

The influence of EU Membership in public management: Customs Services and the challenges for change.

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The consequences of EU membership in the structure and organization of domestic public services has a growing interest in the academic literature. Under the concept of europeanization there is a vast number of studies (Borzell and Thomas, 2003; Featherstone and Radaelli, 2003; Knill, 2006; Mastenbroek and Keading, 2006) which analyses the consequences and the dynamic of the process of integration in what concerns organizational structures, formal rules and consolidates practices in public services. The customs services were the first departments of Portuguese public administration to be under the process of europeanization. Since the EU membership changes in the Head Office of Customs and Special Taxes on Consumer (DGAIEC) were conditioned by the evolution of the integration process. This paper analyse how the process of Europeanization has been responsible for changes in the organizational structure and the functioning of the Directorate-General of Customs and Special Taxes. The study looks at the change process analyzing the perceptions of high civil servants (the so called *Dirigentes*) who has been responsible for implementing

changes in the organizational structure and the functioning of the Head Office of Customs and Special Taxes on Consumer (DGAIEC). It aims to understand how the directors of Portuguese Customs have deal with the pressures for change come from the Europeanization process.

Key words: Europeanization, change, European Union, Portugal, Customs

Les conséquences que l'adhésion à l'Union Européenne a eu sur la structure et organisation des services publics des États Membres ont déclenché un intérêt de plus en plus grand dans la littérature académique. Ce sont divers les études réalisées qui ont comme base le concept d'eupéanisation qui analysent les conséquences et la dynamique du procès d'intégration dans ce qui concerne la structure organisationnelle, règles formelles et pratiques consolidées dans les services publics.

Les services douaniers ont été le premier département de l'Administration Publique Portugaise qui ont été soumis au procès d'eupéanisation. Depuis l'adhésion à l'Union Européenne que les changements dans la Direction-Générale des Douanes et des Impôts Spéciaux-DGAIEC ont été conditionnés par l'évolution du procès d'intégration.

Cette communication analyse la façon comme le procès d'eupéanisation a été responsable par les changements dans la structure organisationnelle et fonctionnement de la DGAIEC. L'étude observe le procès de changement analysant les perceptions des hauts fonctionnaires (les nommés dirigeants) qui ont été les responsables par l'implémentation des changements dans la structure organisationnelle et fonctionnement du DGAIEC. Il a comme but comprendre comment les directeurs des douanes portugaises savent prendre les pressions pour le changement provenantes du procès d'eupéanisation.

Mots-clé: Eupéanisation, Changement, Union Européenne, Portugal, Douanes.

1 -Introduction

European integration is a landmark in the last fifty years of European history. The EU¹ integration process is one of the most original cases of political process transformation at global level. The impact of such process should be analysed not only in the political discourse but as well in the research of its consequences in what concerns the administrative organization of Members States (MS) (Radaelli, 2003).

Europeanization has known in recent times a growing interest. This concept is useful to analyse and show an aspect of the European integration usually ignored: The process through the MS is compelled to change organizational structures, formal rules, consolidate practices due to the dynamic of the European political process (Knill, 1998).

This concept is distinct from the one of convergence, harmonization or political integration. It matters to distinguish between political integration and Europeanization. It is different to understand the reasons behind countries clustering and sovereignty empowering from understanding the effects caused by the integration process at the Public Administration level.

With the accession of Portugal to the European Union, customs administration became one of the first Portuguese Public Administration departments to feel the Europeanization process in structural and organizational terms. Afterwards the Single Market creation and internal borders control abolition brought up an increasing responsibility in the external borders which unleashed the need of a structural and organizational overhaul of the Portuguese customs. Actions that Portuguese customs started to implement are increasing its number and are also defined at Community level. In this regard success of Common Customs Policy is now reliant on domestic customs administration.

The goal of our article is to analyse the influence of European integration and its effects – Europeanization – on Public Administration, especially on Portuguese customs administration.

We focus our analysis on the Europeanization process of Portuguese customs administration by setting the approach on four basic aspects: human resources management, processes and practices adjustments, information technologies relevance and evolution dynamics of organizational structure. Considering features of this research, used methodology was the case study, once according to Featherstone (2003), investigators should value cases studies, while studying Europeanization. In our investigation we established the following starting question:

¹ Formerly called European Economic Community - EEC

In which way Europeanization process has been responsible for Head Office of Customs and Special Taxes on Consumer (DGAIEC) during the last two decades? Investigation resorted in information gathering of different documentary sources, namely official documents and a questionnaire carried through Portuguese customs managers in order to understand their perception on Customs Administration Europeanization.

