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# Report on Bulgaria: Elites' Europeanness and their Trust in Institutions

*Dobrinka Kostova\**

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**Abstract:** *»Ein Bericht über Bulgarien: Die Europäizität der Eliten und ihr Vertrauen gegenüber Institutionen«.* The paper divulges a comparison between the Bulgarian elites, elites in the new democracies and in the old democracies of the European Union and succeeds in interrelating them by using common assumptions, concepts and original and comprehensive empirical data. It shows that the European Union (EU) has been a forerunner and active proponent of the process of integration of Bulgaria in the recent decades and that the EU has played a significant role in mitigating its impact. The analysis on elites' Europeanness is backed-up by an extensive dataset revealing its constantly adapting nature; its diversity of practices; its repeated need to respond to exogenous challenges and, most importantly, its perpetually unsatisfactory quest to make "real existing democracy" conform better to "potentially ideal democracy." The Bulgarian elites' Europeanness is expressed in a high display of trust toward European institutions. However, their trust to national ones is significantly lower. The explanations for these diversities are looked for in the continuity of historical experiences of trust to the state and its institutions, the short period of European Union membership, the discontinuity during the hard economic transformation and the deep social differences in society since the transition has begun.

**Keywords:** Bulgaria, elites, Europeanness, integration, trust.

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## 1. Introduction

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In this paper we are interested in Bulgarian elites analysing how the expectations and assessment of democracy, of the economic and political crises, the visions of European integration and solidarity, the attitudes to national and international challenges and institutional trust shape their Europeanness. Our overall strategy resembles most closely the strategy of Best, Lengyel, and Verzichelli (2012) for the elitist character of the European integration and that of Kitschelt et al. (1999), which vocally denied that political structure in post-socialist type of democracy was non-random and based on structured diversity.

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We would like to show that political legacies, mediated by the rational strategies of political actors, do matter for the emerging patterns of Europeanness and ultimately for the quality of post-communist democracies. Further, building on the vast work of survey research which points to an increasing trend of disaffection and dissatisfaction with democracy (Kostova 2014; Guasti 2014; Dimitrova and Buzogány 2014; Pharr and Putnam 2000; van Deth et al. 2007), and which documents the importance of the cultural predispositions for the way democracy works (Vachudova 2014; Bauer, Knill and Pitschel 2007; Inglehart and Welzel 2005; Kaase and Newton 1995; Putnam 1993), we will provide an overview of the deepening of European integration as balancing mechanism for the democratic deficits. We would like to present how the increasing legitimacy of the European institutions shapes the democratic content of the decision-making process and its consequences for the strengthening of the ties of Bulgaria with EU.

The significant difference between Bulgaria and the other Eastern European countries on one side and the Western countries on the other is that institutionalization in the East has still not reached the one in the West (Guasti 2014; Ugur 2013; Grabbe 2003). This means that stability in the rules and nature of party competition, the configuration of the party system between elections without the appearance of new challengers at each election, the volatility of the electoral outcome are low. More, the parties have no stable roots in society, which does not allow them to structure the preferences of the voters. As a consequence, the parties' relative ideological positions tend to be far from consistent. Still some parties have not reached the level to be considered legitimate by the major political actors. Additionally, party organizations matter. They should not be subordinate to the interests of ambitious leaders as is the case with vast majority of Eastern European parties. In this regard it is difficult for them to acquire an independent status and value of their own.

These circumstances are revealed to face many challenges in Bulgaria – great dynamics, institutional ineffectiveness leading to low trust to the elites that they can bring prosperity to the country, electoral mobility and low civil control over governance. All these contribute to unstable democratization of the country. The low level of institutional trust complicates the process of democratization and leads to ups and downs in the strength of acceptance of the basic rules of democratic political system. As a consequence the process of building the democratic structures and their good functioning is a slow, however, a continuous process. Next, as the trust to elites is low, the governing leaders have no courage to implement non-popular reforms. An additional shortcoming is the lack of experience on the side of the elites and that leads to the creation of networks between state institutes or some of their incumbents and representatives of the black economy and as a consequence there is a lack of equality in front of the law, a lack of fairness and of good governance. Not

keeping to the rules of law on the side of some of the representatives of the state institutions, leads to similar behavior on the side of some of the citizens.

