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## Enlargement of the European Union, integral cultural space and transition processes: equal rights and the ecology of culture

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### Abstract

This paper analyses the processes and priorities of the creation and further development of integral cultural space in Europe in the context of the enlargement of the European Union. The processes of the creation and further development of integral cultural space in Europe in the context of the enlargement of the European Union are defined as an especially important transformation. Some new non-traditional ideas and models of possible development in general, as well as of the cultural changes, are discussed. The main attention is given to the transition processes in the Central and Eastern Europe, as well as to the processes of integration of the society of the Central and Eastern European countries into the general European cultural space. It is shown that provision of equal rights could be defined as the highest priority in the process of creating the integral cultural space in Europe. It is shown that the special attention should be paid to the problems and priorities of the ecology of culture, especially – in the context of the contemporary processes of the European integration in general. The definition of the ecology of culture is described. The needs and priorities of the provision of equal rights and of the solutions of the problems of ecology of culture, especially in the Central and Eastern European countries, are characterized. These needs and priorities are identified in the context of the processes of creation and further development of integral cultural space in Europe, as well as considering to the main challenges for the further transition and modernization processes in the conditions of globalization, European integration and creation of the knowledge based society and knowledge economy. New theoretical concept oriented to the creation, development and further modernization of integral cultural space in Europe in the context of the enlargement of the European Union is described. Priorities of cultural policies to be implemented in the situation of the enlargement of the European Union are discussed.

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## 1. Introduction

The last decades could be defined as the period of increasingly developing transformations in the whole world and all spheres of life. Transformations embody the most important attribute of the modern époque; therefore, all relevant political, social, economic, technological, ecological and other issues should be conceived and approached as issues of transformations. In the process of transformation as well as globalization a society of a new type is being formed, with its typical new values and striving, which creates different patterns of lifestyle and is confronted with new problems and searches for solutions to these problems.

Globalization processes are very well showing themselves in modern Europe. It is quite possible to state that the key-feature of globalization in Europe is the fact that the integral European society is being born, what creates and builds an integral cultural space as well as integral spaces for social, economic, political, technological, ecological and information development.

Creation of the integral cultural space in Europe makes not only preconditions for basic change in life environment and conditions of all European nations, but also determines the fact that a brand new quality is being shaped, both of the society itself and of each European citizen. On the one hand, the development of the integral cultural space opens a number of new opportunities and perspectives for social advancement in the whole Europe; on the other hand, this process inevitably causes new problems and conflicts, and their solution requires the creation and inclusion of an adequate policy in the sphere of culture.

The formation of the integral cultural space in Europe is a complicated process. One of the main problems to be solved is associated with the so-called *equal rights*, implying that equal rights should be provided to all social groups, strata and communities in social, economic, political and other areas all over the country, in any region, as well as in public and business sectors.

The research into this problem should be closely related to the analysis of transformations which took place in Europe because the latter could allow the processes which took place over the last decades can be clearly seen in Central and Eastern Europe.

The paper presents the research results obtained by the author which indicate the emergence of new trends and challenges in the area of creating the integral cultural space in Europe taking account of the need to ensure equal rights to all members of the society.

## 2. Integral cultural space in Europe: main priorities in the conditions of the enlargement of the European Union

Comprehending the concept of integral culture is essential for business practitioners, especially among those who seek to keep it culturally relevant, while increasing sales of products and services. In general, culture consists of patterns, explicit and implicit of and for behaviour acquired and transmitted by symbols, constituting the distinctive achievement of human groups, including their embodiment in artefacts; the essential core of culture consists of traditional (i.e. historically derived and selected) ideas and especially their attached values; culture systems may, on the one hand, be considered as products of action, on the other hand as conditioning elements of future action. Culture is something that is shared by almost all members of some social group; that the older members of the group try to pass on the younger members and something (as in the case of morals, laws and customs) that shapes behaviour (Adorno, 1978; Hofstede, 2000; Melnikas, 2011).