2 – The concept of Europeanization

Europeanization has acquired visibility among researchers as a new concept featuring a variety of changes in domestic terms which results of the integration process. Though Europeanization concept is closely related with the European integration process should not be mistaken with European integration and Europeanization, which are independent concepts. It might also occur some confusion about Europeanization concept, convergence concept, harmonization concept or even political integration. Convergence may be a result of European integration and should not be used as a Europeanization synonym, once there is a difference between the process and its consequences (Radaelli, 2003). Harmonization concept indicates a legislative frame at the EU level not reflecting concerns towards intrinsic specificities of each national Public Administration, which implement supranational defined policies. Political integration process is not synonymous for Europeanization because understanding why countries cluster and delegate sovereignty is not the same as understanding integration process effects on domestic level (Milward, 1992 and Moravcsik, 1993). There is an objective difference that should be established between causes and consequences. Theoretical definition of Europeanization concept presented by Radaelli (2003) is probably the most comprehensive and solid one. According to this author Europeanization is a process of: a) construction; b) diffusion and c) institutionalization of formal and informal rules, procedures, paradigm of policies, styles, ways of performing, standards and knowledge defined and consolidated first at European level and secondly incorporated by each member state. Debate on this theme is a new analysis field that seeks the understanding of how national institutions adjust according the European integration process (Knill and Lenschow, 2005; Radaelli, 2003). Empirical studies have proven to be possible the measurement of the extent and meaningfulness of domestic adjustments which allows to assert that Europeanization process is a degree question. (Featherstone and Radaelli, 2003). This analysis perspective of integration process aspires to understand consequences at domestic level, as well as the adopted decisions taken by Community institutions at supranational level. Casual relation between pressure for change

of European level and substantive adjustment of domestic level is the key question of Europeanization process discussion. Europeanization is a dynamic character because it is associated to organizational change featured process which dimension presents two levels: a) a supranational level (of pressure) and b) a domestic level (of adjustment). Empirical studies on Europeanization process show that impact on domestic terms of European policies is irregular and asymmetrical, deferring from MS to MS according to the political area (Mastenbroek and Keading, 2006). According to Knill (1998) implementation of European legislation depends on the way European requirements are absorbed by national administrative traditions. Pressure for organizational adjustment emerges basically from the need of rearrange and update national structures design in order to create a dynamic in its efficiency and this way achieve certain goals, politically defined in Community terms (Peterson, 2003). For instance, one of the key problems about Community legislation implementation is related to the impact that normative frame starts to exert on national administrations practices (Knill, 1998). This way modernization process of public organizations depends firstly on Community legislative frame amplitude and non adjustment discrepancy between national reality and requirements agreed at supranational level (Knill and Lenschow, 2005). This analysis seems to suggest that success on the implementation of a certain Community policy will be bigger if the implementation follows a domestic convenience pattern, namely if it is verified less possible damage in organizational terms. Resistance tends to take place when the administrative traditions burden turn organizations impermeable to change, creating a shield in those organizations that resists to external pressures (Knill,1998). In that sense, pressure in terms of change will tend to be as far more intense as bigger discrepancy and misalignment will be between domestic reality and the one required by Community legislation. Adjustment pressure could be defined as institutional incompatibility degree between national organic structures and supranational requirements (Knill, 1998). According to Mastenbroeck and Keading (2006) there are two Europeanization analysis perspectives: a goodness of fit and a misfit. The authors defend that as bigger as the misfit degree, misalignment between European position and institutional and organizational reality of each MS, the bigger will be pressure for change in order to correct misalignment. Hypothesis of goodness of fit tries do find a link between European pressures for change and domestic impact (Goetz, 2000). As lower compatibility degree between European level and domestic level higher will be pressure for adjustment (Böerzel and Risse, 2003). In a degree of misfit situation - in other words: in a misalignment level – EU operates as an external powerful variable that strongly stresses change, particularly on national public administrations

which are those domestic organizations responsible for Community policies. For Hall (2003) domestic players interest and preferences need to be taken into account in order to explain dynamics of change. For Guiliani (2003), Europeanization process of institutions becomes a degree question instead of a nature question. Depth of changes at national organizations level varies according to European policies, constellation of domestic interest, beliefs, expectations as well as created opportunities inside institutional structures with which interact domestic players (Knill, 2006). Thus, national Public Administrations are the epicentre of a pressure whirl having its source in Community policies.