These negative effects result in positive expectations towards EU, its support for democracy, establishment of firm democratic principles in the country and trust that European Union accounts as a factor for the success of social cohesion, solidarity and integration of its members. This contributes to the fact that till now the citizens are critical and requiring to national elites but their support to further European integration is stable.

The paper presents an assessment of empirical data<sup>1</sup> allowing divulge Europeaness of elites through analyzing their feelings of attachment, trust to EU institutions, and the level of backing EU integration. Our expectations are that Europeaness is still not a philosophy and strategy, but rather an adaptation to the circumstances and a step-by-step learning to feel, cooperate and be European. Due to that the processes of recognition of EU policies, trust to its institutions and integration are dynamic (cf. this HSR Special Issue's introduction, Vogel and Teruel 2016).

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## 2. The Challenges of Bulgarian Transition

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In the course of twenty five years of transition, Bulgaria has undergone three key transformational phases: 1) *Political* – building a system of democratic governance; 2) *Economic* – transition from a centrally planned economy to market economy; 3) *Constitutional* – at the beginning of the transformation in 1991 when a new constitution was accepted and the accession to the EU in 2007.

In the 1990-2015 period, Bulgaria has experienced 16 cabinets. None of the governments has won a second turn after being in power. Limited executive capacity has narrowed the adoption of reforms or, when accepted, they have been poorly implemented. Weak planning capacities and an underdeveloped use of scientific advice further limit the strategic capacities of Bulgarian governments.

After the parliamentary elections at the end of 2014, Bulgaria has a right oriented coalition government. That contributes to a stabilization of the country as after 2013 general elections the political situation in Bulgaria is marked by a continuous struggle between a fragile centre-left coalition government and a weak opposition as well as by growing conflicts within the right political parties. The weak government and lack of consensus within the parliamentary parties represent a political context that has framed reforms such as economy,

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<sup>1</sup> The data presented in this paper comes from two projects: ENEC (2014) and IntUne (2007-2009).

administration, pension, education and health care, and the debates on the depth of the European integration process. This political development has been accompanied by an ever-growing disenchantment of citizens with political parties and the performance of the governments. In the recent surveys the percentage of citizens satisfied with the ruling government in the country is 32%.<sup>2</sup> It is not only the performance of the government and parliament that underpins this satisfaction rate; it is also a lack of information about public policy making and ineffective communication between the government and citizens. Strategic vision from government is hampered by the nature of a coalition government with narrow majorities and constant negotiations. Conflicts are often either resolved informally or allowed to block decision-making. There is no systematic thinking about institutional reforms and economic development. Methods to improve efficiency, such as regulatory impact assessments, are only introduced in response to EU prompting.

In the elections of 2014 eight parties won seats in the parliament. The coalition government is led by the party *Citizens for European Development of Bulgaria* (GERB), together with the *Reform Block*, supported by the Patriots, ABV (*Alternative Bulgarian Renaissance*) and the *Democratic Centre*. The other three parties – *Bulgarian Socialist Party* (BSP), *Movement for Freedom and Rights* (MFR) and *Ataka* remain in opposition. All the parliamentary parties with the exception of *Ataka*, that has 11 parliamentarians from all the 240 MP, are firmly oriented to deepening of the relations with EU. There are tensions within the main political parties, which lead to instability in the political space, but they concern national issues. In the transition period, but severely in the last years, the key problem is corruption and ineffective anti-corruption measures (Guasti 2014; Aasland, Grødeland and Pleines 2012; Kaufmann, Kraay, and Mastruzzi 2010). These political developments are accompanied by an increasing public mistrust in political parties. Moreover, there are severe cases on the misuse of tax authorities to neutralize political rivals.

