

## Eastern Enlargement, or an All-European Transformation?

The following special issue contains articles written by scholars from several Eastern and Western European countries. The editors hope to encourage a shift in the debate about the 1990s, a period that has certainly received enough academic and popular attention, at least in the former socialist countries. Still, it is our sincere belief that a substantial modification is needed in order to supplement the previous emphasis on the national social and economic policies with a broader transnational context.

The first versions of most papers contained in this issue were presented at the workshop titled “Eastern Enlargement or an All-European Transformation? The 1990s in European Politics”, held in Ljubljana on 29 September 2022 and organised by the Institutes of Contemporary History in Ljubljana and at the Czech Academy of Science in Prague. The purpose of the event was to continue the organisers’ successful cooperation with other specialists within the EuParl.net network, which has produced a number of fascinating comparative projects exploring the European parliamentary history, cultures, and institutions.

We realised that our view of the post-1989 decade while observing the differences between the Slovenian and Czech(oslovak) institutional, economic, and social transformations tended to be restricted to the former political East. Now we sought to employ a broader European perspective. Following the former communist countries’ accession to the European Union seemed like an obvious next thing to do. Many governments applied to join the European Union during the period under consideration, and their domestic elites began to relate intensively to the actors, processes, and requirements for membership. Simultaneously, however, Western Europe was equally transformed by the implementation of the Maastricht Treaty, and stronger and longer-lasting groups critical of the European integration process emerged in many countries. The present special issue thus represents the first attempt to explore the overlapping two contexts, bring the previously exclusive perspectives together, and rethink the forms and concepts of the Europeanisation of national policies.

It is a great honour to have Mark Gilbert, the author of *European Integration: The Political History* and co-editor of *Euro-scepticisms: The Historical Roots of a Political Challenge*,<sup>1</sup> join the debate. He has brought a striking analytical distance, experience, and, indeed, humour to this issue by comparing the British and Italian perceptions

1 Mark Gilbert, *European Integration: A Political History* (Rowman & Littlefield, 2020, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition). *Euro-scepticisms: The Historical Roots of a Political Challenge*, eds. Mark Gilbert and Daniele Pasquinucci (Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2020).

of the Maastricht Treaty in the opening article aptly titled “From the EC to the EU. Ready or Not”.

Jure Gašparič and Andrej Pančur open the empirical section by addressing the politics of the accession – and the origins of Slovenian Euroscepticism – with a reconstruction of the EU-related vocabulary and sentiments in the Slovenian Parliament, using the methods of corpus analysis. Meanwhile, Adéla Gjuričová devoted her contribution to the Czech election campaign of 2002 and the stage of completing the negotiations with the EU, demonstrating the paradox of “Europeanising the national debate while ‘bilateralising’ the European politics.”

The special issue at hand also presents several case studies exploring unexpected actors and connections in building up the image of Europe both in and outside the Union. Marko Zajc has collected fascinating materials from the mid-1990s *Nova revija* circle and focused on the text titled “The Hour of European Truth for Slovenia” to decipher the complicated intellectual position on Slovenian integration with the EU. Ivan Sablin studied the presence of the EU in the Russian State Duma debates, concluding that the Duma became an important stage for collecting anti-European sentiments vis-à-vis the government’s pro-European rhetoric at the time. Finally, Sven Jüngerkes and Tobias Kaiser presented their current project on the development of the German party system during the 1990s, encompassing the crucial issue of integrating the two Germanies’ political scenes and traditions.

In recent years, the European Union faced significant challenges. Once again, both its reform and its enlargement appear on the agenda. We hope this issue brings forward some ideas for a historical reflection that provides the necessary distance from daily responsibilities and pressures. Understanding political actors and national and international institutions remains one of the crucial manners of grasping the development, its risks, and its potential. Besides, it is always wise to examine longer continuities and be aware of the history – and historical connotations – of the supposedly brand-new phenomena.

*Adéla Gjuričová and Jure Gašparič*