

**Czech Republic and European Union:
time to change priorities – from negotiations to
membership**

expertise



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Změněn kód pole

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Document Mission

This expertise is based on our strong opinion that the present Czech political and administrative establishment prepares entry in the EU because of its citizens, not the opposite. Therefore this document aims to debate about some risks of the current approximation process of the Czech Republic towards the European Union, particularly regarding transformation of this process and subsequent EU membership into modernisation of society and improved life conditions of inhabitants, regions and communities.

We have solid grounds to think that the preparation process, under way, involves serious problems and institutional barriers which to some extent will limit the ability of the Czech Republic and its citizens to benefit from EU membership in a comparable way to other countries. The discussed problems will seriously damage our ability to use as much as possible from the accession and membership for development of the country and quality of life of its citizens. Awareness and correction of these risks and active removal of barriers are required and they are worthy of deeper consideration, debate and, above all, decisive measures.

Attract interest for higher efficiency and effectiveness of the approximation process and EU membership itself, this will require changed political behaviour and approach, particularly of central authorities. Concerning quality of the preparation process and entry in the EU, any citizen depends on competence, diligence and abilities of policy makers to “finalise” their tasks regarding interests of the country and life quality in the country. Therefore we speak about “an expertise” (policy paper) treating the change of politics and political behaviour, not about an analytical study. However, the study and critical analysis of the approximation process in the discussed fields form the entry point of the text.

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1. Czech Republic in front of EU door. Are we ready?

1.1. The Czech Republic is successful in its negotiations with the European Union. We are close to access the EU. If the EU expands, we will most likely become its member. The preparation process in the country is being completed.

1.2. However, the nature of the process raises some doubts about the scope in which we use it for the actual modernisation of the country, to improve transparency of domestic political and economical relations, to promote law, public administration and justice and consequently also our lives. Politicians responsible for the entry in the EU consider the process primarily as a macro-political one. The negotiating team negotiates diligently, Chapters are being closed. It looks like nothing else matters. Thus the preparation process is reduced to its central, foreign-policy related, administrative and legal dimension, thus basically the procedural, technical and formal aspect.

1.3. Because the preparation process is reduced to the central level of public administration, the role of regional and local self-administration is undervalued. These levels of public administration have not been adequately involved in the process. But just these levels will bear the main responsibility for the actual implementation of the new, harmonised legislation in all relevant areas of public administration. Analyses results¹ show, however, that most institutions and organisations at the regional and community level lack integrated and specific information about changes that will occur in their area of activity because of practical implementation of EU standards and EU membership. Towns and communities, agrarian and industrial enterprises, NGOs and lower tiers of public administration are lacking clear perspective, some “scene ready for battle”. The situation is

¹ See results of project “Improving CR readiness to implement EU environmental standards” (“Posilování připravenosti ČR k implementaci norem EU v oblasti ochrany životního prostředí”) prepared by Gabal, Analysis & Consulting in cooperation with the Charles University Environment Centre. For other details see www.gac.cz/documents/euen.pdf.



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differentiated, but there are both the risks of missed opportunities from the membership and unmanaged requirements due to our domestic administration.²

1.4. The key motive of interest of regions for the EU is the possibility to draw finance means from EU funds. But the regional development plans are frequently drawn under enormous time stress. The result is their formalism or sketchiness (“the main goal is to exist”). However, the regions have recently shown dynamic differentiation in approach to preparation of relevant documents, both regarding expert capacities and attention, interest, negotiating in autonomous representations. Another problem is to what extent these plans express broader interest and consensus of inhabitants of a region, to what extent the inhabitants know the plans and their special importance for the future development of the region and its financing.

1.5. However, we are not (and there is a real possibility that we will not be in time of entry) able to “reach for” legitimate available EU funds in the area of regional development and “cohesion”³ policy in considerable amounts.⁴

² With regards understanding and knowledge, some decisive rule of certain “activism” is evident at the community and regional level – particularly those involved in the matter and who can get it have the information available.

³ The main tool of the cohesion policy after Czech entry in the EU will be to employ finance from cohesion funds.

