

Transformative Transformation? 30 Years of Change in CEE

Central and Eastern Europe, a home to around 190 m individuals. Each with their own hopes, dreams, and agendas. All of them with a unique set of experiences and access to their *sui generis* historical past. Most of them, however, shared similar routes on their way to becoming liberal democracies. Whether or not the achievements of the early 1990s have been retained is another story. One thing is certain: the importance of the changes introduced back then has been undeniable.

Thirty years ago, a wind of change swept through the region. The Eastern Bloc experienced a series of structural, political, and social changes that have forever shifted the mindset of its inhabitants. Once the countries long oppressed by the communist regime regained their sovereignty, the hankered-after freedom entered every possible sphere of life.

Let us take Poland, my homeland, as an example. Within the past three decades it has managed to join the ranks of other well-developed Western democracies, with a booming economy and an open society. Has the Polish transformation been truly *transformative*? Yes. Was it permanent? Well, is any change permanent? Not really. After all, “the world turns and the world changes”, as T.S. Eliot once stated. What matters is that any real transformation needs to progress, never stagnate or be reversed – a phenomenon recently visible in the country that inspired so many other societies.

Sadly, as the phrase goes, *plus ça change* – even after going through complex stages of transformation, some people in Poland still question the achievements of transformation, trying to bring about a kind of a come-back of the “good old days” from before the democratic changes started. However, any reversal of the said accomplishments in the region is unacceptable.

There is only one way out of the recent conundrums most of the CEE citizens have been facing: keep moving forward. Embracing the positive developments while at the same time trying to simply work out the kinks that still have not been addressed. This is what the 11th issue of *4liberty.eu Review* is about. We explore the extent of the transformation processes in a number of CEE countries – from Poland, to Ukraine, the Czech Republic, Slovakia, and Bulgaria. Because we believe that even though “everything changes, nothing perishes”, to quote Ovid.

Enjoy your reading,
Olga Łabendowicz
Editor-in-Chief of the *4liberty.eu Review*
Coordinator of 4liberty.eu network