

tail how his WRI tried and failed in 1989 to work with President George H. W. Bush and Congress and later the Clinton Administration to address climate change and other issues, urging international cooperation (pp. 68–69). Such accounts, he argues, go beyond underscoring that the landscape is littered with worthy but badly neglected proposals for US government action. They also point out that ‘when today’s environmentalism recognizes problems, it believes they can be solved within the system, typically with new policies and, more recently, by engaging the corporate sector. ...Today’s environmentalism is forever hopeful on all this.’ (p. 69)

After reading the litany of overwhelming ecological challenges together with Speth’s reminiscences of decades of failure and setbacks, one might well wonder what explains his indefatigable confidence that fundamental change is possible on the necessary scale and timeframe. Because it is written with scientific accuracy but in non-technical language, *The Bridge at the Edge of the World* will be of equal interest to students and teachers in the social sciences as well as anyone in the general public who wants to understand the current environmental crisis and learn about a range of creative potential responses. The book will be of particular use to sociologists for three main reasons. The first is that Speth reveals that struggles over political and economic power are central to understanding the obstacles to effective environmental protection. The second is his focus on both the institutional and personal aspects of the issues. And the third is his analysis of social movements – of why environmentalists often fail to achieve their goals, and of the hope for more effective movement building to make the social changes necessary to seriously address the ecological crisis.

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**Gerda Falkner, Oliver Treib
and Elisabeth Holzleithner:**
*Compliance in the Enlarged European
Union: Living Rights or Dead Letters?*
Aldershot, Burlington, 2008: Ashgate,
214 pp.

The process of European integration covers almost all aspects of society, economy, and polity. Although social policy remains in principle within the national competence, following the principle of subsidiarity, some degree of EU intervention is inevitable due to the implications of economic integration and economic freedoms (the harmonisation of the social protection systems) and the basic goals of European integration (a competitive and cohesive society). The EU uses both hard and soft instruments to promote the objectives of ‘European citizenship’, and in this process it advances some common ‘social standards’ within the EU. Given the subsidiarity principle, the question arises as to whether these common standards are actually respected by the individual member states, especially after the accession of the new member states in 2004. On the one hand, the new members are challenged by considerable economic pressures; on the other, they are expected to implement some of the more advanced social standards that have already been established within the EU (although in some respects their social standards have been developed sufficiently). Considering the more binding character of the economic agenda (the Stability and Growth Pact) compared to the ‘social standards’, several researchers have articulated their suspicions that these countries have instead opted for ‘social dumping’ in order to become competitive within the EU.

Social science research on the impact of the EU in terms of the ‘integration’ or ‘convergence’ of the national social policy systems has focused until now mainly on the role of the Open Coordination Method examples of which are the European Employ-

ment Strategy or Social Inclusion agenda. The role of EU directives, which typically elaborate some of the articles of the Treaty, and the role of the case law of the European Court of Justice, which provides guidelines for implementing the directives in practice, have not been much in focus. The book under review aims to close this gap, following up on previous work (Falkner, Treib, Hartlapp and Leiber, *Complying with Europe: EU Harmonization and Soft Law in the Member States*, Cambridge Univ. Press, 2005). It examines the role of social legislation, which is implemented through the instruments of 'soft' law, in this case the role of the Directive on Working Time, the Directive on Equal Treatment, and the Directive on Equal Employment Conditions. In addition to an introduction and conclusion, the book presents four case study chapters focusing on the national systems of labour law and related legislation in four new post-communist member states: the Czech Republic, Hungary, Slovakia, and Slovenia.

This is an excellent comparative study of policy implementation, inspired by the best tradition of public policy research. The authors examine the key hypothesis that during the accession of the new member states to the EU compliance with EU soft law may temporarily be excellent owing to the 'joining the club effect' (as expressed by formal transposition of the soft law directives), while the implementation (of directives) into practice after accession represents the real test of compliance. The 'misfit' hypothesis in turn suggests that the more EU legislation is incompatible with national law, the more difficult it will be to implement it, in conformity with the assumption that the preferences of key domestic political actors is crucial. The process of implementing EU legislation is understood and analysed in three stages: the formal transposition of EU law, its enforcement into practice by using appropriate tools to make the letter of the law reality, and its application in practice.

The four national chapters, written by respectively Clemens Wiedermann, Emmanuelle Cause, Marianne Schulze, and Petra Furtlehner, represent well-informed and detailed national case studies, rich in resources used, intelligent in their organisation, and creative in their interpretation of the findings. Moreover, they are easily comparable since they adhere to the same structure and the same methodological grid, which can be described as a sort of historical-sociological institutionalism. These national chapters not only provide rich information on the processes of the transposition, application, and enforcement of the directives, they also analyse the role of the various actors and the relevance of a broader set of factors in this process. Finally, they assess how far the individual countries have complied with EU soft law. The studies tell us about some shared problems that occurred in the implementation of the directives in the new member states and the differences in the approaches taken to their implementation.