Knill and Lenschow (2005) and Knill (2006) agree that national institutions adjustment typifies a persistence pattern. Apparently, domestic bureaucracy is not enforced in a non-fulfilment situation of Community legislation implementation. However, it tends to minimize great adjustments in changes, styles and institutional structures. Europeanization works in domestic terms as a detonator of administrative reform, mandatory in Community policies implementation. Knill (1998) points as relevant greater or minor capacity of each MS to reform its Public Administration in the sense of adjustment and according to the pressure level brought by Community institutions. The role of bureaucrats and bureaucracy is a determinant factor in Europeanization evolution because there is a fondness for a minimalist character (Knill and Lenschow, 2005).

However, Europeanization process may lead to uncertain results according to domestic realities of each MS. In that regard Radaelli (2003) identifies four unlike results of reform process as direct effect from national public administrations Europeanization: inactivity, assimilation, transformation and suppression. Inactivity indicates lack of change and tends to happen when institutional structure and politic legacy show a high misalignment between domestic reality and Community level. Assimilation is a situation where intended Community change lines up with domestic reality. In this case, domestic status quo essential goals are sustained, therefore change degree is reduced and misalignment minor or null.

As enhanced by Böerzel and Risse (2003), assimilation implies accommodation to European requirements without generating a real transformation in the essential structure and behaviour logic. Transformation implies a pattern change due to an ultimate shift of domestic organizational structures. Once misalignment is high it will take place pattern change of the underlying corporate apprehension (Böerzel and Risse, 2003).

Suppression tends to happen when change degree is very high and a strong domestic opposition to change is verified in terms of a specific area Europeanization.

Pressure may lead to the extinction of a particular institution, specially when there is a

negative public perception of that reality. On the same basis of judgement, Knill (1998) identifies three different ways of implementation, according to three distinct levels of pressure: contradiction of the core, change within a core and confirmation of the core, because Europeanization as a result of European integration process consequences is dissimilar and also influences domestic realities which are different by nature.

Domestic opposition increases in proportion to adjustment pressures deriving from Community legislation. As a result, institutional changes are generally confined to gradual and extra adaptation (Knill and Lenschow, 2005) and they barely fulfil minimal requirements stipulated in the Community prescriptive. As Araújo (2002) asserts, high officials in each head office set their conduct and practices strictly to satisfy requirements applied by the new policy. Demands from Brussels are more tough to implement because it is mandatory, though only the essential, in order to cause the less possible damage to current organizational structure. This is in fact the main question of Europeanization issue: casual relation established between pressure for change required by EU institutions and substantive adjustment at MS level. Though, authors like Knill and Lenschow (2005) draw attention to the fact that changes tend to have a minimalist feature, cutting down to the minimum resulting obligations from MS status. Therefore, it is worth to analyse the consequences of EU integration in the Portuguese customs system, in order to understand how the process of Europeanization has been responsible for changes in the organization and functioning of the DGCST.

3 – EU Integration and Customs

Customs policy is so important that it turns out to be impossible conceiving EU functioning without considering Community custom policy. It fits into the first pillar of European Communities Treaties and, in that extent, to the Commission it suits the right of initiative. Customs Union was the first mark of Common Market and represents one of the most determinant elements of development and deepness of European construction. Following integration process, different MS were dispossessed of its traditional customs abilities in advantage of Community institutions. Since Customs Union was created its activity is based on a common customs legislation which is a crucial part of Community customs policy. Knill (1998) alerts to the fact that this reality does not have to be necessarily limited to Regulations obedience or to EU directives transposition, but also alerts to the relevance of domestic players beliefs and expectations, specially players and organizations which mission is based

on practical implementation of Community legislation.

Single Market settling in 1993 made compulsory the conclusion of Customs Union construction process and adoption of necessary measures to assure a smooth management. EU customs are responsible for practical application of customs legislation concentrated in various legislative instruments which diligence is mandatory in all EU territory.

Besides fiscal activity defined in Common Customs Policy execution, EU customs administrations are also responsible for field application of other common policies which correct application is closely dependent of specific rules applied in equal way in every MS.

These rules implementation is restricted by the domestic impact of Community policies because this is an irregular and asymmetric process, diverging from MS to MS. Legislative measures agreed into Community institutions only make sense if there is an operational and practice harmonization under national customs administrations. Domestic realities diversity stressed out the need of EU customs administrations to think and act as if they were only one. According to Magone (2004) effective fulfilment of supranational policies at EU level is dependant by national administrations intervention.

Each national customs administrations represent its own reality within a specific culture identified with its social reality. How to implement a Common Customs Policy out of different national realities is exactly the main question. Success of common policies defined by EU depends on customs administrative capacity of acting in a reasonable and homogeneous way in all Customs Union. In this context, homogenization of different praxis and cooperation between national customs administrations get a more relevant dimension. The problem was identified. It was necessary coordination and reinforcement of national accuracy through common actions aiming a wider awareness for a bigger Community dimension of its role and need for close cooperation among all national customs administrations.

