Short Introduction

The aim of this paper is the evaluation of the EU influence on “quality of government” in the Central and Eastern European countries regarding rule adoption, that is adoption of formal standards and norms on the basis of political conditionality in the process of enlargement. For this reason, the paper is structured as follows: the first part is dedicated to the concept of quality of government. What is the origin of the concept and its development within different literatures? What definition can be used in an empirical research perspective? To answer these questions in the first part the literature on quality of government will be analyzed in order to propose an original definition based on four dimensions: impartiality, effectiveness, accountability and responsiveness. The second part of the paper, instead, is devoted to the empirical analysis of the EU’s influence on this dimension during the enlargement process. However, in this work we limit the analysis to the direct impact of the EU (through conditionality and programs on QOG), or the impact on rule adoption, although the European influence is not limited to this aspect, as it will be highlighted in the paper.

1. The academic debate: from "good governance" to "quality of government"

The continuing interest of researchers to the concept of quality of government is probably due to a very simple reason: “malfunctioning governments remain widespread phenomena across the globe” (Adsera, Boix, and Payne 2003, p. 445). This question has always had two additional aspects
that have been stressed according to the discipline: from an economical point of view, “the welfare of citizens has been shown to be enhanced by well-functioning governments”, considered to be governments respecting the rule of law, whose bureaucracy and policy-makers operate effectively and are that not affected by corruption practices (Knack and Keefer 1995; Mauro 1995; Easterly and Levine 1997; Kaufmann, Kraay, and Zoido 1999). From a political point of view, inefficiency and corruption challenge democratic representation and the institutional mechanisms ensuring the proper functioning of democracy (Adsera, Boix, and Payne 2003, p. 445; Diamond and Morlino 2004; Morlino 2009). In the perspective that institutions are created on the basis of the principle of efficiency (Demsetz 1967; North 1981) and thus, in other words, when the “social benefits of building institutions exceed the transaction costs of doing so” (La Porta et al. 1999, p. 223), the importance of “good governance” for economic development is now considered “a well-established empirical proposition”(La Porta et al. 1999, p. 223). In the literature on political economy the role of “good governance” in the economic development of European countries has been empirically demonstrated in an historical perspective (North 1981; De Long and Shleifer 1993; Evans and Rauch 1999), as well as in the development of Western Europe after the Second World War (Knack and Keefer 1995; Mauro 1995; Easterly and Levine 1997; Rodrik, Subramanian, and Trebbi 2004) and in the transition from socialism to capitalism in Central and Eastern Europe (Weingast 1995; Johnson et al. 1997).

After the early years, when research on governance has largely been dominated by economic studies, in recent years this subject has begun to attract attention of many researchers who are interested in studying effects and causes of so-called “quality of government” in non-economic areas of social research (Rothstein and Teorell 2008). Especially the studies of democratic stability, role of institutions in the transition process towards democracy and a democratic “quality” (Mungiu-Pippidi 2006; Rose and Shin 2001; Zakaria 2007; Diamond and Morlino 2005; Morlino 2009) have contributed to the evolution of the literature on quality of government. The relationship between democracy and quality of government has been analysed in several studies (Sung 2004; Montinola and Jackman 2002; Charron and Lapuente 2010; Bonaglia, De Macedo, and Bussolo 2001), highlighting the ambiguous nature of this relationship. The results show a trend of deterioration of this dimension in new democracies, and an increase in the long-term following the process of democratic consolidation. Therefore, political institutions of authoritarian regimes perform better than institutions of “new” democracies, but lesser than institutions of consolidated democracies (Charron and Lapuente 2010). This change in the theoretical and methodology perspective, as suggested by Rothstein and Teorell (2008, p. 167), has broadened the research
agenda. In their article “What is “quality of government”? A theory of impartial government institutions”, Rothstein and Teorell (2008) have identified three critical points in the literature on quality of government: the first problem concerns the extension of the concept and can be summarized by the risk of “conceptual stretching” (Sartori 1970; King, Keohane, and Verba 1994; Collier and Mahon Jr 1993). Many definitions, including the definition proposed by the World Bank, are too broad and overlapping with the more general definitions of democracy or politics. Keefer (2004, p. 168) argues that if the studies on governance stretch any questions about how a group of people organized their own government, then “there are few subjects in all of political science and political economy that do not fall within the governance domain”. More briefly, Teorell and Rothstein (2008, p. 168) believe that “if quality of government is everything, then maybe it is nothing”. The second problem is related to the dominance of economic studies in research on “good governance”, which has produced definitions that do not take into consideration the variables that cannot be included in an economic perspective. In addition, the attention to the relationship with economic development has had the effect that the quality of government has not been considered independently of its effects on development, thereby preventing an independent development of a general theory of quality of government (Rothstein and Teorell 2008, p. 168). The third problem, finally, also relates to the definition of the concept and the identification that has often been made in the literature between the quality of government and the lack of corruption (Mauro 1995; Rose-Ackerman 1998, 2006; Mungiu-Pippidi 2006). In contrast, although the quality of government requires a low level of corruption, the content of the first goes well beyond the mere absence of corruption (Rothstein and Teorell 2008, p. 168) because of the multidimensional nature of the concept of “quality”.