Development of the integral cultural space in Europe not only makes preconditions for basic change in life environment and conditions of all European nations, but also determines the fact that a brand new quality is being shaped, both of the society itself and of each European citizen. Growth of the integral cultural space in Europe is being influenced by a great number of diverse factors. Among these factors as very important appear those related to the expansion of the European Union and to transformation processes in Central and Eastern Europe (CEE), meaning that integration of Central and Eastern European countries (CEECs) into the European Union not only indicates the quantitative growth of the European Union (increase in the number of member states, the number of their population, overall territories and economic potential) but also qualitative transformation in the entire Europe.

The development of the integral cultural space in Europe, taking into account the situation of the integration of the CEECs to the European Union, is a very complex and conflicting process. On the one hand, this process opens a

number of new opportunities and perspectives for societal advancement in all Europe, including the countries of CEE. On the other hand, this process is inevitably causing new problems and new conflicts, and their solutions require that an adequate policy should be created, including the sphere of culture.

The development of the integral cultural space is a striking sign of the contemporary society in Europe, which allows making a complex definition of political, social, economic and technological process development. The integral cultural space in Europe can be perceived as a portmanteau concept. The easiest way is to see the integral cultural space in Europe as a general system of priority values, stereotypes of social behaviour, lifestyle patterns and moral and spiritual standards, typical to all layers of the European countries.

Such definition of the integral cultural space demonstrates a very important factor: the integrity of the cultural space can be understood as affinity of priority values, stereotypes of social behaviour, lifestyle patterns and moral and spiritual standards to all societal layers in all European countries. Thus, it is possible to state that the level of the affinity can determine the integrity of the whole cultural space. The more likeness can be seen within the systems of values, behaviour, lifestyle patterns and standards of different countries and societal layers. If the systems of values, behaviour, lifestyle patterns and standards of different countries and societal layers do not suggest the idea of common features or suggest the picture of great differences, one may say that the society of these countries does not share the integral cultural space.

When giving comments on the concept of the integral cultural space, it is necessary to accentuate several conditions. First, this definition suggests that one might acknowledge the existence of different systems values, stereotypes of social behaviour, lifestyle patterns and moral and spiritual standards, typical to different countries and societal layers. Similarity or affinity of different systems can be comprehended as an assumption for association of different cultural spaces into integral cultural spaces. Next, this definition demonstrates the idea that the integral cultural space conveys the situation where all key-elements of cultural spaces of different countries and societal layers: this means that the main precondition for the integral cultural space formation is a high level of its internal integrity.

It should be noted that the development of the integral European cultural space, especially in the situation of European integration and growth of the European Union, causes a great number of various *problems* related to this development emerge. Among main problems emanating in the development of the integral cultural space, the following can be identified:

- immense cultural differentiation among different countries, regions and social layers: the differentiation of this kind is influenced by way of too serious differences within their economic development and social status (there are too serious differences among different countries, different regions, and different social, professional, as well as ethnic or confessional groups or layers, both within particular countries or regions and Europe or even the world.
- various ethnic, confessional or social conflicts, were existing in the history and still are presented in some secret ways; and the relics of these conflicts: there are many cases in modern Europe when various historically developed conflicts and their relics interfere into the development of the integral cultural space.
- disproportion in the momentum of technological, economic and social, as well as cultural development: technological progress and growth of economic well-being is very often faster than social, cultural and mental changes (disproportion of this character determines the fact that in some societal layers or even countries a certain inadequacy of cultural and spiritual development to economic well-being and technological opportunities can be observed: this inadequacy provokes declining of moral norms, deprivation of social accountability and causes other negative consequences.
- too deep cultural insularity seen in particular countries and influencing lack of tolerance to other cultures, individual and group egotism, as well as insufficient capabilities to adapt to intense social and cultural changes: cultural insularity and lack of tolerance to other cultures not only affects the development of the integral cultural space but also provokes social, economic and other sorts of conflicts.
- in many spheres of societal development there is lack of administrative capabilities necessary for partnership development and intercultural and multicultural exchange elaboration: the policies in the culture are often declaratory and inappropriately oriented towards the basic needs of society, coming forth in the situation of the European integration and the development of the European Union.