A common challenge for the EU Customs

The solution presented by Commission to answer this challenge was defined in two aspects: Firstly, sustain a Community program development; Secondly, a Common Mission Charter enfolding all national customs administrations. First step was “Customs” program still in execution which goal is assuring that customs activities match the needs in terms of supply network security and exchange ease. This program looks for active contribution on MS customs administrations interaction and on its perform improvement as if we faced a single

customs administration. This way control is assured with equivalent results in all customs territory, concerning protection of financial interest, security and EU protection. This was a step to try to solve a divergence problem generating EU homogeneity. Evolution to higher levels of Community customs policy integration started to claim closer cooperation among national administrations as well as between those and Community institutions. This cooperation dimension is based on two levels: First, relates to Community customs legislation output, Community institutions responsibility and, secondly, correct application of the same legislation, national customs administrations ability. As a matter of fact customs role evolved of an office, where first task was Community tax charging to a responsible entity for practical application of other policies, namely within agricultural policy, public health protection, environmental protection and fight against fraud and illicit traffic. As Knill (2006) asserts, depth and the way to agglutinate and establish consistent and uniform procedures among all MS varies within European policies, wide range of beliefs and domestic interest, expectations and opportunities inside institutional structures with which domestic players interact. Underlying reality to this whole process is featured by MS diversity in its organic organization in respect to human resources and available equipment or even customs culture. Customs role in EU external border requires a high quality and consistent performance in order to create uniform practices and procedures able to avoid dysfunctions, putting at stake correct work of Customs Union, which is an essential EU principle. Considering that administrations have different practices and habits deeply rooted in its traditions, this exercise implies a certain persistence identifying the track and best practices to reach improvement. As reported by Börzel and Risse (2003) policies defined at Community level challenge rules, domestic procedures and understanding despite its national realities. Second step of the answer to the challenge went through subscription of Common Mission Charter by EU customs establishing goals of commitment to everyone. This Charter represents a commitment adopted by all MS in order to regulate their performances. This Charter sustains formalization in external common border protection and is based in a group of elements that shape its image, character and values. Mission Charter corresponds to a commitment synthesis expressing activity guidance towards the future and having the goal of working as a motivation factor, cohesion and articulation among several Community customs.

4 – Dynamic and Evolution of Custom Structures

According to its assigned tasks customs administrations were the first to have a true Community perspective. Head Office of Customs and Special Taxes on Consumer (DGAIEC) is the responsible department for implementation of customs policies defined by Community institutions in Portugal. Development of DGAIEC organizational structure was widely a result of the European integration process, suffering changes imposed by Community customs policies requirements. First major shift of organic structure happened in a pre-accession period with Decree-Law n° 252-A/82 of July 28th publication which established a new organic law for customs administration. Outlined perspective targeted department conception able to adopt negotiations between Portuguese customs administration and Community institutions responsible for customs policies. On the other hand, there was a bigger structure functional specialization to implement news techniques imposed by EU. Dynamics of European integration process evolved to a bigger integration baseline with Common Market beginning on January, 1993. Defined in Decree-Law n° 252-A/82 of 28th July, previous organic structure of national customs administration no longer answered to requests and challenges of Common Market. New organic law presented in Decree-Law n° 324/93 of September 25th has as its main goal the adjustment of Customs Head Office organizational structure to fit into Common Market bigger demands. In domestic terms most significant aspect of these adjustments was to disable all customs organizational structure with Spanish border. This administrative appliance became unnecessary and had to be reconsidered in terms of common external border where Portuguese customs started to have increased responsibilities, namely concerning Special Taxes on Consumer. Common Market implementation brought out a substantial cut of traditional function in customs domain. For instance, in 1992 the DGAIEC have processed about 2 000 000 customs applications permissions to import/export. In 1993 the number decreased to 500 000. This represents a huge decrease of 75 % (DGAIEC, 1993;1994).

In 1999, the challenge of Monetary and Economic Union and single currency – Euro -, and the need to coordinate activities with fiscal administration pressured another reorganization, implemented through Decree-Law n° 360/99 of September 16th. Later, in May 2004, as a result of impact caused by European Union accession of ten new Members, there was the need to readjust DGAIEC organizational structure. In that sense, it was published Ordinance n° 1067/2004 of August 26th, which introduced adjustments to Organic Regulation of Functioning. As a whole, with the organic law of 1992 the intention was to endow Portuguese customs with an organic structure able to answer adjustment needs, requirements established

by EU accession process and Customs Union challenge. Organic law of 1993 had as a goal reorganization of customs structure fitting itself to necessary adjustments and Common Market procedures. 1999 organic law goal had underlined tributary general administration as a consistent answer to Monetary and Economic Union challenges. 2004 organic law aspired an answer to the adjustment of customs activity context as a result of the bigger EU enlargement ever. All these reasons suggest that different DGAIEC organic restructuring were implemented from outside through EU pressure.