The theoretical proposal by Teorell and Rothstein (2008, p. 170) is based on the idea that the equality of access to power, characteristic of a democratic regime, has to be “complemented with impartiality on the output side”, which consequently is the main characteristic of a “good” government. Democracy is a necessary condition for the quality of government, but it is nevertheless sufficient. In reality, several democracies have different levels of quality of government. For scholars “impartiality” means that the government “shall not take into consideration anything about the citizen/case that is not beforehand stipulated in the policy or the law” (Rothstein and Teorell 2008, p. 170; Strömberg and Lundell 1984). This means that the government should act only according to the public interest rather than a “self interest”. This is a concept that can be found even in the literature on democratization when, for example, O'Donnell suggests that “State institutions are supposed to be guided not by particularistic motives, but by
universalistic orientations to some version of the public good” (O'Donnell 1996, p. 39). By proposing the concept of impartiality, Rothstein and Teorell move away from previous definitions of quality of government as absence of corruption. In fact, the government's impartiality in the exercise of its functions already includes the absence of corruption and essentially subsumes this concept: “although impartiality implies the absence of corruption, the opposite is not necessarily true. Non-existent corruption in a society does not exclude all forms of partial exercise of governmental power” (Rothstein and Teorell 2008, p. 170; Linde 2009, p. 3). A second key point of the concept of quality of government as impartiality is the exclusion of the content of government activity in the definition. Unlike economic studies in which the object of analysis is government’s effectiveness, Rothstein and Teorell focus exclusively on procedural aspects: “the content of public policies should not be included in the definition of QoG” (Rothstein and Teorell 2008, p. 171). This theoretical choice depends on two reasons: the first is about democratic legitimacy, since the political debate cannot be replaced by international rankings developed by experts about the best public policy to be adopted, and because the very act of identifying the best policies regardless of the economic, political and cultural context may be a purely political and ideological exercise. Second, because the empirical evidence shows there are not causal links between specific public policies and the quality of government. With this definition, the studies on the quality of government grew at a conceptual level. The recognition of the connection of quality of government with other dimensions of democracy allows beginning a dialogue with the literature on the quality of democracy, overcoming the previous isolation in economic theories. As Linde (Linde 2009, p. 3) pointed out, “it seems that the conceptualisation of “quality of government” as impartiality also requires a certain degree of quality of democracy”. This means that the concept of quality of government is completely integrated with the dynamics of a democratic system and becomes a dimension closely related to the other dimensions of the quality of democracy.

In this paper we therefore want to include the analysis of the quality of government within the broader research agenda on the empirical studies of democracy. Larry Diamond has noted the importance of quality of government in the construction of a good democratic system: “there is a specter haunting democracy in the world today. It is bad governance—governance that serves only the interests of a narrow ruling elite. Governance that is drenched in corruption, patronage, favoritism, and abuse of power. Governance that is not responding to the massive and long-deferred social agenda of reducing inequality and unemployment and fighting against dehumanizing poverty. Governance that is not delivering broad improvement in people’s lives because it is stealing, squandering, or skewing the available resources” (Diamond 2007, p. 119). Formulating a definition
that can be used in empirical research in this theoretical perspective is not an easy task. As Holmberg (Holmberg, Rothstein, and Nasiritousi 2009, p. 4) stressed, the risk of producing definitions confirming its own theories is very high. In addition, it is a matter of fact that in the literature a common definition of quality of government does not exist yet and probably will never exist because of the essentially controversial of the subject (Linde 2009). However, this consideration should not prevent the possibility of an empirical research on the subject. What is really important, ultimately, is to explicitly and clearly justify the chosen approach.

2. Quality of government: an empirical definition

Basing on the existing literature, this part of the paper is devoted to the definition of the analytical framework of this work. First, it will be necessary to address the concept of quality of government, justifying the choice of a specific definition and identifying the most appropriate indicators for the empirical analysis. Second, we will define how we intend to study the EU’s influence on the quality of government of the Central and Eastern European countries and clarify the complex interactions between internal and external factors in determining changes of the dependent variable.

The first problem arises with the term “government”. As we explained in the previous part, in the literature different terms have been used to describe apparently the same object of study. However, in many cases the definition ranged from a broader and a narrower sense (Ieraci 2003, p. 132): from the one hand, integrating the concept in the whole system of government and in some cases using the same concept to define the broader concept of democracy. On the other hand, focusing solely on the executive as one of the institutions of a democratic system. The problem of the first definition, regardless of the conceptual confusion, lies in the fact of being elusive and difficult to analyze, with the risk of confusing the government's performance with the performance of the political system tout court through the comparison of ideal models (Ieraci 2003, p. 132), such as in the case of Lijphart (1999) or Vassallo (1997). The choice of the narrow definition overcomes many theoretical and methodological obstacles and, in my opinion, it is a more effective strategy where compared to the attempts to measure the economic and political performance of an entire system of government. Therefore, a meso approach to the evaluation of a single dimension of the democratic quality fits better with to the objectives of this research.

The second problem arises with the term “quality”. Why do we use this concept and not, as an alternative, the concepts of “good” or “capacity” of government? To answer this objection, it is necessary to review the theoretical objective that we set in this paper, that is, to fully integrate the
study of government in the empirical theories of democracy. As it has been demonstrated, the term “good” associated with “governance” or “government” was used and developed since the beginning with an utilitarian and economic function. Similarly in many cases the term “capacity” (Tilly 2007; Piana 2006; Natalini 2008; March and Olsen 1989; Sen 1995) was used regardless of whether or not the regime is democratic (Tilly 2007). In addition, using the concept of capacity instead of quality in our theoretical framework would be a step backwards: the risk is to come back to an utilitarian use of the term, exclusively focused on the effectiveness (in several cases, administrative effectiveness) and characteristic of economic studies such as in the Institutional economy. Therefore, the choice of using the term “quality” represents a clear positioning in the academic debate: assessing the democratic quality of government is essential to assess the overall quality of democracy (Morlino 2009). As Ieraci (2003) stressed, the problem of quality of government is closely related to the crisis of democracy. The reasons for studying the “quality of government” are therefore similar to those behind the studies on the quality of democracy. Once these initial conceptual problems are solved and before going further, it is necessary to specify the characteristics that the definition must meet to be used in a scientific work. For this reason, it is useful to come back to the work of Putnam (1994), even if used in a different perspective. Robert Putnam proposes some criteria for the scientific evaluation of a government’s performance. By adapting its proposal to our needs with some modifications and integrations we can state that the definition should meet five criteria: Comprehensiveness, Internal Consistency, Reliability, Responsiveness and Parsimony.

**Comprehensiveness**: The concept of quality itself is multidimensional (Morlino 2008). The definition must take into account as far as possible all the dimensions allowing to evaluate the quality of a democratic government in terms of input-side, output-side and procedures governing its functioning.

**Internal Consistency**: taking into consideration all dimensions constituting the quality of government, it is necessary to pay attention to the coherence and complementarity between dimensions and between different indicators, avoiding as much as possible the risk of “overlapping” between the indicators.