⁴ According to 2000, EURO 4 milliard, 6 milliard and 8.3 milliard should be distributed among candidate countries in 2002, 2003 and 2004, respectively. Use of this money is delayed and we do not get it. And no one can guarantee, that they can be transferred in subsequent budgets, i.e. that the 2004 budget will contain funds for 2002, 2003 and 2004. The default is due to the general unreadiness of candidate countries to administer and effectively use these funds. Neither we have yet (!) established a mechanism, body, committee, way of approval, anything.

According to a passing estimate, the assistance for 7 NUTS II regions for the CR should amount approximately to CZK 80 milliard. Distribution these funds to regions to the day of the entry has become a mere fantasy. Up to now we “do not know” whether the CR will present a single national plan or 7 independent regional operating programs. There is no decision who will be responsible, whether the

1.6. The most serious barrier for timely creation of good conditions and mechanisms to accept EU funds is likely the stiff centralistic approach⁵ of the Ministry for local development (Ministerstvo pro místní rozvoj, MMR) of ČR. The Ministry intends to keep the executive and political powers resulting from distribution of large amounts at any cost. MMR actually and intentionally obstructs creation of independent regional structures that could even now, with knowledge of local needs and an understanding of regional development, assist in overcoming centralism for the benefit of modernisation projects financed from EU funds. The consequence is a serious threat for the regions and therefore the whole Czech Republic to employ the membership opportunities CR for the benefit of own development of communities, regions and the whole country.

1.7. A dispute over competencies between the Ministry of Finance (MF) MF CR and MMR ČR, up to now presented materials, a very slow procedure of preparations of the national plan, a negative position to present 7 decentralised regional programs, this all shows that this is not only incompetency and slowness, but a resolute political objective and effort to maintain centralised control at the government level and not to admit regions to independent

Ministry for Local Development or the Ministry of Finance, origin of regions with elected representations has not been considered, there is no relevant mechanism to accept finance from cohesion funds, regional structures are not ready, absorption capacity of regions considering EU financial assistance is not supported.

Another big barrier to open lock gates of financial flow from the EU is the lacking act on civil service. Our administration is considered to be a completely non-transparent “black hole” without it.

⁵ MMR ČR insists on developing a single national development plan instead of decentralisation in 7 regional operation programs. The Ministry argues with better transparency and possibility to redistribute unused funds. MMR ČR intentionally *rejects* to create of adequate administrative mechanisms in self-governing regions, they reject to transmit twinning and other forms of training for several tens administrative officers from regions. Moreover, they intend to assess the regional development programs from the centre, within an appointed committee where the representatives of regional councils will be just one of represented components.



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management and thus to involvement and responsibility for own regional development. This situation documents not only misunderstanding of one of the key EU policies – the cohesion policy, but also raises the question whether the central authorities consider interests of the population, modernisation of the country in entry preparations, or whether they rather intend to misuse the process to keep own centralised and executive power in the CR.

1.8. The present concept of integration as exclusive matters of “high politics” fails to attract a more deep interest and participation of the public. It is too cloudy, abstract and torn from “common life of common people”. The public continues to be de facto outside from the integration process. The result is modernisation of the state (or rather of its “software” represented by legislation, less of its “hardware” represented by legislative institutions) without adequate modernisation of the society – its behaviour, knowledge and positions. There is a risk that the Czech state will enter the EU while the Czech society will remain outside and conflicts between modernized law and non-modernized society will occur.

1.9. A warning precedent of possible consequences of the situation where the public does not understand enough content and bearing of a macro-political decision about integration of the country neither the public takes part in it and neither administration is ready for it from the technical point of view, was the CR entry in NATO. The Czech Republic became a NATO member through a politic decision bona fide. However, not even the Czech Army was ready for the entry nor the Czech society which was passive during the preparation process, did not know and did not share all relations and consequences of this step which had serious consequences⁶.

⁶ Immediately after our entry, critical situations appeared as reaction to NATO intervention in the former Yugoslavia. Low public support for the allied operation contributed to creation of significant opposition, split consensus and support for NATO. Significant delay in exercising tasks resulting from the accession in NATO appeared at the level of the Czech administration. Because of these problems, the CR had to resist negative assessment by our allies

1.10. The EU concerns much broader spectrum of effects, basically all areas of public life, and consequences of inadequate preparation and reasoning of requirements and content of the EU membership can be even more serious. The result of the low interest and participation of the public is not only the low awareness of possibilities and relations between our integration in the EU and modernization of the country, but also the fact that support for the entry is shallow and it can be eroded and lost in a referendum.