5 – The Development of Human Resources Management

DGAIEC human resources management followed up customs integration process. Abolishment of internal borders and customs control concerning intra-Community exchanges, as a result of Union Market materialization, brought up customs administration adjustments. Eighteen customs delegations were closed, as well as five sub-delegations and several clearance offices nearby Spanish border, with workers reduction in perspective. As a result of these adjustments, DGAIEC human resources suffered a significant reduction among workers. From 1986 to 2006 Analysis of DGAIEC Activity Reports allows to verify that in 1986, in quantitative terms, there were 3183 employees in the Portuguese customs staff board, a number that went down to 1696 individuals in 2006, which represents a 46,7% personnel reduction in the course of two decades (see Table 1).

Table 1 – Evolution of Civil Servants of the DGAIEC

Number of Civil Servants					
1986	1990	1994	1998	2002	2006
3183	3163	1726	1608	1762	1696

Source: Activity Reports of DGAIEC, 1986, 1996, 1998, 2002, 2008

In 1986, executive officers board delivered 27 positions, which represents about 1% of the whole customs employees, and in 2006 this board was comprised by 56 positions, which represented approximately 4% of the whole personnel. Senior technicians went from 12% in 1986 to 20% in 2006, while technician board enhanced 6%; from 9% in 1986 went to 15% in 2006. Ultimately, professional and administrative technician staff went from 78% in 1986 to 61% in 2006 (see Table 2).

Table 2 – Evolution of the civil servants by career

Career	Number of civil servants			
	1986	%	2006	%
<i>Dirigente</i> ¹	27	1%	56	4%
Specialist	383	12%	348	20%
Technician	287	9%	259	15%
Professional and Clerical	2486	78%	1033	61%
Total	3183	100%	1696	100%

Source: Activity Reports of DGAIEC, 1986; 2006

1 – *Dirigente* are the personnel who perform functions of direction, management and coordination.

However, increasing requirements of European integration process showed needs of staff recruitment with higher technical knowledge allowing answers to new challenges. This recruitment conducts to a growth of Technicality² level. Analysis to Activity Reports between 1986 and 2006 allows to verify that since 1986 technicality level improved, going from 22,0% in 1986 to 39% in 2006, which represents a 17% positive fluctuation. During the two decades under review, this was not a gradual reduction. In reality, the strongest decline happened between 1990 and 1995 as a direct result the Common Market becoming operative in 1st of January, 1993. In that period, staff numbers went from 3163 in 1990 to 1726 in 1994, which corresponds to a 54% reduction in the number of individuals who worked in the customs institution.

Customs Union and Common Market set significant changes in Portuguese customs. For instance, with the extinction of internal borders with Spain and abolishment of customs documents on Community merchandise there was a 75% reduction of customs services activity. On the other hand, there was the need to train staff on Community costumes issues. This need leads Community institutions to develop initiatives that encourage customs staff skills in order to build consistency and homogeneity in their performance. Program EU “Customs” was the answer to attend these demands, by developing training actions at Community level for all MS customs staff that might reinforce intensification of Community customs reality knowledge. These actions intend to contribute for better working methods, to identify ways of rationalizing daily activities and identify better practices in objective application of control customs procedures of merchandise in external borders. This way, we can conclude that Europeanization of DGAIEC human resources management originated two significant shifts. First one, in quantitative terms, with 46,7% reduction of the whole number of customs workers, specially less academic skilled staff (administrative and professional technicians). Second one, in qualitative terms, with the increase of high academic skilled

² The level of technicality is the ratio of personnel with high education and number of staf.

permanent staff, which contributed to a 17% technicality level development between 1986 and 2006. Relevance of DGAIEC human resources training assumed a crucial role as an answer to the Europeanization process. Training programs allow customs staff the possibility to improve their abilities in order to keep up the change process imposed by European integration. In other words, it reduced misalignment between national level and Community level in terms of human resources skills in Community legislation, an extensive situation to most MS (Mastenbroeck and Keating, 2006).