**Reliability**: the criteria used for measurement must ensure the validity of the measure over time. Criteria and indicators cannot be volatiles, and they must be used consistently in different moments of time, in several cases and by different observers performing the measurement.

**Responsiveness**: Putnam explains it very clearly in his work. The definition must include “the objectives and evaluations of the institution’s protagonists and constituents” (Putnam, Leonardi, and
Nanetti 1994, p. 64). The compliance with this requirement is thus guaranteed by the inclusion in the overall assessment of government's level of perceived legitimacy by citizens, to avoid the risk of offering assessments completely diverging from the needs expressed by the political community and cultural context.

**Parsimony:** As in all objects of study in social sciences, the study of government allows using a multitude of perspectives, approaches and dimensions. We must therefore identify the most relevant dimensions and indicators and eliminate the rest from the theoretical model. We are aware of the risk of losing much of the nuances of reality, but it is the only way to go of some cognitive value for a scientific analysis. Once clarified these points it is finally possible to specify the definition of quality of government that will form the basis of the empirical part of this research:

--- “A quality government is an impartial, effective, accountable, and responsive government” ---

The definition is based on four dimensions: one procedural dimension (impartiality), one dimension that relates to the output-side (effectiveness), one dimension that relates to the input-side (accountability) and one dimension of results (responsiveness). By focusing on each dimension, in the next part we will try to justify the choice of this definition explaining the system of “quality of government”.

### 3. The system of “quality of government”

Four dimensions contribute to create the system of “quality of government”. We start with the procedural one, that is, impartiality.

**Impartiality.** Impartiality in the exercise of government is a concept introduced by Rothstein and Teorell (2008). The two scholars put this dimension in the “output-side” of government activity. Instead, we believe it is more correct to consider it as a procedural dimension, a rule operating independently of government activity. The definition fits with the objective of this research: the government “shall not take into consideration anything about the citizen/case that is not beforehand stipulated in the policy or the law” (Rothstein and Teorell 2008, p. 170; Strömberg and Lundell 1984). In fact, to act impartially means “to be unmoved by certain sorts of considerations - such a special relationships and personal preferences. It is to treat people alike irrespective of personal relationship and personal likes and dislike” (Cupit 2000). In addition, impartiality is defined independently of the content of public policies. To use an example by Teorell and Rothstein (2008,
the government's preference for specific choices of public policy, such as for example support for poor families with children, does not violate the principle of impartiality unless in the definition of the public policy there are criteria excluding families of a particular ethnic group or people with certain sexual preferences or belonging to certain religions.

Using the concept of impartiality allows integrating and at the same time overcoming the notion of corruption, seen as an abuse of public office for private purposes (Anderson and Tverdova 2003; Mauro 1995). The impartiality in the exercise of government actually subsumes the concept of corruption: “non-existent corruption in a society does not exclude all forms of partial exercise of governmental power” (Rothstein and Teorell 2008, p. 170; Linde 2009, p. 3). In this perspective corruption is a necessary but not sufficient condition of the impartiality of government. There are other variables defining this dimension, including the most important that in our view is the existence of conflicts of interest within the executive. The problem of conflicts of interest, which is emerged with evidence also in some consolidated democracies (Ginsborg 2003), is closely linked to the relationship between economic and political power. The use of the political power for private purposes, as it has been proved by the recent Italian experience, can be seen as a “vulnus” of democracy and an obstacle to the smooth functioning of a democratic government.

**Effectiveness.** This dimension relates to the output-side of government activities. However, prior to explaining what is meant by effectiveness, it is necessary to specify which elements will be excluded from this dimension. In the literature on “good governance”, there is often a reference to the government’s effectiveness in relation to public policy. Putnam stresses (1994) that the evaluation of the performance of a government must consider all areas in which government’s policy has a significant influence (education, health, social services, economic development, etc.). This approach has been used mainly in the economic literature and international indices, which seek to maximize the number of variables affecting the “good governance” through statistical analysis. However, in this work our approach is quite opposite. For two reasons: the first is the recurrent error of “conceptual stretching” (Sartori 1970; Ieraci 2003; Rothstein and Teorell 2008) producing a confusion between the performance of a government (in the narrow sense of executive) and the performance of a model of government or a democratic system in general. This is an error clearly explained in the literature, as shown in previous parts. The second reason lies in another conceptual mistake, that Teorell and Rothstein (2008, p. 172) synthesized in the idea that “impartiality should not only guide implementation but also the content of public policies”. The consequence of this idea is that policies can be good or bad regardless of the political, cultural and economic context. The debate on the relationship between size of government, different public policies, levels of
corruption and economic performance is very uncertain and generalizations about the general validity of certain public policy cannot be made (Alesina and Angeletos 2005; La Porta et al. 1999). On the contrary, often the attempt to formalize universally valid criteria may be ideologically biased, ignoring the different contexts of the government’s action and the criteria of democratic representation. For these reasons, we do believe that in the evaluation of the government’s effectiveness we should not consider the content of public policies, which should be the subject of dedicated analysis. On the contrary, government’s effectiveness must be evaluated regarding the ability to adopt and implement its own policy and legislative agenda. We propose two basic indicators for the empirical analysis of this dimension: the first one is a direct indicator, that is the government's ability to adopt its own legislation in the legislative process, and the second is an indirect indicator, that is the quality of public bureaucracy and its ability to implement government decisions and legislation.

