration of

the AES constituted a real challenge for the Polish administration, as both the policy content, as well as the policy style were novel. Hence, the most remarkable transformation that will be shown in this section is that the Polish Agri-environmental policy is strictly rooted in the principles and political aims of the EU. Additionally, EU membership and the implementation of the CAP objectives within the domestic arena affect agriculture and the environment substantially.

4.2 The origins and development of Agri-environmental Scheme

Political changes towards the common market significantly influenced the agricultural structures within the ten new member states. Prior to a description of the origins and development of agri-environmental incentives, it is necessary to take into consideration that none of the measures concerning the rural environment existed, with the exception of designated nature protection areas³.

The development of the Polish agri-environmental policy prior to EU membership relates to policy-oriented learning. In 1997, the programme titled '*A case study in the Green Lungs Area of Poland*' was implemented, hence this instrument may be considered as the first agri-environmental scheme introduced in Poland⁴. The programme derived from a biodiversity and farming methods assessment, where various farm management packages were offered to farmers, and economic and monitoring measures were tested and scrutinised (METERA, 2003). Experience gained during the application of the four Polish Hungary Assistance for Structuring their Economies (PHARE)⁵ projects was used for the elaboration of the pilot AES under the Special Accession Programme for Agriculture and Rural Development (SAPARD).

Furthermore, the idea of providing agri-environmental incentives corresponding with the EU concept emerged with the establishment of the SAPARD programme. The concept of the introduction of payments for farmers under

³ National parks, landscape parks, nature reserves, etc.

⁴ By the consortium of IUCN Office for Central Europe and National Foundation for Environmental Protection, Avalon Foundation (NL), Veen Ecology (NL), the Institute for European Environmental Policy (UK).

⁵ ► PHARE 99 titled '*The development in Warmia-Mazury and Podkarpackie*' put into practise by the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development.

► PHARE 99 PHARE PL99/IB/AG/1 '*Preparation for the implementation of Common Agriculture Polity*' implemented by the The Agriculture Restructuring and Modernization Agency.

► PHARE PL/2000/IB/AG02, '*Institution building for rural development*' established by the Polish Ministry of Agriculture and German twinning partners, which referred to institutional issues and the implementation of agri-environmental programmes as well as afforestation.

► PHARE project '*Institution building for agri-environment and afforestation-Technical Assistance*' (PL 0006.02, EUROPEAID/113252/D/SV/PL under Financing Memorandum 2000, Poland National Programme 2000). The main assumption of the project was to disseminate information in the form of leaflets, brochures, films as well as training manuals concerning agri-environmental and afforestation programs in order to carry out training for agricultural advisors and administration staff and finally to train farmers (METERA, 2003).

the agri-environmental programmes was outlined in the strategic document '*The Coherent Structural Policy of Agricultural and Rural Areas Development*' (July 1, 1999), in which the guidelines for a sustainable development approach were comprehensively reflected. In addition, the strategy for the Polish operational programme for rural areas development, SAPARD, was set out in this document. The premise that agri-environmental programmes should be elaborated upon in order to assure the continuity of their funding was thus set (KARACZUN, 2002a). The Agri-environmental Scheme and the Afforestation measure were established as pilot projects under Activity 5. The beginning of the pilot programmes would have had to be preceded by the acceptance of the European Commission and the recognition of Good Agricultural Practice by the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development, together with the Ministry of the Environment. Although these conditions were finally met and 30.56 million euro were envisaged under the SAPARD programme, the Pilot Agri-environmental Scheme was not put into practise in Poland at that time, in contrast to Slovenia, Estonia and Hungary (PETERSEN, 2003; KARACZUN, 2002b). In June 2003 the Monitoring Committee scrapped the Activity 5 measure under the SAPARD programme. Although the recommendation of the NGOs to use these modest funds to finance the introduction of the agri-environmental instrument was given, the Ministry of Agriculture reallocated them to measures contributing to the intensification of agricultural production (Measure Activity 2) (METERA, 2003: 1). The MARD's official position on the failure of the implementation of the Pilot AES highlights that it was due to the short pre-accession time-frame, as well as to the time-consuming and costly process of accreditation. In spite of the fact that the Pilot AES was brought back into SAPARD, this instrument was not put into practise.