6 – The Perception of Europeanization in the Customs Management

Methodology

This study uses a qualitative methodological approach. Investigative evaluation field was circumscribed to the universe of Customs Head Offices scattered along the country: 13 organizations in mainland and two in Madeira and Azores Autonomous Region. The survey was headed to Portuguese customs managing directors, head managers responsible for common customs policy. This universe comprises 15 individuals. The choice on these head managers attaches itself to the fact that they perform management functions with specific of implementing Community customs legislation. We focus our investigation on Portuguese customs administration Europeanization by concentrating in four aspects we consider elementary: Perception of Dynamic and Evolution of Organizational Structure, Perception of Human Resources Management, Transformation of Processes and Practices and Relevance of Information Technology Assets. The survey was posted. A pre-test was carried out to a group of three individuals. Data gathering happened during May of 2008. Answering rate was of 100%. There were posed closed questions comprised by a group multiple choice answers using Lickert scale, with a 1 (Completely Disagree) to 5 (Completely Agree) graduation range. We used evaluation of arithmetic mean as measure of central location and standard deviation to calculate answers dispersion.

Data Analysis

Surveys results allow us to understand how Customs Head Managers realize changes in

DGAIEC since EU accession. According to Table 3 data, they agree that accession was a landmark in the institution history once they mention the pre-accession period and post-accession period. It is since then that customs administration organizational structure became subject of great changes.

Table 3 – Perception of the Dynamic and Evolution of Organizational Structure

Questions	Mean	Standard Deviation
Portuguese accession to EEC in 1986 marked the beginning of changes in DGAIEC organizational structure.	4,53	0,834
European integration process generated minimalistic adjustment of DGAIEC structure to EU requirements	2,53	1,457
In terms of organizational structure, DGAIEC “Organic Laws” published in the last two decades reflected external pressures for change by EU.	3,47	1,187
Adjustment of DGAIEC organic structure is subjected by the way Community requirements are absorbed in national customs traditions.	3,60	1,056
Over more than two decades, since Portuguese accession to EEC, how would you classify the adjustment process of DGAIEC organizational structure to challenges posed by the new UE reality.	3,91	0,594

Source: Questionnaire – May 2008

With the deepening of European integration process, Portuguese customs assumed more responsibilities allocated by Community institutions, namely in common external borders management. Respondents acknowledge and value the relevance acquired by domestic customs in Community context, once they started to answer before the Portuguese Government, but mostly before Community institutions. Its mission reached a wider dimension, with strait implications in customs functioning. Customs Head Managers believe different MS customs structures diversity it is not an obstacle to homogeneity of procedures and practices among customs. They think it is possible to make a consistent Community customs policy management, independently of each MS internal realities. To responders diversity is not a negative feature in Community law implementation. European integration process did not generate a minimalistic adjustment of organizational structure able to answer Community institutions demands. Responders acknowledge EU pressures in the way how adjustment was made (see Table 3). The way different organic laws were structured, reflected the will of answering to Community institutions requirements in order to get close to “European Standard”. These head officers do not deny pressures but don’t impute it the whole

reasons for occurred changes. Head managers of Portuguese customs acknowledge that organic structure adjustment was subjected to national customs traditions by customs practices and culture. They don't identify the Europeanization process as a rupture with practices, traditions and national customs culture, which validates Knill's judgement, when he asserts that national public administrations structures the change process and adjustment to new organizational reality, not only by considering a strategy to suit a certain sectoral policy within Community institutions, but also in the way they analyse those adjustments (Knill, 1998). Change process takes into account operational standards in order to reduce domestic damage which asserts North (1996) and Scott (1995) opinion, when they argue that dependence of the past and continuity are important features in organizations, preserved by culture and reproduced in a process of dependence. In respect to human resources, and according to the survey data (see Table 4), responders acknowledge that impact customs policy had on DGAIEC staff.

Table 4 – Perception of Human Resource Management

Questions	Mean	Standard Deviation
Success of Community customs policy implementation is limited to available resources by Member States customs administrations.	3,93	1,280
Implementation of Community customs policy is requiring technical services provision with an increasing level of specialization by human resources assigned to its Customs.	4,67	0,488
Higher education levels among customs workers have contributed to a positive response by DGAIEC, regarding increasing Community institutions demands.	4,47	0,640
In a general way how would you classify technical quality development of customs workers in the last 20 years.	4,20	0,941

Source: Questionnaire – May 2008

Survey data reveals that human resources allocation had a direct relation with responding ability to Community customs policy challenges. According to answers (see Table 4) this one forced a bigger demand in human resources specialization and provision. In the same way it seems to be the answer to personnel recruitment with higher education levels. This has contributed for a positive action to Community institutions higher demands. Responders consider that there was a positive evolution in customs workers technical quality development in the last 20 years. Customs Head Managers have the perception that domestic Community

policies implementation set bigger demands to DGAIEC and has sharply contributed to an increasing human resources specialization degree. Responders also have the perception that acceptance competitive examination requirements of higher education levels have been important to DGAIEC response towards EU institutions increasing demands in interpretation of Community law.

