

# **Central and Eastern European perceptions of the Eurasian Economic Union:**

**Between economic opportunities and  
fear of renewed Russian hegemony**

**Fabienne Bossuyt**

Ghent University

Ghent Workshop – 2 December 2016

# INTRODUCTION

How do the CEECs perceive the EAEU?

□ Growing interest in the EAEU, including the EU member states, incl. the EU member states

□ Increased – yet still limited academic interest in the CEE EU member states as foreign policy actors

□ During Cold War, CEECs were under heavy economic pressure (e.g. by the US)

□ What policy goals do the CEECs have concerning the EAEU?

□ To what extent do they pursue these goals through the EU?

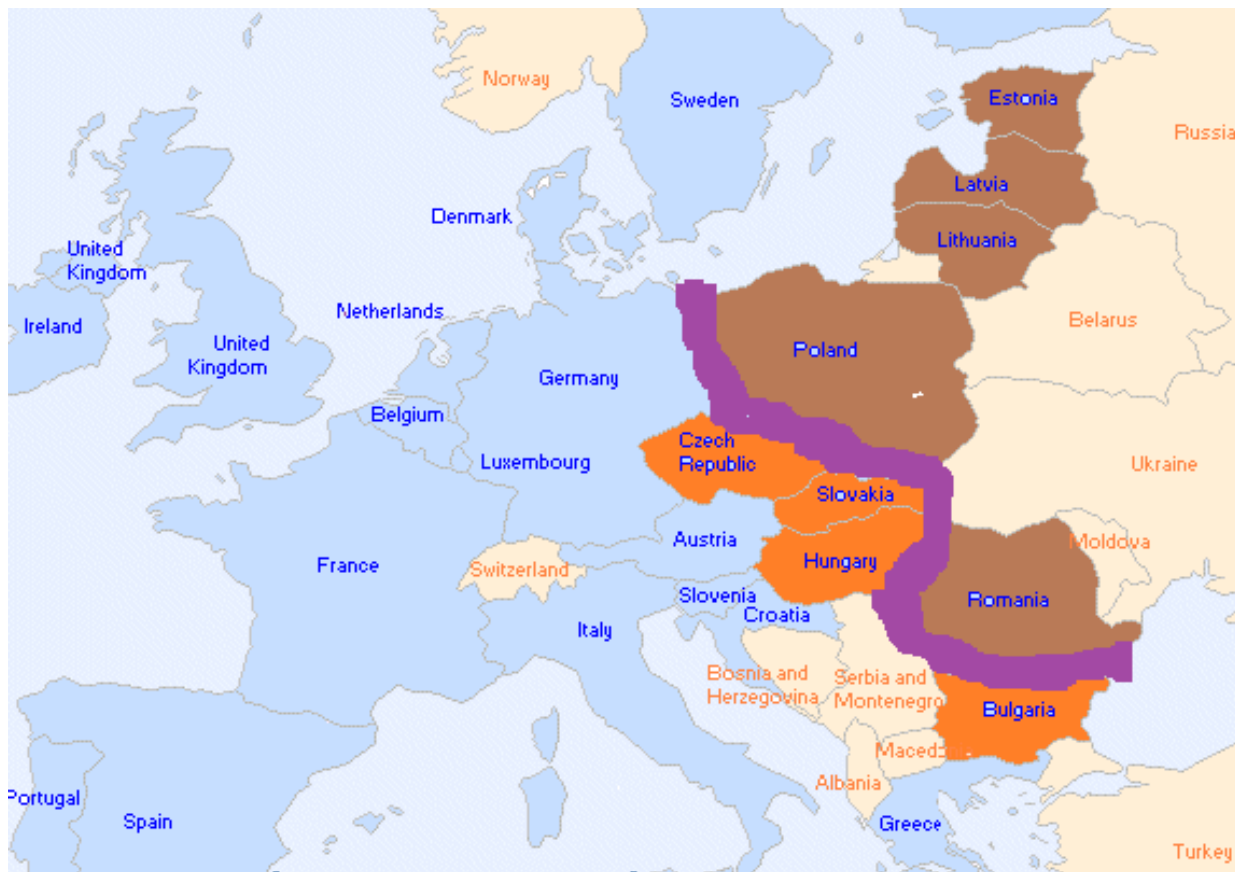
<-> very little is known about how the CEE member states view the EAEU

# METHODOLOGY

- **Data collection:**
  - Semi-structured interviews with officials from the CEECs and the EU
  - Statements/speeches by officials from the CEECs
  - Secondary sources: EU and national news sites

# FINDINGS

**Q1:** Fear of renewed Russian hegemony  
vs. economic opportunities



# Findings Q1: Perceptions of EAEU

- **STRONG** vari... s:
- **Polan**  
supp  
Rus
- **Slow**  
Rus
- **Hungary & Bulgaria** are most supportive of EAEU

Largely in line with CEECs' attitudes and positions towards Russia since Russia's annexation of Crimea

Cf. their positions on EU sanctions on Russia

## Possible explanations:

No single explanation, but combination of explanatory factors:

