

Active Citizenship in Eastern Europe

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- ‘Recent developments in Europe area have made democracy a worrying issue.’
- ‘This is of concern to those that believe the democratic process needs to involve the active engagement of all citizens.’

(Reviewing Education and Training for Governance and Active Citizenship in Europe - A Central and Eastern European Perspective, Final Report, RE-ETGACE Project HPSE-CT2002-60054 Project Supported by the European Commission Directorate General for Research Framework Programme 5 University of Nijmegen, The Netherlands, March 2004, p.3)

http://www.socsci.kun.nl/re-etgace/RE-ETGACE_FinalReport.pdf

‘This has underpinned the idea of active citizenship as one of the basic tools for assuring the legitimacy of the democratic institutions and practices.’

(ibid)

Clarification N° 1: what is citizenship?

Two basic aspects of citizenship:

- a) a membership of a society or a nation-state
- b) a fusion between rights and responsibilities

The three dimensions of citizenship:

- Civil (human rights and freedom)
- Political (participation in political processes)
- Social (right to live according to the given civilization standards)

(Marshall, T. H. (1950) *Citizenship and Social Class and Other Essays*.
Cambridge:Cambridge University Press quoted in RE.-ETGACE p. 19-20)

Who is

- a citizen?

What is it to be

- active?

What is

- Eastern Europe?

Community of Athens:

democracy

= power of the people

Full rights – full duties

(ten times a year!)

Conceptual differentiation:

Religious communities -

devoted to transcendent goal(s)

Societal communities -

devoted to survival (cultures)

From Christianity:

the two are not identical in Europe

‘The English and French word "commune" appears in Latin records in various forms. The classical Latin *communio* means an association. In some cases the classical Latin *commune* was used to mean people with a common interest. Ultimately, the roots are *cum* (with or together) + *munire* (to wall), literally 'to wall together' (i.e., a shared fortification).’

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Communal_movement_in_medieval_Europe

The next community-formed societies:

Switzerland

(Federal Charter 1291
neutrality 1815-

federal state 1848-)

The Netherlands

(Dutch Republic 1581-

constitutional monarchy 1815-)

England:

- English Revolution

 - English Civil Wars and Commonwealth

 - 1641-1660

- Glorious Revolution

 - 1688 constitutional monarchy

France

- revolution 1789

 - First Republic, 1792

Clarification N° 2: what is it to be *active*?

a) To act:

a conscious deed

(do animals act?)

b) To act = to take the *responsibility*

to be active = to *relate* to issues of others

(is physical consumption an activity?)