Accountability. The dimension of accountability is at the heart of democracy. Since it can be formulated in different ways (Morlino 2008; Schmitter 2005; Bühlmann, Merkel, and Wessels 2008; O'Donnell 1998), we believe that some aspects of accountability should be excluded from the analysis. Since the definition of quality of government is applicable only to democratic governments, we must consider as granted the existence of a minimal democracy (Dahl 1971) and consequently all dimensions concerning free and fair elections, political pluralism and the guarantee of freedom of information have to be excluded from the analysis. However, others more relevant issues to our theoretical framework emerges in the literature. Regarding the accountability to citizens, the importance of government transparency and the existence of legislation that ensures transparency and the right for citizens to access information of public interest. Concerning accountability in relation to other institutions we are referring to the concept of “checks and balances”, i.e. “the mutual control (...) to balance power and thereby stabilise the political system”(Bühlmann, Merkel, and Wessels 2008, p. 36) and in particular to executive-legislative relations (Lijphart 1999) and the existence of forms of mutual control between the two institutions. The role of international and supranational institutions and the means of control they can exert on government activities, as in the case of the Union European in terms of fiscal policy is another dimension to be considered especially in the case of the EU countries. Consequently, these three different aspects of accountability must be incorporated in the analytical framework: regarding government-citizen, inter-institutional (and in particular the executive-legislative relationship, because we do not consider in the analysis other institutions as for instance the judiciary, which requires a separate analysis), and supranational relationship.
Responsiveness. This dimension symbolizes the final outcome of the quality of government. It is essential to determine whether the activities of the executive reflect the preferences of citizens of a given country, and whether the government is perceived as legitimate. Robert Dahl (1971, p. 1) emphasizes this point clearly: “the key characteristic of a democracy is the continuing responsiveness of the government to the preferences of its citizens”. Similarly, for Bingham Powell democratic governments are “responsive” when they adopt and implement policies that citizens want (Bingham Powell 2005). The process ensuring responsiveness of the government is extremely complex, involving various aspects of the political process: the method of aggregation of citizen’s preferences, the electoral process, the policy formulation and the implementation of public policies. Moreover, the importance of responsiveness is increasing because of the phenomena, which exist not only in “new” but also in consolidated democracies, of alienation and disaffection regarding democracy and criticism of political institutions’ ineffectiveness. If the role of responsiveness as a dimension of quality of government is very clear in the empirical literature on democracy, from a methodological point of view this dimension poses several problems for its empirical assessment, because of the difficult to accurately identify “expectations, interests, needs, and demands of citizens” (Morlino 2008). Different approaches have been proposed in the literature to empirically assess this dimension (Bingham Powell 2005): approaches considering the entire process, analysing civil society, political parties, public institutions and policies, or on the contrary a limited analysis of surveys opinion on the perceived legitimacy of institutions and public policies. We are aware of these differences, and we do believe that in some cases there may be economic (limited resources) or political limit (the presence of actors outside government, such as international and supranational organizations) to achieve the government’s responsiveness. Therefore, we think in this context the most common indicators in the literature on responsiveness may be used, and especially the perceived legitimacy and the level of government approval, and the evaluation of government activity through the level of approval of different policies.

In sum, these are the four dimensions composing the system of quality of government. As specified in the above criteria, it is internally consistent and sufficiently inclusive of the various aspects distinguishing the characteristics of a quality government.

4. The external influence on the quality of government: a theoretical framework

To explain the EU’s external influence on the quality of government, the theoretical framework must respect the following criteria and rules:
1. Integrating enlargement and europeanisation studies
2. Attention to the interaction between internal and external factors
3. Integrating material and ideal factors

First, it is necessary to overcome the limitations imposed by the division between enlargement and europeanization studies, and in the same time being aware of the specific EU influence on the candidate countries compared to other models of external intervention in the democratization and consolidation process. The peculiarities of the enlargement process and the characteristics of the “governance by enlargement” (Dimitrova 2002) for the candidate countries impose a necessary distinction between the enlargement phase (pre-accession) and the europeanisation phase (post-accession), although in some cases it is difficult to introduce a clear distinction, for instance in the case the transitional measures used with Bulgaria and Romania and the persistence of certain forms of “control” over different aspects of the functioning of democracy. However, the difficulty to clearly separate the “end” of the enlargement of the “beginning” of europeanisation requires an additional theoretical effort in the direction shown by works on the consequences of membership and the problems of “post-accession compliance” (Sedelmeier 2006, p. 21; Epstein and Sedelmeier 2008; Pridham 2008, 2008a). Moreover, the “objects” of study of the impact of enlargement are essentially the same of europeanisation (police, politics and politics). However, the context is different but not the tools, which remain unchanged even if they are used in different proportions with a prevalence of the role of conditionality during the pre-accession. The plurality of the EU’s influence is a factor that needs to be explicit: it must be integrated into the framework of the analysis because it represents continuity in the transition between pre and post accession.

Second, the analysis should focus on the interaction between internal and external factors. As Radaelli wrote about the early work of europeanization, “europeanisation demands explanation of what goes on inside the process, not a simple black-box design in which one correlates the input ‘EU independent variables’ to the output ‘domestic impact’ ” (Radaelli 2004, p. 5). These considerations are now widely accepted in the literature and the latest theoretical and empirical contributions explicitly use this approach (Coman 2009; Magen and Morlino 2008; Radaelli 2004). The internal dynamics affecting not only the executive, but also its interactions with the political, institutional and social actors as well as the role of ideas and values, must be analysed in the context of the EU’s action. Basically, there are vertical (between the EU and national actors) and horizontally dynamics (between different national actors). In particular, we must examine the role
of those who have been identified in the literature as “change agents” and “veto players” and which are respectively the “norm entrepreneurs” that in the domestic context “mobilize and persuade actors to redefine their interests and identities” (Börzel and Risse 2000) and the “individual or collective actors whose consent is necessary to change the status quo” (Tsebelis 2002). Therefore, “change agents” are the actors who, by virtue of their interest and because they share common ideas about rules or policies to be adopted, put pressure on politicians (Finnemore and Sikkink 1998). These actors can influence policy decisions through two main channels (Magen and Morlino 2008): on the one hand through a structural mechanism referring to the degree of openness and exposure of the institutions to other national and supranational institutions. The more this openness will be pronounced the more there will be opportunities for effective actions by the “change agents”. On the other hand, by a direct process of persuasion and socialization of institutions. The “veto players”, on the contrary, are political or institutional actors who have the power to hinder or encourage the adoption and implementation of norms or policies. Tsebelis pointed out that “in order to change policies (or as we will say from now on: change the (legislative) status quo) a certain number of individual or collective actors have to agree to the proposed change. I call such actors veto players” (Tsebelis 2002, p. 12). These actors can be institutional, if specified in the Constitution, or partisan. In the first case, the role of “veto players” mainly concerns the dimension of the inter-institutional accountability: the presence of “checks and balances” as a guaranteed of the interdependence and autonomy of institutions. In the second case, the concept refers to the dimension of “politics”: the structure of the party system and the competition between political actors.