In addition, the pre-accession period resulted in a missed opportunity within the implementation of the agri-environmental programmes, mainly because of the insignificant role that this measure played within the agriculture sector. The deficiency of knowledge about this instrument and the opportunities that it brings resulted in a shortage of attention. Powerful opposition from the former Minister of Agriculture had played a decisive role in the failure of the application of this measure. Considering the lack of political awareness, together with the deficiency in the agricultural administrative body's support, the Agri-environmental Scheme was like an '*unwanted child*' (interview of IUCN, 2006). The Polish case shows that in spite of the necessity to adjust and transform, change has not occurred, whilst a high number of formal veto points prevailed in the political decision-making process.

4.3 National legislative and institutional conditions with regard to the 'goodness of fit'

The Agri-environmental Scheme's instrument was not applied in Poland prior to EU accession. Thus, a complete '*mis-fit*' with corresponding EU regulations occurred. Incompatibility in legislative scope, as well as in institutional style and structural dimension existed. One has to take into account that all activities that had been undertaken were forced upon Poland by the requirements of the European Union. Hence, inconsistency with national arrangements resulted in change being resisted.

The EU accession process forced the Polish authorities to develop and apply environmental measures in rural areas. Both the administrative body and environmental interest groups share the opinion that agri-environmental measures would not be implemented without the pressure to adopt EU standards (interviews: the Agricultural University of Warsaw, the Life Sciences University of Poznań, IUCN, WWF, ARMA, 2006). This points to the conclusion that the AES was applied after Poland's accession only because Regulation (EC)1257/1999 imposed it.

As previously stated, strong resistance to the adoption of European requirements existed prior to the accession process, leading to a failure to gain preliminary experience in the implementation of the AES' legislation. Strong pressure for institutional adaptation existed, which entailed building a capacity for reform, setting up new institutional structures and changes in the perception of agricultural activity by acknowledging its damaging effects. However, as the implementation of the AES under the SAPARD programme was optional, the Polish authorities did not use this chance. Administrative opposition remained until the early post-accession period. In spite of institutional obstacles, which will be analysed next, the European Commission forced changes that were finally undertaken.

With regard to institutional capacity and structure, the new AES policy called for completely different objectives from the ones already established. The Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development had to be reorganised and new departments with qualified personnel had to be arranged. Cooperation between the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development and the Ministry of Environment, together with socio-economic partners, had to be established.

Hence, a complex system of management encompassing payment institutions, such as the ARMA, which accepts and processes the AES' applications, was adopted. The Regional Agencies for Restructuring and Modernisation of Agriculture had to introduce new procedures in order to deal with the implementation of the AES at the national and regional levels.

The implementation of the AES required broad cooperation, interaction and communication between various administrative and community levels, together with the creation of an efficient system for information exchange and coordination. Therefore, there was an urgent need for the creation of efficient advisory services and trainings at all levels, from the Ministry's personnel to the regional administration, and finally to farmers. The advisory services and trainings were set up and the Agricultural Advisory Centres were adjusted.

A concluding remark is that the necessary legislation and institutional issues were put into practise, and changes deriving from the Agri-environmental Scheme under Regulations (EC) 1257/1999 and 1698/2005 were applied: '*The establishment of institutional and procedural aspects plus control of AES implementation were the most important issues, as these type of practises did not exist in Poland*' (interview of MARD, 2006).

This section emphasised that a complete mis-fit between domestic and European arrangements occurred. The number of fundamental changes that were needed to some extent justify the delayed introduction of the AES, as well as the reluctance of the administration body. Notwithstanding

this, Europeanisation took place. The accession process exerted pressure to comply with European objectives and forced national actors to carry out the transformation. However, interactions between domestic actors and the way in which they affected the process are still missing. Yet this analysis has not offered a full understanding regarding the dynamics of domestic change.