The shared problems emerge from the specific features of the societal context in the four countries. First, the lack of institutional capacities is recognised, including the absence of a labour court system and/or long proceedings, the deficient personnel capacity of responsible institutions like courts, labour inspectorates, equal treatment bodies, and the lack of resources provided in order to improve the capacity. Beside more general cultural factors, the authors identify other crucial factors behind this, such as the weak level of civil society, the low prestige and influence of trade unions, the lack of legal awareness, the low trust in institutions, including the courts, combined with people's fear of unemployment and dismissal, and the lack of a case-law tradition. These problems are accompanied by a more general value shift (see the chapter on Slovakia). In the atmosphere of transition, individual liberties are emphasised even in labour contracts, with-

out sufficient institutional support for individuals who are exposed to insecurity and precariousness in their employment position. Similarly, tolerance for the hidden discrimination of women is widespread, which is underpinned by the fact that women assume most of the family responsibilities related to caring for children. Third, some structural factors become highly important when combined with weak institutions. For example, if unemployment is high, people are submissive to employers and resist less when their rights are violated. Similarly, in order to attract investments and be competitive, public administrations often appear to be rather submissive to business rather than enforcing EU directives to protect the rights of the employees and raise labour costs in the process (see the chapter on Slovakia and Slovenia).

The four case studies also show cross-country differences. To start with, the institutional settings are more advanced in some countries than in others. For example, in Hungary and Slovenia the labour courts exist (although their practical role is not so crucial); the status of the Equal Treatment Bodies is more advanced in Hungary and Slovenia than in Slovakia and certainly the Czech Republic. The degree of transposition of the directives also varies: in Hungary, in contrast to the other countries, the Supreme Court has ruled that on-call duties should be assessed as working time – this complies with the EU case law; in the other three countries the Anti-Discrimination Act was adopted in time (after some pressure from the EU), although it involved some problems and resistance from some political actors, while the Czech Republic has been reluctant to accept it at all. Some of these national differences are underestimated in the final comparative chapter. For example, the chapter on the Czech Republic documents the Euro-scepticism of influential political actors, implying anti-European practices in

institutions when it comes to the enforcement and application of directives. The working time directive is the only one to have been transposed timely and effectively, while both equality directives showed 'serious failures in transposition' (p. 57). Yet this conclusion places the Czech Republic in a rather different comparative light. Despite the wide range of contextual variables considered, some relevant ones are missing. More attention ought to have been paid to the cultural contexts since these are increasingly associated with the legitimacy of the directives and the political commitment of governments. Second, the influence of the other EU agendas should be taken into consideration more carefully, given the oft-discussed inconsistency between the more binding EU economic criteria and less binding EU social policy agenda, which may imply in practice that the Stabilisation and Growth Pact requirements restrict countries' possibility to implement the soft 'social agendas'.

In the concluding chapter, the authors generalise the findings presented in the national chapters. Their comparison provides a unique insight into the process of implementation of EU soft law and its real impacts on national policies. The 'worlds of compliance' described in the book from 2005 have been supplemented with a new type identified in the four countries in focus. The original typology distinguished a 'world of law observance', where countries transpose EU directives in a timely and correct manner and where court systems are equipped with sufficient resources. Countries in the 'world of domestic politics' only transpose EU directives timely and correctly when there are no conflicting domestic interests. In the 'world of transposition neglect' compliance with the EU law is not a goal itself and transposition obligations are often not recognised at all. The new type identified in the four CEE countries analysed here is labelled as the 'world of dead letters': directives are trans-

posed promptly, but without adequate enforcement and application in practice.