### **3. The provision of equal rights as the highest priority in the process of creating the integral cultural space in Europe**

The solution of the problem of providing equal rights is an integral part of the formation of the integral cultural space in Europe (Hofbauer, 2003; Melnikas, 2002). In equal rights society the values and people's views of this idea and its significance make an essential cultural characteristic because the culture of the society and the trends of its development largely depend on the treatment and evaluation of equal rights concept.

It can be assumed that equal rights as a value are among the highest priorities in the society. The implementation of this principle in practice shows the level of societal development and the ability to solve the problems arising in the society.

The concept of equal rights may be treated differently. In more general terms it may be described as a situation when the conditions of work and social activity of various people are not affected by the factors not relevant for these activities.

This definition actually implies that when the principle of equal rights is observed, the attitudes to people and the conditions of their work and social activities are determined by the results obtained and quality of these results rather than by other not related issues.

It follows that inequality of human rights is manifested by the evaluation of people and their activities based on some insignificant factors which cannot actually affect the results achieved by these people.

The assessment of the observance of equal rights may be based on various characteristics which can be classified in the following way:

1. The scope of evaluation of equal rights:
  - global, from the perspectives of large civilization, or international area (e.g. Europe or the European Union or its large regions),
  - from the perspective of nations and the societies of various states and countries,
  - from the perspective of regions, agglomerations, towns, settlements and communities,
  - from the perspective of various organizations,
  - from the perspective of various social groups and strata,
  - from the perspective of the family and relatives,
  - from the perspective of an individual.
2. Biological, biosocial, cultural and ethno cultural aspects in assessing equal rights based on the following characteristics of an individual or groups of individuals:
  - sex, demographical characteristics,
  - race, nation, ethnical group,
  - confession, ideological, political views,
  - sexual orientation,
  - ethical and aesthetical views,
  - physical and psychological state, lifestyle in a physical and biosocial sense.
3. Economic, social, professional aspects and status in assessing the observance of equal rights based on the following individual and group characteristics:
  - financial state,
  - area of employment,
  - educational level,
  - profession,
  - social status associated with the membership of some social organization or group,
  - conditions of life and activities.

These and other examples demonstrate the variety of approaches to assessing the situation with equal rights.

In considering the prospects of creating the integral cultural space in Europe the following aspects of equal rights implementation should be emphasized:

- the provision of equal rights to various countries and regions for social and economic development,
- the provision of equal rights to various ethnic, confessional and social groups and strata,
- the provision of equal rights to people of various professions engaged in various types of activities,

- the provision of equal rights to men and women.

The priority should be given to the above aspects in the cultural space of the whole Europe and CEE in particular. It is of vital importance for solving various problems associated with European integration and expansion of the European Union.

#### **4. Enlargement of the European Union and transformation processes in the Central and Eastern European countries: new challenges and [priorities of cultural policies**

Modern science understands transformations generally as changes, testifying a certain object or system to have acquired a new shape or a new state. This approach is rather universal and can find a great deal of evidence in many scientific studies (Altwater and Mahnkopf, 1996; Boldrin and Canova, 2001; Cameron and Quinn, 1999; Ghose, 2004, Lavingne, 1995; Melnikas, 1997, 1999, 2002, 2011; Perraton, 2001).

Incidentally, this concept is akin to the studies examining economic transformations, especially those showing transition from the close plan economy towards the open and liberal market economy.

Transformations in CEE, as well as processes of the development of the European Union, have been analysed at a very broad and detailed extent. A very broad panorama of changes in the entire, especially in Central and Eastern, Europe, has been given in scientific publications, dedicated to the transformations.