1.11. The referendum, whose result will be binding for the policy makers, is necessary to legitimise such an important political decision as the Czech entry in the EU will be. The referendum is also the base means of participation and personal involvement of citizens in the decision.

2. Support for Entry in EU is not steadfast

2.1. The position on the accession in the EU is formed based on mutual relations of expected negative consequences of the accession for a life of an individual or household and of expected positive consequences. EU accession and membership are becoming more of a certainty and attitudes to the EU are becoming individualised – each citizen judges according to his individual perspective. Fears of membership consequences work against the pro-European position. Positive expectations support it. The keystones for these (both positive and negative) positions are provided in mass media, positions of policymakers and of course also comparison of living conditions in the Czech Republic and in the EU member countries.

2.2. Particularly fears of a worsened competitive position in the labour market (fears of losing jobs, of inadequate knowledge of foreign languages, of high work load and qualification requirements) have negative effect on the general position on the EU. A set of xenophobic fears and fears of flourishing bureaucracy after the EU accession (fears of property and land to

and our credit in the international politic scene was badly damaged.

foreigners sold at bargain price, of our national culture threatened, of limited Czech sovereignty, of best jobs being occupied by foreigners and fears of expanded bureaucracy) have also negative effect. Fears of risen and increased prices, fears of high finance costs for approximation and increased crime and flood of strangers are almost universal. Even strong supporters of the entry share these fears.

2.3. Only presence and “weight” of a component with expected improvements and modernising impact of the membership will decide about the final effect of fears on the position to the entry in the EU. Some groups (those younger, better educated, with better job positions and perspectives) are able to mitigate fears of short-time negative integration impact expecting long-time positive benefits. Other groups (older, less qualified) overcome the fears only hardly or they do not share the long-time perspective.

2.4. The Czech society definitely does not harbour unrealistic fictions about the pace of the positive effect of the membership on improving economic performance and performance of authorities. Any positive impact of the membership is expected just in the medium- to long-time horizon⁷.

2.5. The public view of expected benefits from the entry is, contrary to fears, less structured and less specific. Though the entry in the EU will have significant impact, no rational dialogue about benefits and drawbacks of the membership actually exists in the CR.

2.6. The “open ground” is being politicised and is being slowly occupied by primitive populism, economic intimidation, hypertrophied national interests (though it is not clear what “national interests” are in game of their “advocates”) and by increasing inferiority sentiments. It is not quite clear whether their goal is just to win elections by employing prevailing fears of the membership or to reduce support for the EU

membership and complicate the referendum or even the entry in the EU itself.

2.7. Any positive and realistic vision of future development and behaviour of the Czech Republic within the European Union is lacking in all parts of the political spectrum. Most strategic documents approved by the government terminate with the date of the entry – what will happen then is not formulated. If eurosceptics win elections, it can negatively effect the quality of our membership and position of the CR in the EU, including ability of the country to make the most of the accession.

2.8. Among frequently used anti-European arguments are financial investments and controls required for practical implementation of some modernising EU standards⁸, particularly in the environmental field which is becoming to be among priorities of the EU member countries themselves.

3. Quality of living conditions – the environment as an example

3.1. Due to lower “environmental literacy” of the Czech population caused by the communist rule, in comparison with EU population, it is easy to misinterpret EU environmental legislation not as a quality, but as useless, limiting and economically binding load. Without improved environmental literacy of the society, the requirements for high investments in the environmental quality can be considered illegitimate, they can be evaded in practice and they can become a source of anti-European sentiment in extreme cases.