4.4 Policy content

Although the Agri-environmental Schemes were a missed opportunity under the SAPARD project, Poland's accession to the EU forced the Polish authorities to undertake a more feasible approach. During the post-accession period (2004-2006) the Agri-environmental Scheme was adopted throughout the country and was financed under the Rural Development Plan. Initially, the first attempts to establish the AES resulted in setting up a range of primary objectives that have not since changed. Nevertheless, significant alterations have been made in order to develop existing goals and make the measures accurate. Based on the experience acquired during the adoption of the National Agri-environmental Scheme (NAES) for 2004-2006, the scope of the NAES for the period 2007-2013 has been widened and commonly accepted. Additionally, the enhancement of nature objectives has been undertaken⁶.

Optimistic views prevail among governmental and socio-economic institutions. According to both the administrative body and non-governmental organisations (NGOs), the current range of instruments is much more compact and adequate than the previous one (interviews of MARD, ME, ISD, the Polish Ecological Club, 2006). Although budget restrictions exist, the offer is more complex and further improvements are envisioned. The representatives of environmental NGOs acknowledge that positive changes occurred as, '*...the Priority Zones are removed and more species of rare breeds are included. The scope is broader and the fact that the learning process occurred is optimistic. Hence, from a long-term perspective it is a positive assessment, as each activity will allow for the improvement of the environment*' (interview with the Polish Nature Protectors Club, 2006).

With regard to the political and institutional arrangements, the Agri-environmental Scheme for 2007-2013 has not required alterations. The current scope of the AES allows for the use of existing procedures and solutions. The designing process proceeded smoothly and hitherto national institutional structures and style were in line with European demands: '*In administrative terms the system works better and farmers have learned a lot. The knowledge improves within the regions. The hardest objective was to start in 2004. Now it is much easier because from 2014 we can start thinking about regional schemes. Hence, ten years of experience should be sufficient and some preparation will be made to initiate this process*' (interview of MARD, 2006).

⁶ The following objectives are novel in the current scope: the protection of bird hatch places and high nature habitats in rural areas packages 4 and 5 and the protection of endangered birds and high nature habitats beyond as well as in NATURA 2000 areas. Hence, some improvements have been made in the local breeds' package by adding new types of animals and plant species options.

Nevertheless, the two years of the post-accession period have not resulted in a significant change, as the importance of this instrument is still very low in terms of both the financial aspect⁷ and the attitude of the agricultural administrative body. As KONEČNÝ (2004) pointed out, the accession process in the new member states would result in the development of Agri-environmental Schemes in Slovenia, but also in restructurisation and modernisation of the agricultural sector in Poland. The first years of the post-accession period show that his predictions were accurate. Whilst the First Pillar's Single Area Payments (SAP) took up 5.23 bn Euro in the 2004-2006 period (in 2004 1.59 bn, in 2005 1.68 bn and in 2006 1.96 bn Euro⁸) and around 1.5 million applications were submitted, the 71,000 Agri-environmental applications (in the 2004-2006 period) and the 218 million Euro spent (from the RDP's total 3.6 bn Euro) are still not satisfactory results (ARIMR, 2007). In comparison with other EU countries, Polish nature and environment have an advantage of not being as damaged and polluted. From this perspective, the direction undertaken at the moment by both the farmers and the Polish authorities relates to production measures rather than to the protection of the environment. According to the MARD, the AES was one of the most complicated and novel measures within the RDP 2004-2006. The increasing interest in the uptake of this instrument was noticed at the end of the first application period (interview of MARD, 2006). The current status of the NAES' application was achieved by means of educational activities. This brings us to the conclusion that the dissemination of information, along with promotional actions, are crucial to the advancement of this measure.

Summing up this section, in the framework of policy content the influence of Europeanisation is apparent. Polish agricultural policy has been transformed into agricultural and rural policy, which is comparable with the CAP's aims and legislation. It is now necessary to examine the Agri-environmental Scheme's administrative development.

