

The Cooperation and Verification Mechanism for Bulgaria

Public Hearing at the European Parliament,
9th of November 2010, Brussels

Antoinette Primatarova

Centre for Liberal Strategies, Sofia, Bulgaria

Implications of the view that the CVM is not delivering

- The EU's credibility as a transformative power;
- Bulgaria's and Romania's credibility as law-abiding EU democracies;
- Bulgaria's and Romania's prospects for a social and economic catch-up
- Further enlargement in general and prospects for EU membership of the Western Balkans and Turkey in particular

The twofold purpose of the CVM

- To reassure Member States and the European Parliament that Bulgaria and Romania will fully comply with EU rules and standards
- To guide Bulgaria and Romania in their preparation for full compliance with EU rules and standards (“allowing Bulgarian citizens to reap the full benefits of EU membership”)

The CVM as a sanctioning mechanism?

- CVM as a post-accession conditionality instrument
- Conditionality as a sticks-and-carrots-game
- Unfortunate linkage between the CVM and Art. 36, 37 and 38 of Bulgaria's and Romania's Accession Treaty (provisions for safeguard measures)

A non-dual conditionality paradigm

- Reactive reinforcement (withholding rewards)
- Coercive reinforcement (inflicting punishment)
- Supportive reinforcement (giving support); presupposes constructive cooperation on both sides

The CVM and stakeholders

EU

- Commission
- Council
- Individual Member States
- European Parliament
- Civil society and media

Bulgaria

- Government
- Civil Society

The Bulgarian Government

Stanishev (2005 – 2009)

- Perceived CVM as humiliation & sanctioning mechanism; wanted CVM lifted or modified
- Threatened the EU that sanctions could boost extremists & Euroscepticism
- Neglected problems with corruption & org. crime
- Lack of cooperation with the Commission

Borissov (2009 -)

- Electoral victory on the ballot of fight against corruption
- Corruption & organized crime are not any longer neglected
- Positive assessment of the CVM
- Constructive cooperation with the Commission

Bulgarian Civil Society

- CVM reports and Commission's actions were perceived as justified and not as “sanctions” targeted at Bulgarians in general but rather at the government;
- Broad Support for EU's criticism and freezing of financial funds
- Political “sanctioning” of the Stanishev government in the 2009 general elections

The Effectiveness of the CVM

At the level of government

- Not effective with the Stanishev government
- Good prospects for effectiveness on the basis of constructive cooperation between the Borissov government and the EU

At the level of civil society

- Civil society became a real stakeholder in Bulgaria's EU membership
- The generally vague anti-corruption rhetoric got real substance ('conflict of interest' and 'public procurement' issues)
- Raised public awareness of and intolerance towards corruption
- "sandwich game"

Preconditions for the Effectiveness of the CVM

- Understanding that EU membership is not the end of the longer Europeanisation road
- Political will of the governments in new Member States
- Involvement of civil society in the Europeanisation of the new Member States
- Understanding post-accession benchmarks as instruments for granting support

**CVM in the process of further
enlargement?**

YES