3.2. Environmental and modernising EU Directives come to us as a foreign element implanted from outside in a vast extent. The environmental *acquis communautaire* has been in the EU formed for several decades and, besides it, under pressure of environmentally friendly public. These regulations have been introduced in our law in relatively short time, without knowing their grounds and long-time

⁷ Half of questioned persons (50 %) expect our situation improving after 10 and more years after our entry in the EU. Third of questioned persons (32 %) expect our situation improving within 5 years after our entry and only 8 % expect improving already during two years after the EU (for details see www.gac.cz/documents/euen.pdf)

⁸ But we must mention, that under “EU heading”, there are frequently requirements with no relation to the EU or the EU does not require it (like introducing visa for Slovak citizens, round arrows on roads etc....).

natural development that had preceded their establishment in the EU.

3.3. Attitudes of the Czech public to the environment conservation have formed under quite different circumstances. One of system features of the communist rule in the CR was deliberate ignoring qualitative aspects of living conditions of the society and among them of the environment and control of health of the society. Devastation of the environment has been an undisputable proof of unsustainability of centralised economics and of totalitarian, undemocratic relations. Criticising the state of the environment became the backbone of non-dissident civic resistance against the communist rule and one of drivers to change the situation in 1989.

3.4. Because of massive installation of terminal cleaning facilities (obsolete production methods have been equipped with modern and efficient filters), very quick “cleaning” of our environment occurred in the 90’s. Prevailing attitude in some spheres of the Czech society is that we have done enough for the environment because we have achieved the sharp drop in water and air pollution Euroseptics interpret requirements for further improvements in the quality of the environment as unreasonably maximised and illegitimate. But the goal and effect of these requirements is not only the quality of life, but also modernising economics and improving its competitive abilities in foreign markets, including the EU common market.

3.5. The idea that it is adequate to transpose the EU environmental standards in our legislation technically is not realistic. The EU puts (also in the 6th Action Program for the Environment) special attention to institutes to enforce environmental legislation that should provide for implementation of requirements of these regulations. There are series of institutional challenges. It is necessary to overcome conservative stereotypes that prevail also among experts in the environmental law. We cannot achieve the level of the acquis and we would enforce their requirements only hardly without “gripping” them actively and without their implementation in legislation and education.

3.6. Respecting law, active and environmentally literate public, a functioning civic sector being

involved in decision-making processes, life style of population (recycling, economising...) etc. belong among necessary preconditions of optimal function of the acquis. Economics must adjust to the quality of life, not the opposite. The premise for understanding and respecting the parts of EU environmental legislation is understanding and broad acceptance of sustainability principles. Transposition of demanding European standards implies understanding the principle from the part of both officers and the public.

3.7. Implementation of EU environmental legislation will improve the quality of life particularly for us – Czech citizens. Adopting the EU environmental legislation means in fact to adopt environmental legislation of a civilised industrial state. This represents series of economic and social advantages, particularly in the field of improving health of population, improving efficiency and competitive ability of industry, using natural resources, protection of cultural heritage etc.⁹ for the CR Awareness of this situation must become the base for “ecoliteracy” of Czech population and their interest in problems related to EU membership.

3.8. Unless the Czech Republic achieves a higher performance standard in the field of sustainability and protection of conditions for life, it will get swiftly on the fringe of EU environmental policy. It will not participate in forming the policy, but it will be subjected to it.

3.9. The Ministry of the Environment CR bears main responsibility for harmonisation of the Czech and European environmental policies. The Ministry keeps aside not only the community and regional dimension of preparation of home conditions, but even the basic issues of high environmental policy of the EU and its next orientation – officers of the Ministry have not expressed any opinion to strategic documents that shall determine the EU environmental policy in the period immediately after our entry. For example, the prepared EU Strategy for Sustainable Development adopted in June 2001 in Göteborg has remained without any comment. The response of the Ministry to

⁹ See the benefits of compliance with the environmental acquis for the candidate countries, ECOTEC et al 2001



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prepared 6th Action Program for the environment was rather formal. We cannot expect that other sectors would be more interested in the matter.

3.10. The Czech Republic (contrary to other candidate countries, including "rich" Romania?) has not participated in some EU programs that would be beneficial for it from the long-term point of view (even considering finance – like LIFE program, and energy saving programmes)

3.11. The whole process shows that the Czech Ministry of the Environment is not a real representative and active author of the Czech environmental policy. The Ministry has concentrated above all on "finalising" and "closing" relevant chapters. But the Ministry has not connected the process with cultivation of ecologic literacy of Czech population, with pressure on modernising and improving development of communities and regions, with pressure to enforce sustainability principles in the general economic development of the Czech Republic. The Ministry seems to be losing a unique opportunity to overcome communist burden and Czech retardation with regard to the EU countries because of low or no activity.