c) To act = *praxis*

to act ≠ to be, to exist

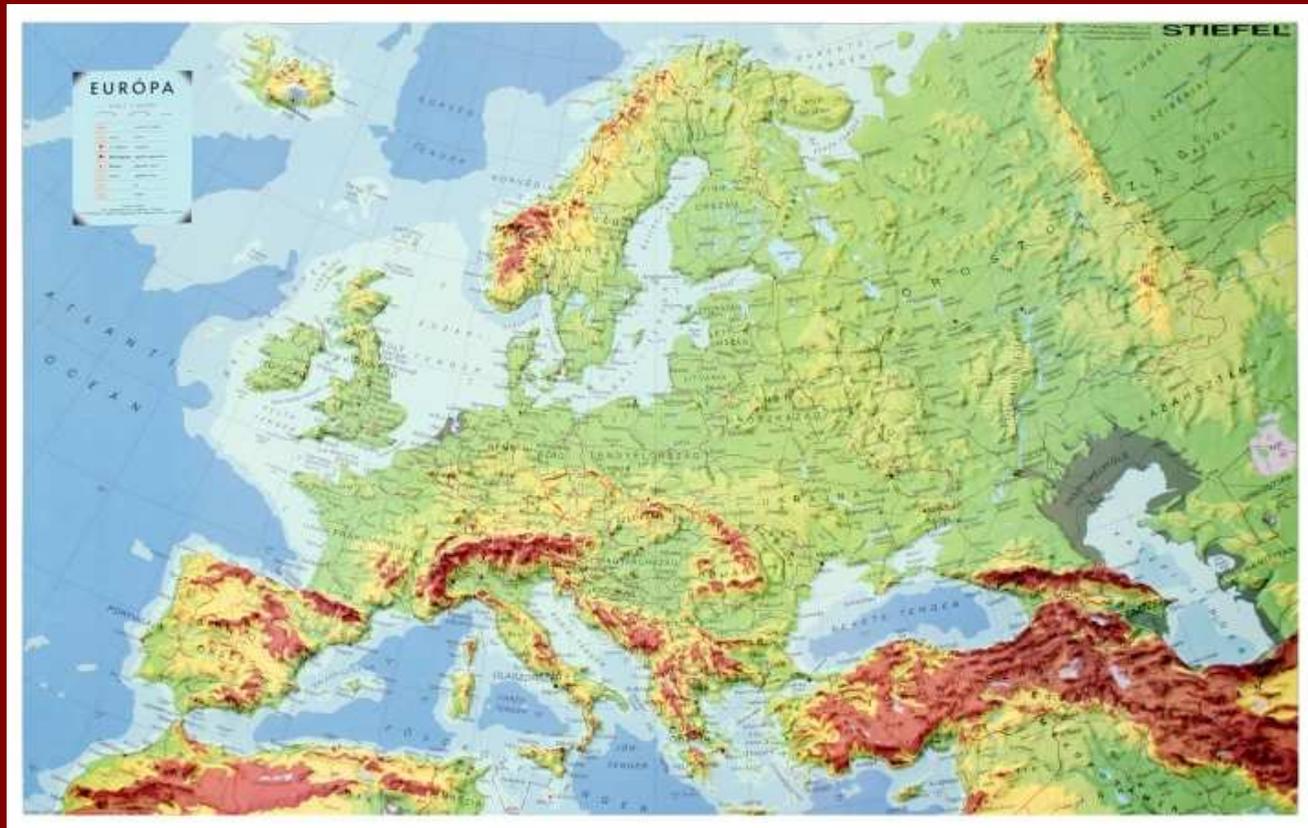
(Negative) definition of a citizen
as an active member of the *polis*:

“To take no part in the running of the
community's affairs is to be either a beast or a
god!”

(Aristotle, Ancient Greek Philosopher, 384 BC – 322 BC)

Clarification N° 3

What is (Eastern)Europe?