As a whole, most citizens support democratic institutions and there are no important groups seeking to change the political system. However, there is a great mistrust that the elites are capable of implementing democracy in the governing process, especially since 2009 when the country was hit by a deep economic crisis. The problem is not the crisis as such, but the austerity measures which seem to affect the society disproportionately and the fact that simultaneously large scale corruption scandals reached the public.

Although EU membership is positively perceived, one of the problems during the accession negotiations was that law adoption did not translate into its implementation, whereby no reliable measurement tools were designed. In other words, adoption of the *acquis communautaire* does not automatically

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<sup>2</sup> <[http://www.novinite.com/view\\_news.php?id=152056](http://www.novinite.com/view_news.php?id=152056)> (Accessed 30 September 2015).

translate into real changes on the ground. However, efforts are made to make the EU believe not only that the changes are undertaken, but also, that they yield positive effects. The state strategies are to formally meet the EU requirements, while minimizing institutional adaptation costs (Andrey 2014, 103-24; Policy Public Procurement).<sup>3</sup> Although Bulgaria is obliged to adjust to the prescriptive rules of the European law, it is free to decide on how to implement them in the national system. Insufficient implementation at the national level brings many problems and negatively affects democratic development.

The case of Bulgaria proves how closely the concepts of integration and of democratization are interlinked and how important the balance between integration and keeping to the democratic rules is. The core actors of these processes are the national elites. They have now three significant functions – to cooperate with the national elites from the member states, to participate in the decision making process for significant transnational issues and to be mediators between their societies and the supranational EU governing bodies.

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### 3. The Data for the Analysis

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Our objective in the following parts is to reveal the Europeanness of Bulgarian political, media, and social elites on the basis of descriptive and analytical discussions to compare the data from the three surveys mentioned above.

We do not consider the degree of Europeanness, but how it transforms the problem solving capacity of member states toward effectively regulating transnational issues, such as economic and financial stability, immigration, environmental protection, and so on.

The set of questions concerns general relations between the countries and the EU. Is there an expansion of the trust in the period of integration, contraction or continuity? Do the legal and the institutional structures of the EU provide provision for solidarity or undermine the social capital proposing different access to resources and low transparency of its activities? If the states fail and there is a divide between the states and the representatives of the EU, are there mediators or networks that provide the collaboration? Is there, and if yes to what degree, isolation of some countries from the process of integration in the legal and institutional basis of the EU? Are some countries able to avoid marginalisation through intermediate organisations that are capable of developing sufficient power, authority and legitimacy for a voice in the EU political process? We will address some of these issues in the next part on the case of Bulgarian elites.

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<sup>3</sup> <<http://www.csd.bg/artShowbg.php?id=17822>>(Accessed 15 October 2016).

<<http://www.csd.bg/artShowbg.php?id=17794>> (Accessed 30 September 2016).

The analyses rely on data from surveys that are realized as standardized interviews on a representative sample of parliamentarians, media and trade union activists. The IntUne surveys took place in 2007 and 2009 and ENEC – in 2014 and the latter involves only political elites.

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## 4. The Bulgarian Elite's Europeanness: Some Dimensions

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### 4.1 Attachment to EU

Firstly, we consider the attitudes of the interviewed elites to their region, to their country and EU. The trade union leaders are most attached to their region (very attached 75%, to the country very attached are 68% and to the EU 6%), the mass media elites are most attached to their country (37% very attached, to the region 29% and to the EU 11%) and the parliamentarians are also most attached to the country (89%, to the region 84% and to the EU 26%). The value of “somewhat attached” added to the “most attached” reveals that all groups are highly attached to the three levels – regional, country and European. Most probably more research is needed to go deeper to the explanations why there are some hesitations in the attachment values. We can compare the data from 2009 with the data from 2007 only for the parliamentarians, as the other groups were not investigated in 2007. The comparison shows that the interviewed parliamentarians were most attached to the country (86%, to the region, 45% and to the EU 15%). There is no significant change in the length of the two years EU membership as the comparison reveals. However, there is a significant decrease in the strong attachment to the region and also to the EU. That can be explained together with other justifications that the most important level for policy making for the parliamentarians remains the country level. The more emotional explanation can be looked for in the data for the significant identity characteristics. The data reveal that the acquired characteristic of a deep feeling of belonging to the nation is very important for the researched elites. The laws and rules are more important than such features as origin of the parents, culture, and religion. Simultaneously, the feeling, the loyalty to the nation has a very high support as 80% of the interviewed elites think that it is the very important characteristic to feel national. Although our next data set is from 2014, the conclusions are similar to those from 2009 as the interviewed parliamentarians are attached and very attached to their region (98.1%), to Bulgaria (100.00%) and to Europe (83.00%).

