




# Book Review: Europeanization of Environmental Policy in the New Europe by Mats Braun

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*In this book, **Mats Braun** aims to offer an up-to-date account of how post-communist member states have handled policy initiatives in the field of environmental policy after accession. Case studies on Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, Poland and Romania explore whether social norms and the process of socialization can help us understand why the track record of new member states in the area of environmental policy is more varied than was originally envisaged prior to enlargement. **Sebastian Mayr** recommends this book to students looking for an overview of the topic.*

**Europeanization of Environmental Policy in the New Europe. Mats Braun.**  
**Ashgate. 2014.**

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With the People's Climate March recently bringing the United Nations climate summit and global environmental policy into the spotlight, the analysis of potential EU internal opposition to its standing is certainly topical. In *Europeanization of Environmental Policy in the New Europe*, [Mats Braun](#), academic researcher at the Institute of International Relations in Prague, considers how the Czech Republic, Poland, Romania and Bulgaria have navigated two different EU policy initiatives – [REACH](#) and the [Climate-Energy Package](#). These four countries have of course completed the accession process in recent years, and Braun's book considers how and why new member states react differently to EU environmental policy.

The EU has been advancing its environmental regulation significantly in terms of both quantity and quality since the early 1990s. However, the EU enlargement in 2004 and 2007 and the cost of environmental policies for the new Central and Eastern European Countries (CEECs) raised concerns that they could become internal “brakes” for the further development of the EU's environmental policies.

Braun looks to grasp the extent to which these accessions have hampered the EU's environmental policy-making. The book succeeds in illuminating the reasons for the policy positions of the countries under examination in a very balanced and judicious manner, and its strength certainly lies in presenting interesting evidence and groundwork. However, the generalizability of the findings remains quite limited. While readers looking for an understanding of the presented cases may find the material of interest, those looking for stronger conclusions may find this a somewhat disappointing read.

Braun's study focuses on the analysis of the conditions of the socialization processes of the four countries under examination. The reason for taking this focus lies in his observation that “new member states, at least so far, have not had the negative impact on EU environmental policy that had often been predicted” (p.1). The concept of socialization, which is defined as “the process by which states internalize norms arising elsewhere in the international systems” (see [Kai Alderson](#)), may serve here as an explanation for the new member states' adaptation to certain shared environmental norms of the EU-15. Braun further theorises that socialization has taken place “when norms have become so internalized by actors that they achieve a ‘taken-for-granted’ quality.” Finally, socialization becomes more likely, the more conditions are in place (p.10).

Based on the socialization and norm diffusion literature, he distinguishes two roads to state socialization, with distinct conditions for each. First, states may be socialized through the interaction of domestic decision-making civil servant elites with the EU and colleagues in other member states. Second, states may be socialized through the

correspondence between norms promoted by the EU and the activities of domestic norm entrepreneurs, such as NGOs. A condition for socialization via the first road would be, for example, the continuous involvement of the same people and the same institutions in a particular policy, whereas norm diffusion via the second road would normally go along with dominant action of NGOs, industries or other advocacy groups in favour of the EU policy.



People's Climate March London 2014. Credit: [askbeforepresuming](#) CC BY-NC-SA 2.0

After elaborating on the EU's environmental core norms – namely ecological modernization, sustainable development, precautionary principle, multilateralism and environmental policy integration – the author uses Chapter 4 to discuss the performance of new and old member states in terms of transposition and implementation of EU environmental policy directives as well as public opinion. He concludes that the [infringement and transposition statistics](#) do not reveal any significant differences between CEECs and the EU-15 member states or change over time but rather, if at all, confirm the divide between Northern and Southern European countries (p.57). In contrast to this, [Eurobarometer](#) and [Gallup surveys](#) suggest that the CEECs have different normative preferences on EU environmental policies such as climate policy and show lower support for environmental protection in general.

In Chapter 6, “The New Member States and EU Climate Policy”, Braun then analyses how likely the socialization process proceeds in the selected countries with regard to the EU climate change policy of 2008/2009, and provides a background on the latter. For his analysis Braun draws on 44 semi-structured interviews with agents, representatives and activists involved in the formation of the CEEC's negotiation positions in the two EU policies under examination (p.23). He concludes that “there are few indications of socialization in the field” (p. 146), with biggest obstacles in Poland. Poland stands out due to “almost consensual support among the political elite for an alternative norm”, while norm opponents are strong and norm entrepreneurs marginalized (p. 146). Bulgaria and Romania are reluctant to challenge the EU climate norms, which may not be due to an on-going socialization but rather the countries' short history of EU membership. In contrast, “indications of socialization of EU climate norms” can be found for the Czech Republic, which is supposedly due to its influential Ministry of Environment and a “certain stability of staff of the Ministry” (p.147).

In his concluding discussion, Braun summarizes the results of the analysis of both policy cases as well as the respective role and reception of the five EU environmental core norms reflected in the two policy cases. He concludes that “whereas the conditions for the first road of socialization are largely in place regarding the REACH regulation and EU chemical policy, this is not the case regarding climate change policy due to the high level of

fluctuation of staff working on this issue in the public administrations” (p. 157). Regarding the second road to socialization, he only finds indications of an ongoing socialization process in the Czech Republic and only on climate change policies. As a consequence of his analysis, Braun argues that CEECs become increasingly willing to challenge the EU position and that the EU enlargement may eventually hamper future EU environmental policy. Nevertheless, “socialization should not be equated to a certain type of state behaviour” and it is not likely that CEECs will form blocking minorities in the Council due to different approaches taken towards the EU (p.158), he states.

In sum, *Europeanization of Environmental Policy in the New Europe* provides interesting case studies on the policy approaches of four CEECs towards the EU’s REACH legislation and climate policy package 2008/9, based on rich qualitative data. By analysing CEECs’ positions after their adoption of the environmental *acquis communautaire*, he contributes to a new field of research and a new stream of the EU normative power literature. While the book’s strength lies in the judicious discussion and balancing of arguments and evidence, the value of its conclusions remains questionable. As it relies on only two policy cases and barely half of all new recent EU member states, any conclusions must be put into perspective and seen as “tentative”, as Braun admits himself. The book thus addresses itself mainly to academic peers interested in evidence on and understanding of the presented cases and further research on the topic.

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