
PREFACE AND ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

One of the main questions revolving around the accession of the new Member States in 2004 was whether these countries could successfully integrate into the decision-making procedures of the European Union and accommodate the outcomes of these procedures in their own legal systems. The decision-making procedures of the European Union, due to the particular nature of the organisation, assign distinct roles and tasks to the Member States and their political institutions. The nearly decade long legal and political preparation before accession greatly shaped the roles and functions that these countries, as EU members, would assign to their political institutions in maintaining the multiple linkages between the state and the EU institutions. The beginning of the research process for this book largely coincided with the accession of the ten new Member States to the EU. The purpose of this project was to analyse Hungary's accession to the EU, examining the state's experiences, practices, and structures to provide a general framework with which to evaluate the impact of accession on all new Member States. It is hoped that this established framework as well as the specific study of Hungary will also aid future accession candidates in their preparation process. The book's findings confirm that although there is convergence between the 'Europeanisation' of models and practices actually established in Member States, Hungary's example shows that particular constitutional traditions of a state will likely have a determinative effect on allocating the 'European' tasks among the state institutions, while at the same time helping to maintain the state's core constitutional principles. This research endeavor, however, was aimed beyond solely an analysis of legal and constitutional frameworks, and examined the practical, operational side of state apparatuses through collection of first-hand observations from civil servants and experts working at different levels and stages of coordination of EU policy in Budapest and representation of the national position in Brussels, as well as the implementation of EU law at the national level. Questionnaires were circulated and evaluated, interviews were conducted in Budapest and in Brussels, and government documents were collected and analysed. I owe special thanks to the civil servants from the various ministries, the Hungarian Parliament and the Hungarian Permanent Representation to the European Union for their special assistance in this project, particularly their providing me the opportunity to observe their operations in practice.

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