To analyze additionally the issue of national and European identity we will present the data about what is considered most important to be real Bulgarian and real European – religion, cultural traditions, to be born in the country, to have Bulgarian parents, to speak Bulgarian language, to respect the laws and regulations and to vote during the elections. The data support the conclusion

that the *respect for the institutions and laws* is considered the most important characteristic of the person who would like to be considered true national. In this regard there are no significant differences between the researched elite groups. Among the mass media elite on the second place comes the knowledge of the language as the most important identity characteristic which is explainable with regard of their professional affiliation while among the parliamentarians this is the feeling of being Bulgarian (85%). The latter is the most important for the social elites as they put it on the first place (93%), even before the respect to the laws. This approach of the elites to the identity problem reveals an attempt to balance between modern understanding of national identity and a traditional one relying on patriotism, love and loyalty. The data from 2007 reveals that the parliamentarians have placed in this period the emphasis on the same two characteristics and the most important, even if not significantly different, is the feeling of being Bulgarian (86%) while the respect of the laws is most preferred by 82%. Other research in Bulgaria (Kostova 2005) has shown similar conclusions and this supports our empirical findings as reliable. In this regard, it helps to bring consistent data about the significance of religion, being born in a definite country, and having national parents as important characteristics in identity discussions. The elites in Bulgaria put less emphasis on the latter attributes requiring modern qualities to be of significant consideration.

The understanding of the researched elites toward European identity is similar to their comprehension of national identity. The respect to the laws (most significant according to 76% of the mass media elite, to 76% of the parliamentarians and 87% of the social elites) and feeling of being European (most significant according to 82% of the mass media elite, to 67% of the parliamentarians and 75% of the trade union elites) are the attributes considered most important for European identification. The very close relation between European and Bulgarian identity is best revealed by the data considering the feeling of only national or only European, on the one hand, and the combined identity – national and European, on the other. The majority of the researched elites perceive themselves as this complicated double identity – Bulgarian and European: 85% of the journalists, 81% of the trade union elites, and 75% of the parliamentarians.

#### 4.2 The Threats to the EU

The issue of identity is connected with the unity of the European Union. A specific nuance in this regard is revealed by the attitudes of the elites to the threats toward the Union. To a definite extent, this depends on the specific potential threats that national elites feel. In this regard the Bulgarian elite, as every other national elite, considers their own powers, strengths, locality, privileges and shortcomings. From this point of view the data from 2009 shows that



according to the Bulgarian elites the biggest threat for the unity are the economic differences between countries, the propensity of member states to put their national interests first and the interference of Russia in European affairs. However, there are some differences between the different groups within the elite – the mass media and the trade union elites are considering these three threats as the most dangerous while for the parliamentarians the threat of economic differences is not as significant as the enlargement including Turkey. The content behind this identification we will discuss further down. It is devoted to the decision making process and its efficiency, to the barriers and encouragements in the process of integration. This is a difficult path and the data reveals that in a very clear way.

In comparison, five years later, in 2014 the parliamentarians still consider that the greatest threat for the unity of the Union is the economic differences between various member states. The thread of Russia is on the second place and this is relevant as the relations with Russia were frozen at this period of time. However, the third significant thread is again the emphasis on national interests, but it divides the third place with two significant momentous problems as immigration, and the thread coming from an enlargement including Turkey. Yet, Bulgarian political elites in their majority (52.8%) do not consider an enlargement including Turkey as a thread. They consider it in the economic and geopolitical interest of the country Turkey to be a EU member.