3.12. The Ministry fails to manage communication with its regional sections and newly established environmental protection units at the regional level. These bodies not only do not know scope of their competencies within applicable Czech legislation but neither know the task awaiting them in implementing EU legislation, programs and policies.

3.13. But the environment conservation itself has significant positive potential. The public perceives the issue of the environment as directly related to the entry in the EU. The entry in the EU, protection of the environment and ecologic modernisation of industry are perceived as unambiguously qualitative items. The entry in the EU is not understood as a part of the Czech transformation process but as a successive step towards increasing quality of living conditions after the transformation period is terminated¹⁰.

3.14. People who accentuate the quality of living conditions and are willing to do

something for this quality in person are pro-European and ready for participation above average. This type of attitude is currently rather an elite matter. Perceiving European Union as a modernisation, not transformation tool is, however, relatively common.

3.15. Expected connection of the entry in the EU with modernising the country creates conditions for a significant synergic effect. The preparation process can become a source to improve public "eco-literacy" and increase awareness about principles of "sustainability" and vice versa: improving public "eco-literacy" can significantly contribute to strengthen support for the entry. If public interest and participation in preparations of the country to enter are lacking, then the protection of the environment represents one of possible ways to improve them.

3.16. One of reasons why the citizens and home NGOs show just little interest and participation can be their feeling that they cannot influence anything in fact and that no one cares about their opinions. Many EU member countries have long tradition of participative democracy when compared with the CR, and the participative democracy in other countries looks for its place fast¹¹.

3.17. Stressing quality of life wins its way in the politics of the European Union more and more. One of official key goals of the EU became achieving such a type of development that would be sustainable, i.e. acceptable considering economical, environmental and social point of view. Works towards integration of sustainability criteria in sector policies continue intensively. The European Union became a global leader in the field of sustainability¹². These aspects have been stressed already in the above EU Strategy for Sustainable Development.

3.18. The government communication pre-accession strategy has not in fact touched these qualitative aspects of the EU – increased

¹¹ Such participative democracy is further developed within EU (see e.g. "White Paper on Governance").

¹² See e.g. development of the situation concerning the Kyoto Protocol to limit production of greenhouses gases.

¹⁰ For details see www.gac.cz/documents/euen.pdf.



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emphasis on quality of living conditions and of the environment, though the Ministry of Foreign Affairs is responsible for the government communication strategy as a whole. Perception of the access to the EU as an entry in a community actively reflecting global problems and challenges is completely lacking.

3.19. While the sustainability criterion plays quite marginal role in domestic discussions, the discussion about sustainability in the EU has been structured in details. The basic EU documents show clearly where the future EU policy is going to concentrate – on the issue of the climatic change, protection of human health, biodiversity and natural resources management and waste management. Completely in line with the new orientation of the EU policy, it is necessary to re-assess intended development of infrastructure, investments in public transport and in the railway network. The EU anticipates also a decrease of finance assistance from EU structural funds for road transport. The strategy speaks clear about reassessment of development of the whole transport infrastructure in the EU.

4. Responsibility of political parties

4.1. The present establishment pays hardly any regard to issues of EU strategic trends. It restrains on mechanic adoption of *acquis communautaire*. The above problems of the integration process – particularly the passivity or direct questioning of some EU policies – seem rather inappropriate in light of former obligations and declarations of our political representations¹³.

¹³ A political memorandum presented by Václav Klaus to Italian prime minister Dini together with the Czech application for the EU states besides other: “The Czech Republic accepts for its future membership the European Union as it is and as it will be created through collective wisdom of member countries in forthcoming months and years. The Czech Government shall be ready to accept *acquis communautaire* and the level of cooperation among equal partners as the member countries have promised in all fields and at all levels at which the

4.2. No political party has got an elaborated, not just declaratory, vision of future that would reflect diminishing environmental space for future life of the society. Though one cannot say that the EU has got such a full vision, political parties in their programs have frequently reflected not even this level. This, together with mere effort to hold power, is reflected in daily politics of these parties. Both political parties and the Czech Parliament are passive in enforcing sustainability. Therefore the parliamentary control of executive bodies and of the implementation process fails. Ignorance of and the dismissive attitude of the establishment result in the fear in the EU that the accession of new countries including the CR will impair conditions to execute goals of the EU environmental policy.