It is also worthwhile mentioning that within the majority of scientific writings on transformations in CEE a certain one-sided emphasis can be observed. Unfortunately, transformations in CEE are frequently perceived as an exclusive transfer of Western expertise (especially, the expertise of Western Europe) to CEE: in these cases transformations are understood as promotion and implementation of the Western lifestyles in the East, and the plain adaptation of these standards, applying local specificity of the Central and Eastern European countries. Importantly, in many cases the following factor is ignored - transformations in CEE, and the development of the European Union make great influence on the entire European Union, and is a crucial factor for the changes both in Western Europe and the whole world.

Transformations in Central and Eastern Europe should be perceived a part of a complex process, involving transformations in the entire Europe and the entire world. Main elements of this complex process are the following:

- transformations, marking the “exit” of the CEECs from the close non-democratic system of the plan economy; these transformations that occurred over the last 10–15 years, showed readiness of Central and Eastern European countries to join the Western world and “take over” the expertise of the Western world,
- transformations, marking the “entrance” of the Central and Eastern European countries to the European Union, their adaptation to further development in the integral space of the European Union, as well as adaptation of the entire European Union to the new environment; these currently undergoing transformations, show common changes within the increased space of the European Union.

This approach lets us conclude that development of the *integral cultural*, as well as political, economic, informational and other *space in Europe* embraces several key stages, including:

- transformations in the countries of CEE, prior to the integration of these countries to the European Union,
- transformations in the entire European Union, especially in the CEECs that have newly entered the Union (these transformations are intensely happening there).

A significant feature of the transformations which took place in CEE is associated with the changes in the area of equal rights. These changes have some conflicting aspects as follows:

- on the one hand, in the transition period the situation in the area of equal rights was improved because the problems associated with their absence in the time preceding the transformation were solved in many fields,
- on the other hand, new problems arose in the area of equal rights in the period of transition. These problems indicate the conflicting character of transformations and are also associated with the complicated integration processes in Europe and the expansion of the European Union.

An effective approach to solving newly arising problems in the area of equal rights is the development and implementation of cultural policy aimed at creating the integral cultural space in Europe.

Enlargement of the European Union does not only show the growth of the European Union but also characterizes the core transformation of the entire European cultural space. This means that an important outcome

of the transformations in CEE has been the fact that integration of new countries into the European Union gives an impulse for development of the integral cultural space of the entire Europe. Based on this approach towards transformations, two key priorities of cultural policies can be defined:

- cultural policies that are designed to popularize on a mass scale and affirm progressive values of humanism and democracy, stereotypes of social behaviour, as well as lifestyle patterns and standards of moral and spiritual life in the Eastern and Central European countries;
- cultural policies that are designed to guarantee that traditional Western European society is able to consider the Eastern and Central European society as equal and compatible with the norms of Western culture and lifestyles, and the progressive historical and cultural experiences of the Eastern and Central European countries and their elitist spheres are integrated into the overall system of the European cultural system.

For the sake of the implementation of these two priorities on the pan-European scale special programmes of complex character should be introduced:

1. Programmes of cultural heritage preservation, conservation and actualization of all European countries, regions, as well as ethnic, confessional and other groups and layers: the programmes of such kind should ensure that the culture of each country, region as well as ethnic, confessional or other social groups and the layers preserves elements comprising uniqueness of each of these countries in the context of basic norms and standards of the European cultural space.
2. Programmes for integrated European dimension adaptation in various cultural spaces: such programmes should address coexistence of various cultures and their reciprocal harmonization, ensuring universal cultural tolerance and mutual understanding.
3. Programmes for elimination of unacceptable factors within humanism and democracy: first of all, these are programmes designed to prevent fascist, racist, nationalist manifestations; as well as programmes designed to adopt ideals of humanism, high morale, human rights and freedom and social accountability; they should include prevention of such phenomena as violence or wrong habits, etc.

Further development and implementation of the programmes of this kind should encourage the creation of a new society and produce preconditions for further cultural, economic and social progress.