#### 4.3 Policy Perspectives for the EU

The data clearly shows that Bulgarian elites are not liberal. There are some differences between the groups as the mass media representatives rely on competitiveness of economy than on social approach more often than the social and political elites (rely on competitive economy: 35% of the mass media elites, 19% of the trade union elites and 23% of the political elites), but all the groups in their majority prefer the balance between social and liberal approach (rely on both competitive economy and social approach: 66% of the elites). The difficult years of the financial crisis have even deepen these attitudes and the political elites interviewed in 2014 reveal that competitive economy is the choice of only 18.9% of them, while 41.5 would prefer the social approach and 32.1% choose the balance between economic and social line.

#### 4.4 Perceptions on EU Governance

For the Bulgarian elite, the member states ought to remain the central actors of the European Union (54.7% agreement) and only 18% firmly think in 2009 that EC ought to become the true government of the European Union. However, the portion of the supporters of the latter idea increases to 45.3% at the end of 2014. In this regard, the strongest support is from the side of the parliamentarians and the weakest from the trade union leaders. The powers of the European

Parliament have to be increased significantly according to 15% of the researched respondents in 2009 and 73.6% in 2014. To some extent the explanation of these views could be justified by the effectiveness of the institutions. To a greater extent, the justification of this finding could be looked for in the comparison between national and European Union institutions' performance. The most relevant explanation contributing to the increase of the approval, however, lies in the characteristics of the elite composition in 2009 and 2014. According to our data from 2014, almost half of the parliamentarians in 2014 are new to the parliament. These people know foreign languages, communicate actively with the institutions of the EU and expect deeper unification of the member states.

It seems that Bulgarian parliamentarians appreciate the efficiency of European institutions. However, the interviews in 2014 reveal that still there are doubts about what is the better strategy – unified Europe in all aspects or a European Union in which member states are independent in the process of decision-making. The parliamentarians have arguments for both strategies. According to the interviewed elites, those who make decisions at the EU level do not take enough into account the interests of Bulgaria and this is the firm conviction of 15% of the mass media elite (together with the answer of somewhat agree this percent increases to 57%), of 6% (62%) of the trade union leaders and 9% (61%) of the parliamentarians in 2009 year survey. In 2014 we have interviews with parliamentarians and the comparison reveal that there is a significant increase of the portion of the political elites (75.5%) that consider that the interests of their country are not taken into significant consideration when important decisions are taken at EU level. More, it is perceived that the interests of some member states carry too much weight at the EU level. In this way think 27% of the mass media elites (together with the answer of somewhat agree this percent increases to 93%), 25% (94%) of the trade union activists and 25% (87%) of the parliamentarians in 2009. To a significant extent this is due to the effectiveness of the national elite to influence EU policy-decisions. It is obvious for the Bulgarian elite that the country is at the periphery of the European Union and has very little influence on the decision making process. This most probably contributes to the prevailing expectation for more united European Union.

The impact of the parliament on the decision making process is considered as very ineffective by 32% of the media elites (78% if to the group is added the respondents for whom the effectiveness is rather low), by 33% (73%) of the trade union leaders and 14% (47%) by the parliamentarians in the survey from 2009. Not more positive is the perception of the effectiveness of the government as 13% of the media elites consider it very ineffective (75% together with the answer rather ineffective), 25% (69%) of the trade union leaders and 7% (46%) of the parliamentarians. The data reveal the perception that the parliament is quite incapable of influencing the decision making process at the EU

level. Even when the tools of media and/or lobbying are added, the effectiveness is still considered very low.

Does effectiveness influence the ideas of the elites about the enlargement of the European Union? It seems not to a significant extent, as 57% of the mass media elites and 70% from the trade union leaders and the parliamentarians consider the enlargement necessary for the Union in 2009. The data from 2014 for the parliamentarians show no significant change as about 70% of the interviewed elites consider it necessary that the enlargement of the European Union should continue.