4.5 Building administrative capacity

In the case of Regulation (EC) 1257/1999, Poland's response to the Agri-environmental Scheme's requirements demanded a build-up of new administrative structures as well as the establishment of new competences, along with the mechanism of their co-ordination. In spite of the political and administrative bodies' reluctance, new structures were finally developed. The MARD is the managing authority for Rural Development Plans including the Agri-environmental Scheme's programming, monitoring and evaluation. Within the MARD it is the Department of Rural Development that carries out the tasks. Furthermore, the Department of Programming and Analysis was established to set up the Rural Development Plans, and within this section the Rural Development Plan Unit in particular is responsible for the elaboration of the Agri-environmental Scheme. Also, cooperation with the Ministry of Environment and socio-economic partners had to be established.

⁷ The financial assets for the AES for the next budgetary period 2007-2013 are still kept at the lowest level required by the EU, namely 25% of the Rural Development Plan's budget.

⁸ Currency from the National Polish Bank on 12.06.2006-1 Euro 3,9801 zl.

These changes have been made to respond to EU legislation demands. Thus, the process of accession resulted in Europeanisation. Owing to external pressure, the administrative structures altered and developed a new capacity to act.

4.6 Political and organisational cultures

With regard to policy style, the interventionist style continued within the agricultural as well as the environmental sectors, with a hierarchical '*command and control*' approach. Hence, regulatory procedures were developed from a '*top-down*' perspective. Therefore, it is not hard to predict that the requirements deriving from the European Agri-environment Scheme were in direct contradiction to political instruments and practises already in use. This also holds true in view of the type of interest intermediation, namely the relationship between administrative and societal actors.

For this reason, it is no surprise that the '*bottom-up*' way of setting up the policy, deriving from Regulations (EC) 1257/1999 and 1698/2005, is a novel one. An open process of policy elaboration is not characteristic of the Polish policy style. A tradition of consensual policy-making that would help overcoming the decisional barrier does not exist. While designing the AEP, it was the EU that imposed broad consultation with the public, encompassing social and economic partners. The idea of cooperation between the agricultural and the environmental departments was new, but the necessity of citizen participation during the AES set-up process was even more innovative. Environmental lobbying groups seized this opportunity and increased their influence significantly. It should be underlined that the NGOs have played a noteworthy role in the AES adoption process. Due to their activities, knowledge about this issue improved among authorities as well as farmers.

Additionally, the need for building a consensus as well as a cooperative decision-making culture was called for. The Department for Agriculture had to be transformed in order to replace the hierarchical and control model with a cooperative one, which included socio-economic partner participation. It is apparent that such a policy change would be accompanied by strong reluctance from the administration, as it necessitated alterations in internal and external arrangements. Under the new Agri-environmental Scheme, the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development, which used to function independently, was forced to interact with the Ministry of Environment, the Agency for Restructuring and Modernisation of Agriculture, regional conservation authorities, environmental NGOs and academic scholars.

Building a consensual corporatist decision-making culture

The obstacle to implementing the AES due to the lack of cooperation among the administrative sectors, as well as the NGOs, was noticed a long time prior to Poland's accession. In 2000 KARACZUN (2000: 7) had noted that the weakest point of Poland's institutional capacity was the division between agricultural and environmental issues and the implementation of separate programmes. The author envisaged that deficiency in the integration of agricultural and environmental policies would result in a lack of improvements in rural areas and a hampering of the implementation of EU requirements: '*The lack of cooperation between institutions responsible for environmental protection and those which coordinate the implementation of agrarian*

policy means that environmental requirements are only empty declarations in written agrarian strategies and usually are not realised in reality' (KARACZUN, 2003: 2).