4.3. The basic orientation of our country will be decided already in parliamentary elections in 2002. They will decide whether we become a full EU member or just a querulous passenger. The further trajectory of our country will depend on the result of the election joust between home Eurosceptics and Eurooptimists. The winner will bear the main part of responsibility for the future fate of the integration process and quality of our membership.

4.4. The doubts as to our ability to compete in hard European politics are likely another motive for Eurosceptical attitudes.¹⁴ Complaints of Czech Eurosceptics about environmental *acquis* display not only their disinterest about quality of living conditions but above all fundamental rejection where the EU is going, as far as quality of life and global responsibility are concerned. But from our point of view this is the key issue – whether we manage to adopt this product of EU long-term evolution as our own, or whether we decide to continue to be a

European Union will be in the time of Czech accession. It will be ready to fully participate in future development and strengthening the European Union.” Also the Concept of Foreign Policy of CR adopted based on Government Program Resolution from 12.8. 1998 expresses a similar position.

¹⁴ The current tough international (environmental) politics is evidenced in the conflict over Temelín Nuclear Power Plant.



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country marginal for European and Western dynamics.

4.5. The problem of most our pro-European politicians is formalism and sticking to technical and home issues. A certain passivity and superficiality in their approach to practical preparation of the state and society for the EU membership show underestimation of complicated internal conditions and conditions in the Czech society. On the domestic political scene what is lacking is a leading promoter of the integration process who addresses the basic strategic agenda instead of getting involved in small-minded politicising.

4.6. If there is not in the CR (opposite to e.g. Poland or Hungary) the basic political accord with regards the necessity to access the EU, citizens must be allowed to decide it in a referendum. The referendum will force politicians to adopt a single position on our entry. The citizens should decide and bind policy makers to follow the selected approach. The referendum is the only alternative to politicians' indecisiveness and ambiguity.

5. How to overcome secretive and formal preparations for the benefit of modernisation of the country and readiness for membership?

5.1. Our goal is to change living conditions, not only regulations. If we are to use most of our accession preparations to modernise and improve living conditions, the preparation process must be open to the most wide sphere of actors, we must be able to accept and evaluate available and offered human and financial resources related to the preparations and to the membership. This is the only way how the education and modernization dimension of this process can be strengthened so that the membership would bring practical and not only "paper" or promised positive effects.

5.2. Within the transformation process, we have invested above all in economics, in its privatisation and in the finance sector. Investments in education have been subjected to tough and long-time restriction. The CR cannot any more start "the Irish way" of priority investments in education and it will lag in this field in long-term. As the accession approaches rapidly, we will need to concentrate the funds

more than before to improve our human sources and not only to build and adapt the legal and institutional infrastructure. The EU consists of highly educated societies, it is a project based to a large extent on education, language, multicultural and historical foundations of European learning. Lower standards of learning and knowledge limit not only our ability to hold our ground, but also the ability to employ the EU environment. The deficit in education and languages is a drawback that we realise and it is among hearts of fear whether we can hold in the European environment.

5.3. The EU environment is also highly demanding in terms of the high quality of public administration and its ability to resist bribery in administering the *acquis*. Qualified and professional officers are not only a prerequisite for smooth function of public administration, but also a prerequisite for quality of services provided to citizens. Even now we can see that we will lack good administrators who will work in the European Commission after the accession and advocate our interests in various positions. The same applies in a much broader sense to our domestic relations where investments in professional performance, qualification and wage conditions of public administration rather stagnate.

5.4. Increasing the regional and community dimension of Czech pre-accession process, decentralisation and approaching to the regional and community level is a prerequisite for public participation which is necessary to respect and enforce (not only) the environmental *acquis*. In their final results, the modernisation process and qualitative changes must hit above all life conditions of communities and regions, synergy among public administration, citizens, economics and quality of the territory and the environment.