Challenge for procedure modernization

National legislation that regulated Portuguese customs activity before EU accession goes back to the year 1965. This stability in DGAIEC procedures and practices translates persistence and rigidity of customs standards and procedures. Until 1986, date of Portuguese accession to EU, customs legislation had two elementary pillars: a) Customs Reform, approved by Decree-Law n° 46311 of 27th April 1965, defining services organic and b) Customs Regulation, Decree n° 31730 of 15th December 1941, regarding procedures. With the accession it became urgent new internal legislation proceeding from Community Directives principles regarding procedures. Simultaneously, in domestic law it takes direct effect several regulations already operative in other MS. It means that customs legislative framework was revoked, which produced a real “normative revolution”. European integration process is pronounced, representing in its essence transfer of powers of long-lasting national customs administration responsibility to Community institutions. Skills previously under DGAIEC exclusive responsibility are now imposed abroad by Community institutions. Deepening of European integration process delivered to Community institutions the power to legislate on customs matters and the possibility to enact rules of Community law, which are directly applied in all MS, independently of institutions specific realities and domestic players. This way, Portuguese customs became under strict scrutiny of Community institutions in implementation and enforcement of expected goals upon common customs legislation. Customs Head Managers perception on these adjustments lie in Table 5.

Table 5 – Modifications to the Processes and Practices

Questions	Mean	Standard Deviation
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Questions	Mean	Standard Deviation
Integration process dynamics generated a cleavage with the past of Portuguese Customs regarding its procedures.	3,73	1,163
In organizational structure framework, modifications operated at Customs level since Portuguese accession to EEC have contributed to a wider efficiency of its performance.	4,13	0,990
Customs policy is the EU substance, grounded to a Home Market correct functioning and represents a common set of rules (ex. Common Customs Tariff and Community Customs Code) that should be applied uniformly in EU external border.	4,87	0,352
There are specificities of each EU customs administrations (ex. organizational structure, available technological and human resources) that could restrict uniform application of Community legislation.	4,47	0,516
Domestic customs administration assumed bigger responsibilities in operational terms, regarding EU external border management.	4,40	1,056
Community customs integration process exerted a strong external pressure upon DAGIEC in its way of managing services.	4,13	0,743
Adoption of customs policies at Community level, following Customs Union and Single Market, anticipates an increasing Community institutions intervention, specially from the Commission, in matters so far exclusively of Member States .	4,47	0,834
Community customs regulation depends on national customs to be implemented.	4,67	0,488
Increasing integration process started to claim from different Member States customs “homogeneity” in Community law application over EU external border.	4,93	0,258
In a generic way it is possibly to assert that workers of my Customs guide their performance by following their mission.	4,53	0,516

Source: Questionnaire – May 2008

Dynamics behind European integration process didn't cause a cleavage with Portuguese customs past. According to Table 5 data there isn't a cleavage with the pre-accession period, which refers some persistence in Customs Head Managers opinion on customs institutions, also indicating that Community policies were implemented regarding its perspective on how those policies should work. This perception lays in a cleavage of responsibilities of who defines policies and implements those policies. Community institutions depend on national customs administrations to execute policies set by Brussels. Strict enforcement of Community customs legislation didn't limit the form and the way of how this regulation was implemented in domestic terms, because that is a DGAIEC head officers responsibility. A crucial aspect in this process is what relates to the fact of being sealed to Community institutions any

interference in national public administration management. This responsibility is of exclusive competence of each MS Governments. Profiles of this reality provide a space to DGAIEAC head officers to manage domestic reality. Knill and Lenschow (2005) emphasize the particularity that Europeanization idea it is not necessarily restrict to EU Regulations obedience or to transposition and implementation of Directives, but mainly to beliefs and expectations of players and organizations responsible for EU legislation. In its drafting of Community laws, EU institutions don't show concern to secure domestic specificities of each MS. What seems to take place in Community institutions is concern with structures and work methodology applied by each MS. It matters that they may be able to reach defined goals in Community customs legislation. It is in fact in both subject fields that the Europeanization process of national customs administration is played, in the duty to observe Community requirements and in domestic management of those obligations. As Knill and Lenschow (2005) assert, when they emphasize bureaucrats and bureaucracies role as determinant issues in Europeanization evolution.