13. Century Europe



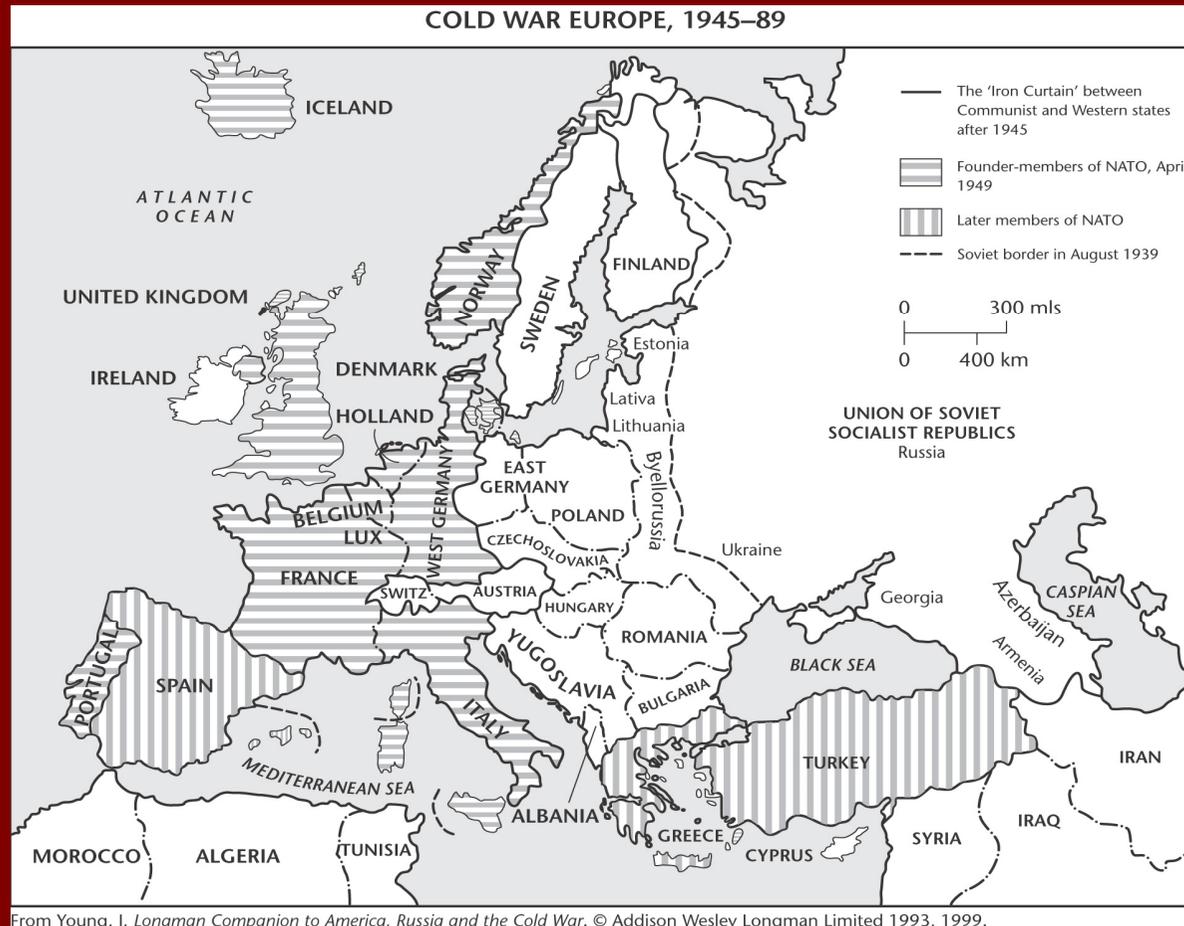
19. Century Europe



Post World War I. Hungary

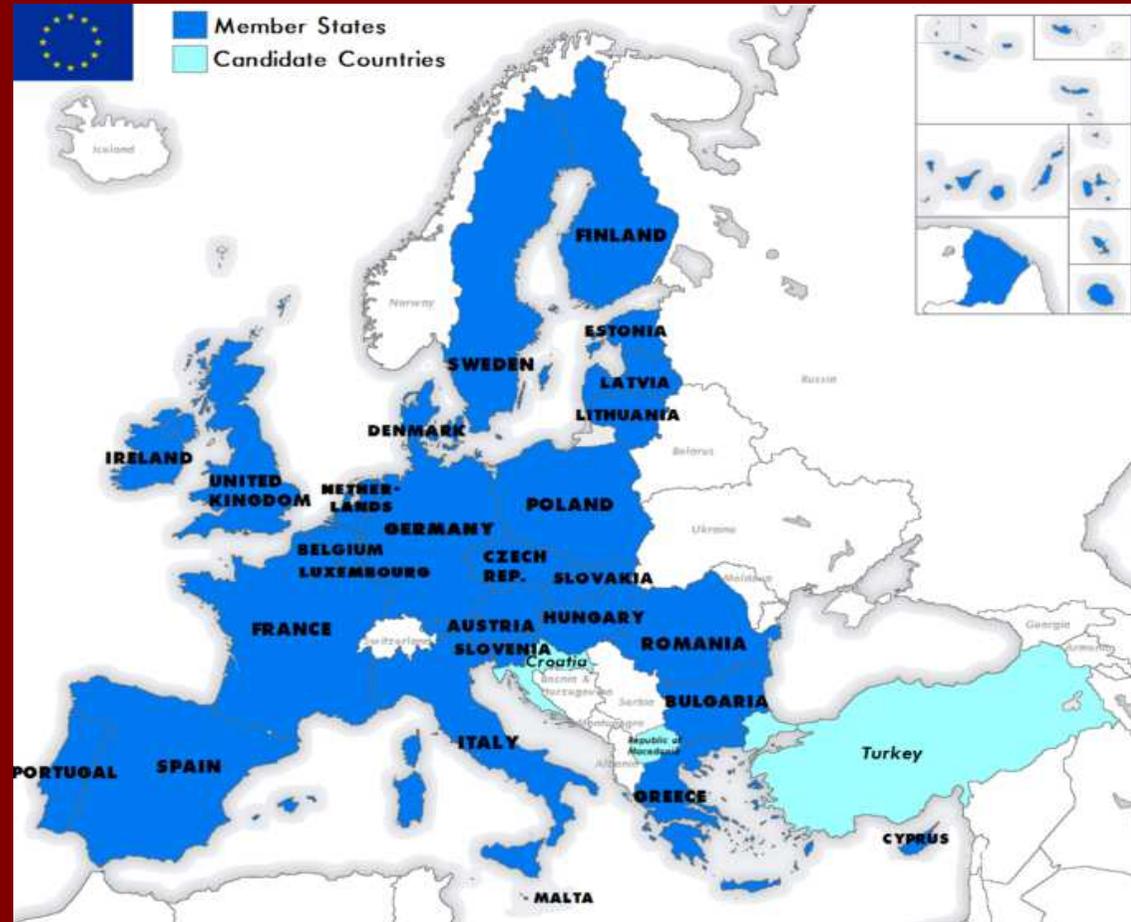


Post World War II. Europe



http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/shared/spl/hi/europe/04/changing_borders/html/1900.stm

Europe today



Eastern Europe?



Eastern Europe:

- between West and East
 - Europe and Asia
 - Protestantism and Orthodoxy
- between North and South
 - the Hansa towns and
 - the Ottoman Empire

i.e.:

Between different paradigms

Between different empires

Poland

Czech Republic

Slovakia

Hungary

Slovenia

Roumania

Bulgaria

Serbia

Croatia

Macedonia

Montenegro

Albania

do they have

a single

identity?

Problems have been identified at two levels, firstly at the “democratic hardware” level (legal and political structures and regulations, new democratic institutions) and secondly at the “democratic software” level (lack of initiatives, institutional and social lack of trust, cynic behaviour, strong penchant for corruption, and indifference to voluntaries activities). These problems tend to lead to non-participation due to mental heritage, lack of democratic skills and inequalities or lack of access to resources.

Assets of (Western) Europe:

- Nation state:

stability, sovereignty, autonomy, identity,
self esteem, security

- Constitutionalism:

the formation of a crystal structure,
institutions, public middle field

The Void in Eastern Europe

centuries of occupations - no nation state
no sovereignty, no autonomy, insecurity,
low self esteem, no middle field
enforced institutions

The crystal structure crushed repeatedly:

the formation of a sand society

Striker, 1986

Examples of the two kind:

Multatuli: Max Havelaar (Dutch)

Madách: The Tragedy of Man

(Hungarian)

Outcome in Eastern Europe:

chief value: patriotism (to be)

chief expressions: symbolic

metaphoric

chief actions: passivity,

re-sistance, re-volt,