5.5. The accession in the EU stops being a political topic at the regional and community level and becomes above all a practical issue of public administration. If the requirements resulting from the accession in the EU are completely transparent regarding information and administration, if self-governing bodies do not have adequate powers, tools and resources, their practical application will not acquire necessary support and professional effort of the



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people who shall through their activities decide about final effect of our integration in the EU. We must this argument repeat for the sake of understanding: while central bodies decide by their behaviour above all about the entry in the EU, regional and community bodies will decide about consequences and effects of the membership considering change, modernisation and improved quality of life of inhabitants. One of the most serious barriers to use membership benefits can be identified precisely in this dimension of public administration.

5.6. Self-administrations on communities and representations of new regions must be assisted in preparation of regions for the EU environment and above all concerning their abilities to draw own modernisation and development projects and to manage available Brussels' funds effectively. Providing a clear view of future development in the relevant fields because of implementation of *acquis* should play the primary role, instead of competence quarrels about control and distribution of a "European packet".

5.7. Increasing competence at the level of regions, communities and towns requires the best knowledge of citizens particularly concerning sense and purpose of funds that should be used at the given level. This is one of ways how to raise public interest about community and regional politics and to provide for the public control of managing EU funds.

5.8. NGOs play a key role in incorporating the general public. Public willingness to participate in protection of the environment in the place of residence is high. Nevertheless, the synonym for NGOs' activities should not be a conflict, but cooperation in harmonising environmental requirements with social and economic aspects of public life. NGOs must operate on the basis of the most complete information and their participation in the decision making process must be based on high expert knowledge that would correspond to the level of opponents. The aim is synergic function of public administration, the commerce sector and citizens and improved mutual communication. It is in fact restoration of community life "broken" during the communist rule. This aspect has been just marginally achieved in Czech pre-accession

preparation process, contrary to other candidate countries.

5.9. Application of sustainability principles can be efficient and successful only in the case when sustainability becomes a criterion to assess both development projects and concepts (application of EIA or SEA procedures) and all sectors relevant regarding sustainable development. Mutual communication among these ministries and other bodies of public administration (currently poor and conflicting) is required to improve also considering practical implementation of the environmental *acquis*.

5.10. Administration offices, particularly at the central level, are not able to overcome their particular competences and develop effective cooperation. This prevents us completely from enforcing one of the current main principles of the EU policy – the principle of integration of environmental aspects in all other (sector) politics – together with the EU and its bodies. We must look for institutional tools that would overcome mentioned drawbacks.

The Board for Sustainable Development as a government advisory body and, as the case may be, boards of territorial self-governing units can be such a tool or a measure. Their balanced staffing with experts, representatives of branch administrative offices and of public (NGOs) seems to be the optimum solution. However, relevant state authorities should decide about initiative proposals from the boards. The activities of such boards should involve permanent harmonisation of environmental, social and economic aspects of public life. But admitting the necessity to establish such bodies will ask for a change in the up-to-now prevailing sectoral way of management and execution of centralised politics. Practical activities of similar current advisory bodies at the central level have shown that the integration principle can be actually implemented through coordination at the governmental level or at the level of a regional board, but not through advisory bodies. They are undoubtedly useful as inspiration, feedback and a source of expert opinions, but their work is losing effect without coordination at the governmental level.

5.11. The European Union is an elite club of rich countries that care more and more for the quality of the environment and for global



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environmental problems. Membership in this club cannot be negotiated only. It must be supported through own performance and ability to change own living conditions. The key prerequisite to achieve such conditions is its support from the part of public administration and participation of the public. Investments in modernisation of the country and in quality of life should be a common national goal.

5.12. The Czech Republic is within reach of the EU membership. In the debate about this step, quarrels whether to do this step dominate over how to make most of it for modernisation and Europeisation of Czech countries. A conflict between provincialism and (west-) Europeanism escorts the Czech policy since its origin. It is our privilege that we are now able to experience what we had only been able to read about in history textbooks for so many years. Our historic experience shows us also that we should not lose this opportunity and rank our country to the developed Europe not only considering geopolitics, but also through the way we live in the country and the way we administer it



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