Respondents acknowledge that Community customs policy is very relevant to European integration process development, specifically with regard to Common Market right of functioning and assigned responsibilities to national customs. Similarly, there is an understanding that specificities of each national customs administrations may limit uniform application of Community customs legislation (see Table 5).

European integration process seems to have exerted pressures on the way customs services are managed. Respondents acknowledge that changes at customs level since accession have contributed to a wider efficiency in its performance. On the other hand, there is an increasing influence of Community institutions in areas of previous MS exclusive responsibility. Respondents consider that there is a reliance of Community customs legislation regarding national customs, responsible for its practical application. EU customs policy application depends on national customs to set Community customs law. Likewise, it seems to be the feeling regarding a wider "homogeneity" in Community customs legislation in common external border. Respondents admit to perform their tasks by following defined goals of Common Mission Statement. Answers show a positive opinion on realization by customs workers of their mission goals (see Table 5).

Relevance of information technologies assets is another aspect of our analysis. Building computer networks and applications at EU level, but also at national level, was an important step towards an homogeneous information system of customs inside all MS. It was an important contribution to let uniform Community customs policy application, once

development of computer applications of Community dimension allows customs sharing information in real-time and building unity and proximity image. When Portugal accessed EU Portuguese Customs information technology applications was not but a big wish, because available technological resources were null or almost null. Creating Common Market in 1993 exerted a huge external pressure on Portuguese customs administration to respond positively to information technologies usage. In the two last decades it happened a radical change. Today, almost all customs workers have at their disposal a computer to accede several applications, national or Community, allowing real-time information exchange among MS. These applications goal contribute consistently to treat and spread information in a quick and identical way among Community customs administrations. According to Table 6 data, Head Managers of Portuguese customs acknowledge that networks and information technologies development have contributed for a better Community external border management and that “Customs” program in information technologies training have maximize the use of that important technological resource. Customs Head Managers perception reveals the relevance of information technologies in uniform and consistent management of common external border. By being connected, all MS customs build a positive psychological factor of feeling part of a reality, which dimension represents a whole.

Table 6 – Relevance of Information Technology Assets

Questions	Mean	Standard Deviation
Comparing intervention given by Member States to specific customs issues.	4,27	0,594
Investigation and definition of common solutions to specific customs problems.	4,07	0,458
Reinforce use of computer tools, namely applications developed under EU (ex: AFIS, TARIC, NSTI) at national level.	4,07	0,799
Computer applications development of Community dimension has contributed to the improvement of EU external border management.	4,53	0,640

Source: Questionnaire – May 2008

We can conclude that information technologies allow easier access to information and knowledge and at the same time to diffusion and share of that knowledge. It actively contributed for Portuguese customs consistent approach to European procedures, decreasing the impact of European integration, in other words, it eased Europeanization process of

national customs administration. These analysis documents prove how important it was training, networks and computer applications of Community dimension to the approach opportunity among different MS customs administrations. Conditions created by new technologies contributed sharply to generate homogeneity and consistency in Community law application and to a correct management of common external border.

7 - Conclusion

European adjustment process was a landmark for Portuguese customs institution. Organizational structure had to fit itself into new procedures and requirements resulting of EU integration and Common Market implementation. Its action was to follow Community law, but by circumscribing a change without contesting Community legislation fulfilment. There was the perception of demands and relevance of that obligation imposed by Community law. These changes had strait impact in human resources, which led to a reduction in workers numbers and their specialization. Specialization of workers resulted of the need to minimize misalignment between national level and Community level, concerning human resources competences. Data analysis reveals an apparent paradox. If on one hand there is a perception on behalf of Customs Head Managers of an increasing intervention of Community institutions in Community customs politics, with repercussion in its structure and functioning, at the same time it contrasts with their perception of national customs traditions conservation. Data shows that directive implementation had a reform minimalist feature. This apparent contradiction is clarified by Araújo (2002), when he defends that external issues were addressed through political nature and pressures, while domestic issues were addressed according a traditional standard established by rules, norms and routines. This standard approaches Radaelli (2003) model, according to which Europeanization reflects itself in assimilation, in other words, when there is domestic structures adjustment to Community requirements, without going through a substantial transformation. Domestic status quo main goals is kept and change degree is reduced to minimum, in order to observe Community requirements. As Knill (1998) emphasizes, it is necessary an accommodation to European requirements, without generating transformation in the essential structure, which he calls “change within core”, a change regarding demands, limited to the implementation of what is essential in Community law. This reality reminds us the “good student” metaphor. In front of data analysis it seems that we are, not in presence of “a good student”, but in presence of a student who studies to pass, who merely fulfils minimum requested requirements to avoid punishment.

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