While this label may be helpful, new questions arise and alternative interpretations are possible. The authors are concerned with the central hypothesis of the policy 'misfit' or 'goodness of fit' of the EU directives with the national policies. They use the notion of the total policy misfit – one that depends first on the legal policy misfit and second on the practical significance of the policy area, for example, in terms of the economic costs involved in implementation. For example, while in all countries introduction of the Working Time Directive did not require much of a legislative change, when applied in practice it might increase costs for employers owing to demanding health protection arrangements, and could reduce their competitiveness. On the other hand, with respect to the Equality Directives, in the Czech Republic the legal misfit has been higher than in the other countries – and when combined with the expected costs for different actors, the overall misfit has been higher too, which has hindered implementation. The authors claim that although the overall misfit has led to the failures in the implementation (enforcement, application) of the directives in the four countries, there is no pattern of 'revenge', and institutional shortcomings such as long court proceedings and inadequate personal resources and expertise represent the main obstacle for putting letters into practice. The key problem, for them, is the low implementation capacity: no deliberate effort to cheating by CEE governments was observed (p. 165). However, it is far from clear to me that this is the correct interpretation of the non-effort or total neglect of the enforcement of soft law and the deliberately 'formal' approach adopted by all four countries. Is it appropriate to interpret such an approach as 'compliance' with the EU in the case of countries where law enforcement has traditionally been rather

ineffective? I would argue that these countries are fully aware of the lack of practical consequences and would consequently suggest an interpretation of 'camouflage compliance' or *de facto* neglect. In the Czech case we can find some evidence of 'rejection' of the EU directives: the Anti-Discrimination Act had been effectively rejected until 2009, until the new 'administrative caretaker government' submitted it to Parliament, which overruled the President's veto, resulting in a delay of about one year.

The assessment of the factors which influence implementation could also be elaborated further? The reasons the authors suggest for enforcement and application problems can be summarised under two broad clusters: weak civil society and lack of litigation culture, and weak administrative capacity and inadequate resources. However, this overlooks the deeper question of low political commitment and low political and public legitimacy of the directives and related policies. If the directives enjoyed some degree legitimacy and there were a commitment to them, more resources and more capacity would probably have been devoted to them. This leads us to more general cultural contexts and factors. Here it would have been helpful to see a more systematic analysis of popular preferences with respect to the EU directives and related agendas, based on data from either the European Social Survey or the European Values Study or Eurobarometer.

The 'world of dead letters' is possibly not as homogenous as presented here. The case of the rejection of the transposition of the Equality Directives in the Czech Republic at least suggests the possibility of another type, which could be labelled the 'world of rejection'. Clearly, political commitment to the directives and the political legitimacy of them, which derives from the overall public and political support, represent an important context for implementation that deserves closer attention.

The concluding subsection of the comparative chapter features a section entitled 'promising strategies', which are really the authors' recommendations on how to improve the implementation of soft law in the four countries. These recommendations provoke some misgivings, as the ethical assumptions behind this policy advice are not clear. Do the authors believe, for instance, that the directives ought to be implemented at all costs, or can countries have legitimate reasons for non-compliance? Second, these recommendations are of a rather technical or technocratic character, as they focus very much on administrative capacity and enforcement/application procedures, but fail to note that they can probably only work under broader socio-cultural and political-economic contexts, which are abstracted away, such as weak civic society and the weak political legitimacy of the directives. Ralf Dahrendorf famously noted that the requisite cultural changes would take about fifty years to occur in the post-communist societies. On the other hand, cultural change may be facilitated by public policies: this is probably the implicit hope of this book.

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Paul Blokker and Bruno Dallago (eds.):
Regional Diversity and Local Development in the New Member States
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In this book Paul Blokker and Bruno Dallago assemble a number of experts on the region of East Central European (ECE), who together paint a complex picture of the dynamics of local development. This is indeed an important undertaking for, as the editors rightly point out, regional development problems in ECE have received

much less attention in the literature than have similar issues in other parts of Europe. Moreover, the volume is keen to avoid over-simplifications, which are often common in the discussion on development in Europe and either insist on uniform recommendations for development based on some generalised model or simply assume that convergence will follow from implementing a common EU regulatory framework. Instead, the focus of these studies is the context-dependent interplay between different levels of governance – firm, local and regional, national and supranational – which present the local actors with a different matrix of opportunities and are in turn shaped by them. In the introduction, the editors present a variety of elements which ought to be taken into consideration when analysing such a complex phenomenon, from the differences in the institutional set-up which facilitate or obstruct linkages to the global economy, to the nature of intra-community relations and the particular legacies of each locality.

The ten studies in this volume are grouped into two sections. The first six offer a more general theoretical or comparative view of regional development in ECE, and the remaining four tackle specific issues in single national contexts. In the first section, Grzegorz Gorzelak outlines the general pattern of uneven development of different regions within the ECE after the change of regime, offering a categorisation of regions by their development trajectories into forerunners (those that used to be highly developed and maintained high levels of growth), winners (those who managed to capitalise on certain previously unutilised assets to promote growth), losers (those whose previously valued assets lost their currency in the new environment), and laggards (those who failed to make use of the new opportunities). In the same section, Petr Pavlínek builds on some of these insights to show how foreign direct investments (FDI) intervened in these dy-