Third, the need to integrate in a common framework ideal and material factors. Fearon and Wendt (2002) proposes three different ways of looking at the divide between rationalist and constructivist approaches. In the first case, the division is ontological: the two approaches offer totally opposing starting points on the social reality. In the second case, the division affects the empirical difference: according to the case there is a most appropriate approach explaining reality. In the third case the division is analytical or instrumental. The difference is essentially the "tools or lenses with which to theorize about world politics” (Zürn and Checkel 2005). The latter is, according to Fearon and Wendt, the most interesting and pragmatic way to treat the rationalism/constructivism debate. We have, consequently, the idea that the two approaches are not mutually exclusive: “they often occur simultaneously or characterize different phases in processes of adaptational change” (Börzel and Risse 2000, p. 13; Schimmelfennig 1999). We do believe that a theoretical dialogue, within the empirical analysis, is possible and desirable. Although we recognize that differences between the
two approaches are real, from an empirical perspective referred to the solution of a specific problem, the theoretical stagnation between “either/or” may leave space for a constructive “both/and” confrontation (Jupille, Caporaso, and Checkel 2003).

The integration between the two neo-institutionalist strands is necessary, at least for two reasons: first, because of the complementary existence of the “logic of consequentialism” and the “logic of appropriateness”. For March and Olsen (1998) the process of socialization and learning takes place very easily in a situation where actors are uncertain about their preferences and strategies, but certain about their identity and values. Instead, the process of “resource redistribution” occurs when the preferences and strategies of parties are clearly defined. Therefore, in the literature on enlargement and Europeanisation many researchers have argued the need to consider both approaches with their independent variables (Sedelmeier 2006; Jacoby 2004; Epstein and Sedelmeier 2008; Johnson 2006). Second, because of the link between the two sequential logic of adaptation: as pointed out by Börzel and Risse (2000, p. 13), “norm entrepreneurs might be empowered by supportive institutions, but then start a socialization process of persuasion in order to overcome multiple veto points in the domestic system. In contrast, if domestic change in response to Europeanization involves high redistributional costs, a socialization process might be necessary to overcome stalemate and to develop new rules of fairness on the basis of which actors can then bargain over the distribution of costs”. The logic based on the costs/benefits calculation and the processes of socialization and learning are therefore complementary and temporally linked. With the aim to analyse the causal mechanisms of international action in the process of democratization, Morlino and Magen (2008) have proposed to consider three distinct levels of influence: the “rule adoption”, which concerns the transposition of European norms and standards into national legislation (Schimmelfennig 2005). The “rule implementation”, which concerns the effective implementation of norms and standards transferred from the EU to candidate countries, and the “rule internalization”, which concerns the acceptance of these norms and standards, beyond the formal adoption, by bureaucracy, political elites, social actors and public opinion. There is a causal relationship between the adoption phase covering the short period, where the external pressure for change is stronger and more effective, the implementation covering the short/medium period, where the pressures are strong but the control capacity of the external actors is less effective, and the internalization phase covering the medium/long period, where in the absence of external incentives the dynamics between internal actors prevail. In some situations, and specifically in the case of countries subject to EU conditionality, it may happen that once the adoption of standards is completed (Schimmelfennig 2005), the “veto players” fail to comply previous commitments,
creating problems to implementation. An appropriate action of the external actor, combined with the commitment of change agents, can lead to the growth of skills and material and technical resources favouring implementation (Dimitrova 2002). The link established between exogenous and endogenous action is therefore the “hallmark of this particular process of institutional and administrative change” (Natalini 2008, p. 395). Therefore, the analysis of the different logics of influence in a sequential manner is confirmed by the proposals to formalize the different possibilities of dialogue between the neo-institutionalist approaches (Jupille, Caporaso, and Checkel 2003).

5. The EU’s influence: an empirical assessment

The transformations in the CEECs in the eighties have upset the political agenda of Member States and the Community itself. In a few years, European policy toward CEECs moved from structural and economic aids up to the prospect of membership. Answering to this challenge the EC puts forward new strategies and tools changing significantly the enlargement process. Following the EC-CMEA Joint Declaration in 1988, diplomatic relations are established for the first time and the Commission become responsible for the Trade and Cooperation Agreement. The following year the G7 summit states the need to intensify economic and political relations with CEECs and to promote the necessary reforms in Poland and Hungary. The G7 asked the Commission “to coordinate Western aid and to take the necessary initiatives in agreement with the other Member States of the Community, and to associate, besides the Summit participants, all interested countries” (G7 Declaration on East-West Relations 1989). The Commission establishes PHARE and the DG External Relations (DG I) deals with the creation of the programme. The programme followed a demand-driven logic based on the requests of national governments. It was essentially a technical support: the prospect of the programme was only a temporary economic assistance in exchange for reforms required by the Commission through conditionality. The Council of December 1989 decided to create an appropriate form of association with the CEECs. At the same time, it created the EBRD with the aim at promoting investment. The Commission prepared a proposal for an Association Agreement (Commission of the European Communities 1990). The European Council in April 1990 accepted the Commission's proposals and calls for the start of negotiations with some countries. The AA is offered primarily to Poland, Hungary and Czechoslovakia, and later to the other countries. In 1993, the Copenhagen Council expresses clearly the possibility for CEECs to seek EU membership, defining the criteria for new candidates (Council of the EU 1993).
The accession's prospect is strengthened even further when the Council of June 1994 asked the Commission “to make specific proposals as soon as possible for the further implementation of the Europe Agreements and the decisions taken by the European Council in Copenhagen”, to prepare a report on the progress of potential candidate countries and “on strategy to be followed with a view to preparing for accession” (Council of the EU 1994). Following this request the Commission prepares a Communication defining the characteristics of the pre-accession strategy for candidate countries (Commission Of the European Communities 1994), and the subsequent Council of Essen approves the Commission's proposals and calls for preparing additional documents and reports on the state of readiness of candidate countries and the consequences of enlargement on Community policies. The 1995 Madrid Council endorses the conclusions of the Commission's White Paper (Commission of the European Communities 1995); the “administrative capacity” is added to the previous three Copenhagen criteria (Dimitrova 2004) and the Commission develops programmes aiming at adapting the CEECs' administration for the transposition of the Acquis communautaire as TAIEX. The requests of the Council of Madrid are processed by the Commission that proposed a key document in the enlargement policy's evolution. In this document, called Agenda 2000 (Commission of the European Communities 1997), the Commission sets out its opinion on the candidate countries, shows an impact study of enlargement on Community policies and outlines the characteristics of the future enlargement policy. The objective is to “bring together the different form of support provided by the Union within a single framework” (Commission of the European Communities 1997, p. 72). The key instrument of the new strategy is the Accession Partnership setting out priorities and objectives in accordance with the Copenhagen criteria. Other instruments are the National Programmes for the Adoption of the Acquis, prepared by the candidate States; the Europe Agreements; the Commission's preliminary screening process on individual chapters of the acquis; the Commission's annual Regular Reports on the reforms' progress; and finally the financial assistance through PHARE, with an accession-driven logic. For this purpose PHARE is enhanced by new instruments such as Twinning and TAIEX (for the Institution Building) and supported by specific tools as SAPARD and ISPA.