re-action

After 1948 totalitarian regimes:

paternalism

enforced institutions (again)

enforced collectivism

enforced solidarity

Outcome:

individualism, passivity, distrust

Cultural activities substituting the politics

There were 'constitutions', 'laws', 'police',
'socialist morals'
'communist Saturdays'
'voluntary societal work'
'trade unions'

the regime seemed to be eternal and final

with campaigns and slogans

After 1990

High expectations

but: economic crises
'privatization'

from 96 % state economy

to 90% multinational economy
(Hungary)

EU accession process:

PHARE Program

The crystallization process is polarized
again – now towards Brussels

Burocracy is doubled:

national burocracy
(government and municipalities)

EU burocracy
(subsidy allocating agencies)

Responsibility is 'delegated'

Very low trust in public institutions
(see: groupwork)

The formation of

a paper democracy

on a paper economy

- high energy dependency

- low or no national

research and development

Civil society is 'being built up'

- through party affiliations

- on state subsidies and allowances

Conclusion N° 1 on active citizenship:

- as a membership of a society or a nation-state:
lost its value
- a fusion between rights and responsibilities
occasional rights, few responsibilities

Civil (human rights and freedom)

Political (participation in political processes)

Social (right to live according to the given
civilization standards)

*globalized media and business have overtaken these
dimensions*

Conclusion N° 2 on active citizenship:

*Eastern Europe does not offer 'legitimacy'
as there is no room for real citizen acts*

Rather a return to traditional dimensions:

- to the family sphere
- to local communities, revived as
values of relevance

*a scope and perspective an individual citizen can
engulf, comprehend and control – and practice
actively*

Thank you for your attention!

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