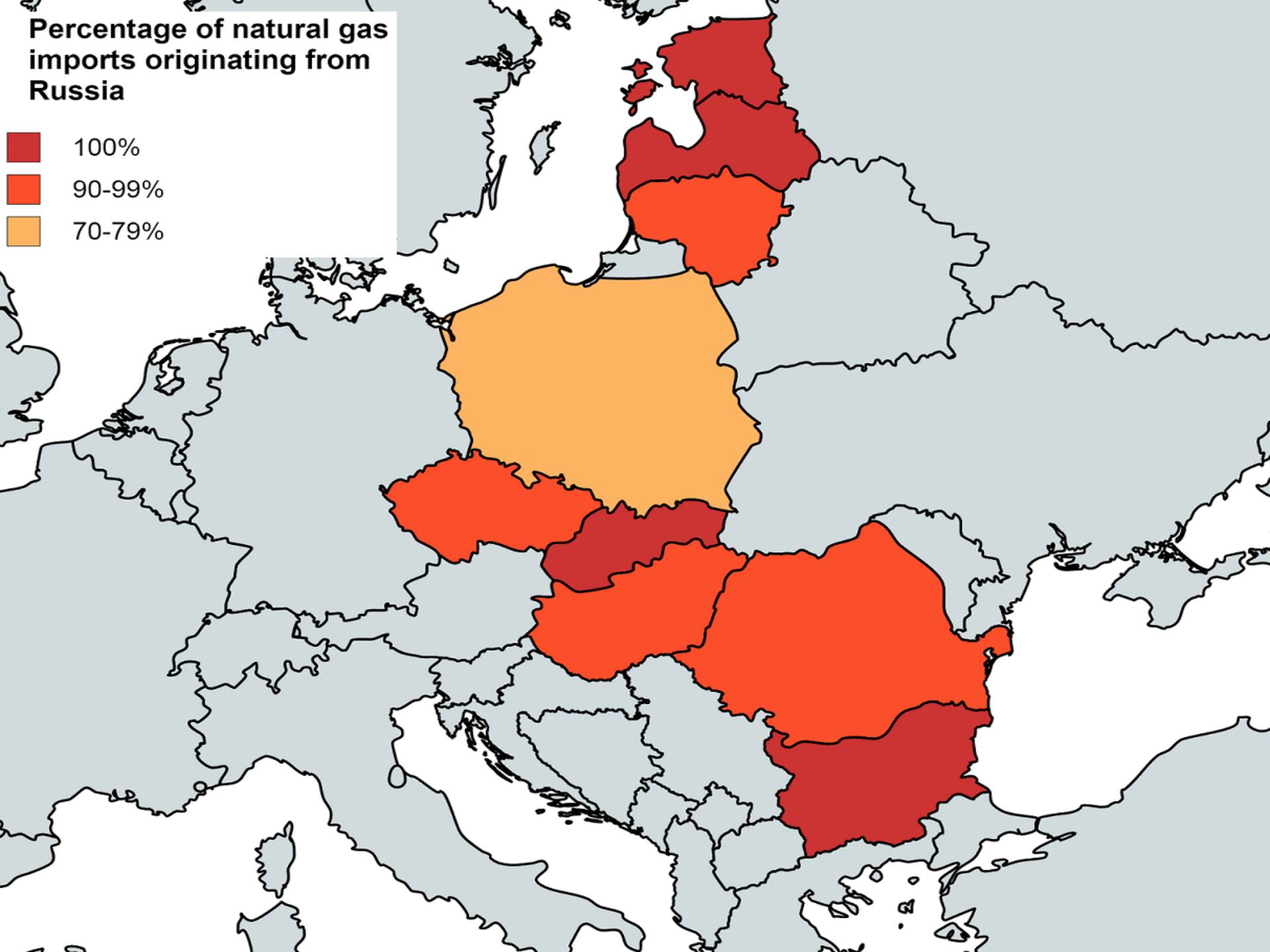
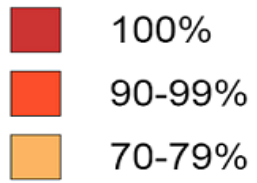
- ✓ **Historical reasons:** Poland, Romania, Baltics
  - Historically difficult relationship with Russia (<-> Bulgaria)
  - Commercial interests are overshadowed
- ✓ **Economic & energy dependence:** Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Slovakia, Hungary
  - Commercial interests are prioritized
- ✓ **(Non-economic) pragmatism:** Hungary
  - Orbán's anti-democratic course

## 22% of Bulgarians want to join 'Eurasian Union'

EurActiv.com, 15 May 2014



# Percentage of natural gas imports originating from Russia





## Findings Q2 (goals) & Q3 (EU/bilat):

- **Poland, Baltics & Romania:** No rapprochement as long as Russia does not fulfil Minsk agreements
  - > via EU
- **Hungary & Bulgaria:** wants closer cooperation with EAEU
  - > bilaterally & via EU
- **Slovakia & Czech Republic:** business interests are pushing governments towards closer cooperation with EAEU
  - > bilaterally (and via EU)



FÖLDMŰVELÉSÜGYI  
MINISZTERIUM



Szergejevics SZIDORSZKIJ  
miniszter



Dr. FAZEKAS Sándor  
földművelésügyi miniszter



# **Andreichenko: “Belarus ready to be a gateway for Slovakia to Eurasian Economic Union”**

05.05.2016 - eng.belta.by



**Thank you for your attention!**