Once the general context of the EU’s action and the tools used to influence reforms in the CEECs are defined, and considering the various dimensions presented in the empirical definition, in the next step we can present a picture of EU intervention on the quality of government.

Impartiality. The EU’s attention is focused specifically on measures to combat corruption and on government’s commitment to adopt and implement legislation about this issue. Within the chapter of Regular reports (or Progress reports) about the Copenhagen political criterion, the Commission
analyses the “anti-corruption measures” taken by the candidate countries during the enlargement process. However, there is not a chapter explicitly dedicated to conflicts of interest, even if the attention to this kind of distortion of impartiality is present in the section on corruption. There are significant differences between candidates at the beginning of the accession process. In some countries the problem of corruption is serious: “a serious problem” in Czech Republic (Regular report on Czech Republic 1998), “a continuous negative background of corruption which could undermine the trust of the citizens in the democratic institutions” in Hungary (Regular report on Hungary 1999, 2001), “a serious problem with corruption”, which is an obstacle “to the proper and efficient functioning of the public administration” in Latvia (Regular report on Latvia 1999, 2000). At the same time in other countries the problem is relatively less important. In Slovenia, according to statistics and analysis used by the Commission “corruption problems are relatively limited” (Regular report on Slovenia 1998, 1999) and in Cyprus, “there are not a great number of cases reported of corruption in the administration so that it does not seem to be a major problem” (Regular report on Cyprus 1999). The commitment and the success of governments in tackling this problem is a key variable in assessing the quality of government. Again, even in this case results vary considerably: since the beginning the Commission notes a commitment by Bulgarian governments in the formulation and implementation of anti-corruption legislation. The governments continue to expand “the scope of legislation against corruption” (Regular report on Bulgaria 1999) and the commitment “remained high on the political agenda of the Government” (Regular report on Bulgaria 2003). We find the same situation in Czech Republic, where the government recognizes that corruption is “a serious problem in the country and that efforts have to be undertaken to address the problem” (Regular report on Czech Republic 1998) and “its fight is a priority of the current Government” (Regular report on Czech Republic 1999, 2001); in Hungary, where the struggle against corruption is “one of the main priorities of the Government” (Regular report on Hungary 1999), and it “continued to be high on the political agenda of Hungary's preparations for accession to the EU” (Regular report on Hungary 2000); and Latvia, where the Commission acknowledges the efforts made by the government (Regular report on Latvia 1998). However, despite all efforts the results are not always assured and several problems arise, including “inadequate staff, a lack of specialised training and a lack of effective cooperation among the law enforcement institutions involved” (Regular report on Czech Republic 2000), “a continuous negative background of corruption which could undermine the trust of the citizens in the democratic institutions” (Regular report on Hungary 2001), insufficient measures (Regular report on Lithuania 1998), and a “legal basis for the fight against corruption
incomplete” (Regular report on Romania 1998). Along with the positive examples, in other cases there is no firm commitment from governments on this point, especially in the first phase of the negotiations. For example, in the case of Poland “in relation to the importance of the issue little progress has been made on the establishment of a genuine anti-corruption policy” (Regular report on Poland 1998), and the importance of strengthening the fight against corruption through the adoption of a national policy “continues to be a source of serious concern” (Regular report on Poland 1999). Similarly, the fight against corruption in Romania “is not addressed with sufficient determination” (Regular report on Romania 1999). Therefore, in these countries the problem is significant, although the governments’ commitment significantly differs between positive (Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Hungary, Latvia) and negative examples (Poland, especially in the first phase, and Romania). At the same time there is another category of countries where the problem of corruption does not seem to be prominent, as in the case of Slovenia where “according to the available statistics and reports, corruption problems are relatively limited” (Regular report on Slovenia 1998, 1999), Cyprus, where “there are not a great number of cases reported of corruption in the administration so that it does not seem to be a major problem” (Regular report on Cyprus 1999), and Estonia, which has achieve “considerable progress as regards the fight against corruption” (Regular report on Estonia 2000).

Overall, since the 1998 Regular Report the Commission points out that the fight against corruption in candidate countries “needs to be strengthened further” and that efforts were not always commensurate with the gravity of the problem. In many cases, it also notes a “lack of determination to confront the issue and to root out corruption”. Corruption is endemic and widespread in CEECs and, moreover, there is the problem of lack of commitment of governments “with the result that the anti-corruption programmes which have been launched in most countries are having limited results” (Composite paper 1999). The assessment does not change in 2000 Regular reports, where the Commission emphasizes the negative impact of corruption on public confidence and legitimacy of the reforms. Despite this point, some progress has been reported, “including accession to international instruments in this area” even though corruption remains a source of concern (Composite paper 2000). Elements of progress has been highlighted in the 2001 Regular reports, where the Commission notes that “anti-corruption bodies have been strengthened, and progress has been made in legislation, in such areas as public procurement and public access to information” (Composite paper 2001). In the following year the Commission welcomes the introduction and strengthening in several countries of “anti-corruption strategies (...) and anti-corruption bodies”. The “perception” of corruption has to be considered as a decisive factor in the
process of adoption of norms and standards: the Commission itself notes that several indicators show the perception of the negative role of corruption in CEECs is growing. This is not a criterion for assessing governments' efforts by itself, but at least it shows a better environment in which the anti-corruption reforms take place (Composite paper 2002).