#### 4.5 The Benefits of EU Membership

Bulgarian elites as the majority of the elites in Europe recognize that their countries benefit from the membership. The perception of the European institutions by the Bulgarian elite is similar to the average of all studied countries – to the European Parliament and respectively to the European Commission and the Council of Ministers: 92.5% of the elites think that the country has benefited from the EU membership in 2009 and these are 91% of the interviewed parliamentarians in 2014. In this regard we have a considerably united perception of the elite in the country.

Most probably that is why the trust in European institutions is high. The trust to the European institutions in the survey of 2009 is substantial among all studied elite groups - political, mass media and trade union leaders. However, the trust of the political elite is higher in the European Parliament than the trust of the trade union and media elites and similar to the trust of the other groups toward the Commission and the Council of Ministers. There is no significant change in trust relations toward the European institutions in 2014. As we have seen in the survey of 2009 the political elites are less critical than the trade union and media elite. However, the trust of the parliamentarians in European Parliament – mean 8.9 (10 is highest trust), in European Commission – 7.2, in European Council – 6.8 is significant. As a whole, there is a more positive attitude to European institutions than to the national ones. There is a clear externalization of relations – the Bulgarian elites rather trust European Union institutions than the Bulgarian ones.

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### 5. The Effects of Europeanness on Trust

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It is important to understand the significance of trust to soften the consequences of the reforms and the crises and their impact on social cohesion. The study of such tensions at multi-level structures (European, national, regional, or local) reveals that the Bulgarian elites trust the European institutions more than the Bulgarian ones as the presented data illustrate (Tables 1, 2).

**Table 1:** Trust in EP, EC, EC (on a score of 0-10, 10 – most trust)

	Political Elites	Mass Media Elites	Trade Union Elites
Trust in the European Parliament (mean)	6.33	5.49	5.79
Trust in the European Commission (mean)	5.68	5.79	6.07
Trust in the European Council of Ministers (mean)	5.77	5.52	6.16
Number	76	48	16

Source: IntUne, 2009.

Our data provides reliable information on measuring trust. Our main hypothesis here is that the more recently the country has joined the EU, the more trustful people and the elite are to the European institutions to balance, to overcome the instability they face. The relations of trust have the tendency to change slowly but they are characterized with dynamics. In 2014 the same party is on power as in 2009, but it has formed a coalition government and is supported by five parties from all eight parliamentary represented parties. In this regard, it is not surprising that the trust of the interviewed parliamentarians in 2014 toward national parliament (mean – 7.3 from 10 being the highest point of trust), national government (mean of 7.1) and local governments (7.5) is significantly higher than according to the data of 2009.

**Table 2:** Trust in the Bulgarian Government (on a score of 0-10)

Political, media or trade union elite?	Mean	Number	Std. Deviation
Political Elite	5.46	76	2.595
Media Elite	3.31	48	2.362
Trade Union Elite	3.94	16	2.294
Total	4.55	140	2.667

Source: IntUne, 2009.

The data reveal that there are some variances between the differently oriented Bulgarian MPs expressed towards the European Commission and European Parliament (Table 3), who nevertheless trust them as institutions, may be accounted for by the experience of the indirect but strong influence and leverage these institutions have over national decision-making, coupled with the requirements imposed primarily by the Commission on Bulgaria during the latter's journey towards accession to EU and its monitoring afterwards.

**Table 3: Mean Score of Trust in EP and EC and Political Orientation**

Political Orientation of Bulgarian Elites		
	European Parliament	European Commission
Socialists	5.21	5.46
Left Liberals	6.31	7.00
Right Liberals	6.22	5.67
Christian Democrats	7.00	7.00
Conservatives	6.43	6.06
Extreme Right	3.50	2.67

Source: IntUne, 2009.