In the pre-accession period, the process of elaborating the Rural Development Plan for 2004-2006 was accompanied by meetings and seminars in which outlines and information regarding the plan were given. However, the Ministry Office did not disseminate the information broadly enough. Although some stakeholders took part in these gatherings, their consulting role was not made clear. It should be noted, however, that the MARD cooperated with the ARMA on the Rural Development Plan's arrangements. The National Advisory Center for Agriculture and Rural Development (the main advisory institution), together with the Foundation of Assistance Programmes for Agriculture and research organisations, took part in the designation process (this is contrary to the NGOs, which were not invited) (HOFFMANN, 2004: 9). In 2003 some environmental NGOs became aware that the scope of the Agri-environmental Scheme was to be reduced from 14 to 5 measures. Subsequently, they arranged a protest and lobbying activities to force the ministry to change this decision and include four of the most important packages for biodiversity protection. Hence, more than 40 organisations participated in the complaint, which, together with support from the European Commission and other international organisations, influenced the MARD. Thus, some of the formerly deleted schemes were reintroduced (HOFFMAN et al., 2004: 9).

Furthermore, the level of open consultation and information sharing among administrative authorities and NGOs is still not sufficient. Based on acquired experience, the scope of the National Agri-environmental Scheme has changed significantly in the current period. The Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development, whilst working on this issue, invited some of the representatives of the NGOs to join the working group, as well as disseminate the NAES's proposal on the Ministry's website in advance, thereby encouraging all interested groups to provide comments. However, there is still a disparity between the Ministry's influence and that of NGOs. The smaller number of the latter decreases their influence: '*It is a positive aspect of this process that NGOs are invited and may provide their comments. The issue of their consideration differs from case to case, but environmental groups have the impression that they have a voice in the discussion*' (interview with the Polish Ecological Club, 2006).

The previous sections have contributed significantly to this research. Hence, the notion of the superiority of EU legislation has been proved. Knowing that institutional structures and styles are not easy to change, one could expect that these aspects would illustrate a reluctance to change and may even show that change is prevented from taking place altogether. The former statement has proven to be true, but the latter brought about opposite results. The transformation process took place and provided evidence for the power of EU pressure. This also relates to the institution-based institutionalism, which suggestss that external shocks are able to alter both administrative structures and styles. Consequently, institutions comprise actors which interact and affect domestic response. However, to what extent are they able to do this? The following sections will provide the answer.

4.7 The empowerment of actors

The Agri-environmental Scheme's instrument provides environmental interest groups with power and resources, whereas the importance of agricultural matters is weakened. Hence, it is necessary to elaborate the scope of supported activities for farmers, which includes environmental incentives. Nevertheless, the responsibility for the design and set-up rests in the Agricultural Department, and for this reason the influence of agricultural interests remains strong. As there is a lack of personnel engaged in the AES's elaboration in comparison with the rest of the department, it is hard to place this issue at the top of the agenda. Thus, a minimalist approach is undertaken. The following section will further discuss this issue by scrutinising the influence of opposing and facilitating actors.

Veto points

It is argued in this study that the main obstacles to the set-up process were the high number of institutional veto points, as well as the lack of knowledge about the instrument among the politicians, agricultural administrative body, farmers and environmental NGOs. While it is true that the latter acquired the necessary knowledge and soon started to lobby for the AES, the majority of the administrative body remained reluctant for a long time.

In order to present a complete picture, it is necessary to trace the actors' attitudes in the pre-accession period, when there were a greater number of opportunistic actors. During the elaboration of the SAPARD programme, the AES measure was deleted from its scope. According to the then-minister of agriculture Kalinowski, it was more appropriate to pay greater attention to the processing sector. The succeeding minister, Olejniczak, also failed to show the necessary political willingness to implement the Agri-environmental Scheme, which was perceived as being useless. Hence, it was obvious that nobody, except the personnel working on this issue within the MARD, wanted it. The difficulties that occurred during the set-up of the AES process prior to Poland's accession and during the early post-accession period derived mainly from a high number of institutional veto points. This case shows that in spite of the necessity to adjust and transform, a low level of change occurred whilst a high number of formal veto points prevailed in the political decision-making process. Furthermore, advances in the adoption of the AES had been slowed down by the agricultural sector's opposition.