Effectiveness. Referring to the government’s ability to adopt its own reforms and legislation there is a section of Regular reports dedicated to the executive within the political criteria in which the legislative process is analysed. However, the Commission mainly focuses on the quality of bureaucracy. Since the beginning the Commission stresses the importance of the reform of public administration. In some countries, reforms are "still at an early stage" (Regular report on Bulgaria 1998), while in others no progress has been detected, although the government gives priority to the reform: “no progress in public administration reform (...). The civil service law which was intended to come into force in January 2000 has still not been drafted” (Regular report on Czech Republic 1998), “no progress has been made beyond the preparation of a draft Civil Service Law” (Regular report on Slovakia 1998), “and the implementation of the 1996 legislation has not achieved the desired results” (Regular report on Poland 1998). In addition, there are positive signals from some candidates, as in Cyprus, where “the public administration is well-structured even if the government is keen to reform it and to improve its efficiency” (Regular report on Cyprus 1998) or in Romania where there is evidence of a real commitment by governments in office: “there is a Government commitment to continue the reform of the administration at all levels” (Regular report on Romania 1998).

Others common problems are the low level of wages, which makes the “recruitment of qualified staff difficult” (Regular report on Czech Republic 1999), the insufficient preparation of civil servants and a shortage of staff: “insufficient skilled capacity (...) and a high turnover of staff” (Regular report on Estonia 1998), and “salaries of civil servants that are still low compared with earnings in the private sector” (Regular report on Hungary 1998). The situation is thus very different: there are countries such as Slovenia and Cyprus, which do not have particular problems and need only an adaptation and modernization of their bureaucracies in view of EU membership. At the same time, the state of public administration in countries such as Romania, Bulgaria, Czech Republic and Poland calls for radical reforms. Foremost among this group of countries there are considerable differences in the results achieved: the situation of Romania and Bulgaria remains problematic until the conclusion of negotiations in 2007, while in other cases the reforms achieve the desired result before the accession, as in the case of Czech Republic: “welcome progress has been achieved in the establishment of an independent, professional, stable and accountable public
administration at central level” (Regular report on Czech Republic 2002). During the enlargement process the policy-making capacity of the executive is also highlighted: “policy making in the central institutions has improved but remains rather weak” (Regular report on Bulgaria 1999). In relation to the capacity of government to adopt its policies, in 2003 the Commission emphasizes for Romania the need to “address the reform of the policy and legislative process” to improve a “limited transparency and a limited capacity for policy execution” (Regular report 2003 on Romania). Finally, attention is also given to the cultural dimensions of institutional change, namely the importance of “promoting a new administrative culture so that it is ready to cope with EU membership” (Regular report on Bulgaria 2001, 2003).

Overall, the Commission considers the modernization of public administration “of crucial importance” in the implementation of the acquis and more generally in the transition process (Composite paper 2000), and at the same time it acknowledges the efforts made to reinforce the “independence, professionalism and effectiveness of public administration and the civil service” (Composite paper 2000). In 2002, the Commission notes that “a legal framework for the civil service has now been established in all candidates, and training of civil servants has become the norm” (Composite paper 2002). Moreover, in many countries the government has introduced codes of conduct and ethical codes, as well as a clearer distinction between political and administrative responsibilities.

Accountability. The dimensions of government’s accountability is analysed in the section about executive. The Commission stresses in particular the importance of the transparency of government and focuses on the relationship between executive and legislative power, even in the paragraph relating to the latter. Referring to this issue, perhaps the most significant case of change among the CEECs is represented by Slovakia with the change from Meciar to Dzurinda government in the 1998 elections. In the 1998 Regular report the Commission highlights that “a tendency towards further concentration of power in the hands of the incumbent Government continued” (Regular report on Slovakia 1998). The following year, after the change of government, the Commission finds a completely different attitude towards the others constitutional powers and the international institutions, highlighting the commitment towards the implementation of reforms required by accession: “the country has pursued an ambitious programme of political reforms. (...) the Government, in close co-operation with the concerned international organisations, prepared minority language legislation which was adopted by Parliament in July 1999. (...) Slovakia is now considered to meet the Copenhagen political criteria” (Regular report on Slovakia 1999).

The accountability to other constitutional bodies, and especially to the parliament, is mentioned also
in the case of Romania, where there is a positive improvement with the introduction of a “Law on the Liability of Ministers” in 1999 on the Status of government’s members, which includes “political responsibility and the fact that the government is responsible to Parliament that may withdraw its confidence; the obligation of the Government to respond to questions by Members of Parliament; the penal liability of ministers while in office”, regular meetings between Prime Minister and the speakers of Chambers and the creation of a Minister for the Relations with Parliament (Regular report on Romania 1999, 2000); and in the case of the Czech Republic, where “new mechanisms for enhanced communication between the Government and the Parliament are being introduced” (Regular report on Czech Republic 2002).

Some others elements are subjects to a monitoring process: the degree of consultation with “stakeholders” by the government (Regular report on Romania 2001), which is considered “beneficial in helping prepare better quality drafts which will be easier to implement” (Regular report on Bulgaria 2002) and improving the transparency of the legislative process, especially “in the social field and in the fight against corruption” (Regular report on Bulgaria 2003), the adoption of rules on transparency of government activities (Regular report on Poland 2001) and the use of the emergency legislation. On this point a particular problem arises in Romania where governments, throughout the accession process, often use the “emergency ordinances” in an improper way (Romania 1998) reducing the transparency of the legislative process, limiting the opportunities for consultation and producing legislative instability (Regular report on Romania, 2003).

**Responsiveness.** Obviously, the degree of government’s responsiveness is not among the criteria used by the Commission to evaluate the candidate countries. The Commission does not consider explicitly the approval of the government and its policies by citizens. However, this issue is mentioned in several documents (especially in Regular reports) but not as an evaluation criterion. Rather, the government approval is used only to complete the general framework.