## **5. Integral cultural space in Europe and the ecology of culture**

Our lexicon contains many terms trying to express similar thoughts. With the passage of time, some of them gain a wider, more universal meaning. "Ecology" is one such term. Once, its meaning was restricted only to the phenomena and processes connected with biology. Over time, however, this concept has begun to attract a wider meaning – for example, in such aspects as the ecology of the soul; the ecology of residence; the ecology of memory; the ecology of ideas. This gradual expansion of meaning evidences a wider interpretation and use of this term as a means for understanding universal values and meanings.

When we use the term "ecology," we usually mean the interaction of man and his environment, as well as the consequences of such interaction. Since culture is an important and indivisible element of man's surrounding environment, the term "ecology of culture" naturally fits into and expands our lexicon. Naturally, we are interested in the positive development of the cultural world surrounding us.

The ecology of culture may be understood in two ways. On the one hand, it is a scientific discipline, the subject of which is the complex analysis of the possibilities of saving and restoring the positive modification of the surrounding cultural environment; the search for optimal ways of artistic and other creation, perception and distribution of artistic and another works. On the other hand, the ecology of culture is a constant interaction of man and his surrounding spiritual environment, the expression of the qualitative level of such interaction, evidencing the consonance of man's actions to the spiritual imperatives of his existence.

The dual meaning of "the ecology of culture" shows that the term carries in itself not only the potential for theoretical learning, but also the practical intent to restructure the environment surrounding us. For humans, is not enough to study the surrounding world; by learning about our world, we attempt to conform to it. Yet, now and again such adaptation transforms into its opposite: not humans conforming to their surroundings, but the surroundings conforming to our needs and desires.



Humans often sully and sometimes annihilate their biophysical environment. Yet we understand that such interaction is a negative phenomenon. Thus, when we speak of the ecological character of any interaction, our usage of these terms subsumes that the interaction will contain an attempt to preserve the environment and to ensure the positive development of the surrounding world.

## 6. Conclusions

The central indicator of the processes of integration and political, social, economic development is the creation of an integrated cultural space in Europe that is strongly influenced by many factors, including the expansion of the European Union, especially the integration of the Central and Eastern European countries into the European Union.

The integral cultural space in Europe is defined as a general system of priority values, stereotypes of social behaviour, lifestyle patterns and moral and spiritual standards, typical to all layers of the European countries where the integrity of the cultural space might be understood as the affinity of different systems that can be comprehended as an assumption for association of different cultural spaces into integral cultural spaces.

Processes of development of the integral cultural space in Europe are very complex and controversial; and in this course various problems and conflicts arise, which cause a real threat for further process of the European integration and the expansion of the European Union; therefore, special attention should be paid to the solution of these problems and conflicts.

To encourage the creation of the integral cultural space in Europe, the appropriate cultural policies are necessary to be implemented in the entire Europe. These policies may embrace many priorities, including:

- preservation of cultural diversity of all European countries, as well as ethnic, confessional or other social groups or layers; heritage preservation of these countries; and further integration of these cultures into the overall process of cultural development;
- adaptation and dissemination of the integrated European dimensions in the whole Europe;
- elimination of inappropriate factors within humanism and democracy.

Priorities of cultural policies are especially important for the countries in the CEE and for better implementation of these priorities; we propose initiating complex research and diverse scientific and educational projects.

Considering the problems of creating the integral cultural space in Europe, the emphasis should be placed on the provision of equal rights. The attitudes to the significance of equal rights principle characterize the society and its culture, while the attitudes to this aspect as a priority reflect the system of values of the society. This means that when creating the integral cultural space the attitudes to the value and implementation of equal rights should be coordinated. A significant consideration is the orientation of these attitudes to democratic and humanistic values.

The creation of the integral cultural space in Europe requires comprehensive investigation. The research into this problem, especially in political, economic, cultural and administration areas, is very promising.

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