However, some progress has been made in the perception of the AES among the administrative body. Since this instrument was put into practise, its acceptance has slowly increased. This does not mean that the measure has been given much attention within the agricultural sector, but the number of veto points has decreased significantly and the Ministers of Agriculture are no longer opposed to the concept of the AES: *'Ministers are good pragmatists and they acknowledge the programme, which is a good approach. They perceive this instrument as additional money for farmers who do not have to do much but who get sufficient payments'* (interview with the Regional Office of the National Community of Birdlife International, 2006). Hence, achieving the policy objectives is no longer hampered.

Facilitating institutions

In spite of the general resistance of the administrative body within the agriculture sector, the people responsible for elaborating the Rural Development Plan in the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development, in which the agri-environmental measure is integrated, are well qualified and fully engaged in the issue. An effort has been made to increase the number of people involved in the designing process and a working group for the AES has been set up. These actors have attempted to incorporate a broad range of views within the AES and to extend the consultation process. Due to these actions, the scope of the AES has improved.

Whilst discussing the matter of facilitating institutions, the crucial role of environmental NGOs is noteworthy. The NGOs communicate with the authorities both directly and indirectly in order to establish co-operation and to improve consultation. During the pre-accession period, the IUCN and WWF Offices in Poland, ABC Poland Consultancy and the Farm and Wildlife Advisory Group, by means of foreign partners⁹, were the first organisations involved and were assisted by their foreign partners. These NGOs worked on disseminating information in order to convince both the farmers and the authorities that the Agri-environmental Scheme was very important and definitely worth attention (WÓJCIK, 2000, 2003; METERA, 2003: 2). The aim was to encourage rural development, and the NGOs played an active role in lobbying for the implementation of the Pilot Agri-environmental Scheme, as well as ensuring that the scope of the National Agri-environmental Scheme was sufficient. *'They were and still are dynamic in providing domestic political pressure by lobbying for change. The most common activities undertaken by NGOs are: sending petitions and letters to the Ministries as well as the Prime Minister and organising educational activities including workshops, trainings and leaflets'* (interview of WWF Germany, 2006).

Summing up, the way in which environmental NGOs have developed internal and external communications, as well as how they have significantly increased their influence in the national arena is considerable. They used additional power derived from European law, which enhanced the pressure for change considerably.

4.8 Policy learning

The results of this research have shown that the policy learning process has occurred. The increase in information flow regarding the AESs guided the policy learning process at both the administrative and socio-economic levels. Co-operation between the agricultural and environmental administration and NGOs was launched, along with the establishment of the coalition of interest groups to represent common opinions.

4.9 Domestic change

The scrutiny of Poland's implementation of the Agri-Environmental Scheme's Regulations highlights that political and institutional transformation occurs if high European pressure, as well as the support of an alliance of domestic

⁹ Oy Scanagri Finland Ab, Avalon Foundation and the Institute for the European Environmental Policy.

actors capable of challenging prevailing arrangements exist. Regarding the first condition, the AES requirements demanded far-reaching sectoral changes that exceeded the core of national traditions. The second condition points to the high level of transformation which takes place due to domestic actors who, using new opportunities deriving from European legislation, seek to overcome existing institutional constraints and initiate changes. As has been shown, the particular actor constellations and accompanying interest intermediation resisted and delayed adaptation of the Pilot AES and Articles 22-24 of (EC) Regulation 1257/1999, but accepted adaptation in the case of Articles 39 of (EC) Regulation 1698/2005. In terms of Regulation (EC) 1698/2005, changes to the administrative structure were not required, as regulation allows for the use of existing procedures and solutions. Thus, the absorption was noted.

5. Conclusions

As has been shown in this paper, the Europeanisation of agri-environmental policy takes place and results in domestic change. Due to the accession process, Poland has transformed its agricultural policy, making it compatible with the CAP's objectives. European policy requirements have been placed at the heart of the national policy agenda, which led to change. The reforms generated substantial changes in administrative structures. That is, innovation has occurred.

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DR. ANNA HADYŃSKA

Institute for German Studies
Department of Political Science and International Studies
University of Birmingham, Edgbaston, Birmingham B15 2TT,
United Kingdom
phone: +(44)-12-14 14 33 44
e-mail: annkard@wp.pl