Our data comparison from the survey in 2009 between Bulgaria and the other countries' populations shows that the Bulgarians least trust their national institutions. On the scale from 0 to 10, where 0 is a complete lack of trust, the mean for the Bulgarian population is 3.44. Close to Bulgaria is Poland (mean of 3.72) and very different is Denmark (7.46). More, the deviation from the average answer in the case of the Bulgarian population is the largest in comparison with the other studied countries and it confirms the thesis for a sharp division within Bulgarian society. The data show that all studied Eastern European societies trust less their national institutions in comparison with the trust to the national institutions of the Western European countries. The data for the trust to the national government is not very different. The lowest degree of trust is among the populations of Poland (3.70) and Bulgaria (3.73). The average mean for the degree of trust in the national parliaments is 5.47 and to the national government – 6.53. The trust in local governments is higher in all countries in comparison to the trust in the national institutions. Bulgaria is again sharing the lowest positions as the mean of the trust in the local government is 5.25 and the average for all countries is 6.27. The lowest degree of trust in this case belongs to the Serbians (4.35). The data reveal that the Bulgarians are the ones whose trust in their national institutions is low.

The mistrust is not so much a cultural characteristic but rather a result of historical experience. The empirical data for the trust in the European institutions confirms that as the trust to the European Parliament is the highest among Bulgarian elite in comparison with the ones of the countries, involved in the survey. The mean for the trust in the survey in 2007 to European parliament among the Bulgarians is 7.61 and the average for the studied countries is 6.33. The Bulgarians trust very highly also the European Commission. The mean for trust among Bulgarians is 8.02 and the average for the studied countries is 6.53. These data suggest an externalization of trust to institutions outside the country in comparison with the deep degree of mistrust to national institutions.<sup>4</sup>

An explanation for the trust relations of the elites to the European institutions could be the frequency of visits to other European countries. Bulgarians

<sup>4</sup> <<http://epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/portal> 2013> (Accessed 10 January 2015).

are the least travelling in comparison with all studied countries. The data from the survey in 2009 show that only 12% of the Bulgarians have visited in the previous year other countries in the European Union while for the whole sample this average figure is 48.3%. Similar are the reactions of the elites. Their attitudes in 2014, as we have revealed, are changing as the communication with EU institutions are becoming regular and frequent. A further explanation one can look for is in the sociability of the respondents. Among Bulgarians only 12% are members of trade union or other organizations, while the average figures for the sample are more than 15%.

The conclusion from the data reveals that internationalization of polity economy and social environment contribute to the transnational influences. However, they have still not changed the national space in a considerable way.

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## 6. Conclusions

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The recent development in Bulgaria is closely connected with the membership of the country in the European Union. The state has developed adequate political, economic, and social institutions and at the same time has to adapt to the multilevel structures of governance at European level. From one side this means tremendous social changes inside the state and from another – adaptation to international standards that are accepted as basic for the prosperous development of the country. While the inner country's processes are characterized with the creation of multiparty system and market economy, the international relations develop intensively leading to enlargement and transition to international governing structures and in this way to the broadening of the objective of democratization and enlarging the Union solidarity beyond the national boundaries.

The EU integration and the path to this integration contributed considerably to the speed of the change of Bulgarian politics and politicians move toward more practical, reasonable and consensual politics. There are constant ups and downs in the process of Europeanization and our data and interviews show that there is a somewhat historical delay in Bulgaria when compared to the other members of the EU. The data reveal that the elites are dissimilar in perceiving some of the studied aspects of national and European spheres of political, economic and social life and similar in opinions and attitudes in other fields. The greatest defenders of policies at regional level are the trade union leaders, most open to global influences are the mass media and the protectors of national decision-making and influence are the political elites.

The attitudes of the elites reveal high satisfaction with the integration and some suspicion about the efficiency of the national policies. Although there is development toward consensus, the Bulgarian elites still lack experience, ability to transfer good practices, and capacity to control bad practices such as

corruption. This plays a part in the average levels of trust and satisfaction at the national governance level.

The Bulgarian elites' Europeanness is expressed in a high display of trust toward European institutions. However, their trust toward national ones is significantly lower. The explanations for these diversities are looked for in the continuity of historical experiences of trust in the state and its institutions, the short period of European Union membership, the discontinuity during the hard economic transformation and the deep social differences in society since the transition has begun.

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