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<th>Country</th>
<th>Impartiality</th>
<th>Effectiveness</th>
<th>Accountability</th>
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The table shows the annual positive (+) or negative (-) evaluation on the progress of the situation relating to each dimension. Due to the difficulty of analyzing the qualitative assessments of the Commission, all “positive” and “partially positive” judgments are merged together. The same procedure was followed for “negative” or “partially negative” judgments. In the cases where the Commission found substantial stability of the situation, the year has not been reported.
Preliminary Conclusions

The Commission constantly monitors the functioning and the democratic nature of the executive during the accession procedure, as part of the Copenhagen criteria on the proper functioning of democratic institutions. Provisionally, it is important to stress that the results achieved during enlargement are very different. Public administration reforms and legislation on Civil Service have been adopted in all countries involved in negotiations. This is a strong positive element for the democratization process considering the legacies of the socialist system on the functioning of state bureaucracy. Consequently, the EU has certainly played a positive role in these countries in creating an “independent, transparent, stable, liable, efficient, professional and non-political public administration” (EU Commission 1998). At the same time, the effective implementation of these reforms took several difficulties, even after the achievement of the membership. At the moment of the adhesion, the Commission itself acknowledges that many problems still exist, such as the “low level of staffing and training” (Comprehensive Monitoring Report on Cyprus 2003), the “degree of openness and transparency in the Czech public administration” and the lack of coordination (Comprehensive Monitoring Report on Czech Republic 2003), the career system, the “recruitment, promotion and remuneration levels” (Comprehensive Monitoring Report on Estonia, Hungary, Latvia 2003), and the wage system (Latvia, Slovenia). In the case of Bulgaria and Romania it can be noted that despite the continuation of negotiations until 2005, the preparation of the two countries is partial and unsatisfactory even in the moment of accession. In fact, the Commission notes “limited progress” (Comprehensive Monitoring Report on Bulgaria 2005) in reforms and a partial adoption of several amendments to the legislation on public administration.

The results of the fight against corruption and the commitment of governments in this direction are also ambivalent. In almost every country a comprehensive legal framework against fraud and corruption has been established and, in some cases, even against conflicts of interest. However, apart from the case of Cyprus, where the government has implemented the whole requests by the Commission, as well as in Estonia and Slovenia, where corruption is a “limited problem” (Comprehensive Monitoring Report on Slovenia 2003), in the rest of the CEECs the situation is much more problematic and corruption has been recognized by governments as “still widespread” (Comprehensive Monitoring Report on Czech Republic 2003). Hungary is a relatively less serious case, because of the government's commitment to fight corruption and because the country is one of the “less corrupt of the post-communist countries” according to international rankings. However, despite some positive signs, corruption is widely perceived, the measures taken
by the government “have not achieved their objectives” and there is still a “wide immunity” for politicians, judges and magistrates (Comprehensive Monitoring Report on Hungary é003). Likewise Latvia is not a source of major concerns because the perception of the problem in public opinion is high, even if it is necessary to increase this perception in business and government (Comprehensive Monitoring Report on Latvia 2003).

The most serious cases seem to be those of Poland, Slovakia, Bulgaria and Romania. In the first two countries corruption is perceived to be high and growing in all spheres of public life. In addition, there have been “very little progress in combating corruption” and many politicians have been involved in cases of high-level corruption, which led to their resignations (Comprehensive Monitoring Report on Poland, Slovakia 2003). On the other hand, Bulgaria and Romania are even more problematic, and the persistence of corruption practices has been one of the causes that have delayed the country's accession in 2004. Moreover, the analysis of the Commission’s reports shows the lack of preparation of these two countries even at the end of negotiations. In Bulgaria the measures adopted and implemented “appears to be little effect in practice”, there is a lack of administrative capacity in the structures dedicated to the fight against corruption and there are many cases of corruption at high political and administrative level that have not been pursued. Similarly, in Romania “there has been no significant reduction in perceived levels of corruption” even if there is a commitment by the government. Above all, the problem is not so much the adoption of standards, but a “more rigorously, rather than proposing new laws” implementation of existing legislation. Consequently, the perceived risk is the failure of the implementation following the adoption of formal rules.

Concluding, the EU's influence on the quality of government during the enlargement negotiations can be considered as positive. However, some considerations are needed to clarify this preliminary conclusion. First, there is considerable variation between cases. Given EU’s action is carry out in similar ways and with standard tools for all countries, the differences highlighted refer to internal factors, which include in part the legacy of the communist era and in part the role of political and social actors, which promote or on the contrary hamper change. Second, the direct intervention of the EU concerns the phase of the rule adoption. This also depends on the fact that the EU can easily ensure the effective adoption of the required reforms on the basis of political conditionality. The next phase (i.e. implementation) is more problematic and more difficult to verify using the EU’s instruments of control. The consequence is that in some cases the membership takes place “sub condizione” of the subsequent implementation of reforms (e.g. Romania and Bulgaria). However, while in the phase of negotiations the EU has a strong instrument to influence the political agenda
of the candidate countries, once they get the membership the opportunity to maintain effective pressure is significantly reduced.

Third, the modalities of influence upon the quality of government are complex and at a first sight it is possible to identify two different ways: first, the “direct” influence through conditionality and programmes of assistance. This kind of influence refers to the adoption of legislation and produces concrete results only in the long terms, as it helps to (re)define the institutional framework for the following governments. Second, the “indirect” influence on informal practices, behaviours, values and policy preferences of domestic actors. The relationships between government and parliament, transparency of executive’s activities, impartiality and absence of conflicts of interest, relations with international and supranational institutions are key dimensions in assessing the quality of a government and, at the same time, cannot be assessed only in terms of formal adoption of the rules. In these cases, the daily practices are even more important in the final evaluation of the functioning of democracy and government.

In sum, in this preliminary work can we state that the quality of government of CEECs has improved as a result of EU membership? From this analysis, the answer is positive. Nevertheless, further investigations are required. The next analysis will go into the details of the real functioning of the different governments before, during and immediately after the accession negotiations. Indeed, in addition to the elements of structural improvement, the EU's influence will be assessed through the empirical examination of informal practices and behaviour of political, social and institutional actors, which determine the overall quality of government.
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