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Institutional change of the agricultural administration and rural associations in East Germany before and after unification

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DISCUSSION PAPER

**Leibniz Institute of Agricultural Development in
Central and Eastern Europe**

**INSTITUTIONAL CHANGE OF THE AGRICULTURAL
ADMINISTRATION AND RURAL ASSOCIATIONS
IN EAST GERMANY BEFORE AND AFTER
UNIFICATION**

AXEL WOLZ

**DISCUSSION PAPER NO. 136
2011**



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ABSTRACT

With the collapse of the socialist regime in East Germany in late 1989 and the rising political call for unification in early 1990, a radical and abrupt change of the institutional structure became necessary. Among others, the (agricultural) administration had to be totally restructured. This referred not only to substance, functions and tasks which had to be adjusted, similar to most other transition economies, to the market-economic and pluralistic democratic system, but also the whole administrative set-up had to be re-established in line with the West German system (territorial re-organisation). Hence, a new administrative system had to be built up in the East, while simultaneously the socialist one had to be dismantled. This transformation process implied the recruitment of new staff and had to be carried out in a very short period. However, different to the other transition economies, there had been strong support from the West in re-organising the administration. Overall, this institutional change seems to have been accomplished successfully as billions of Deutsch Mark could be processed by the agricultural administration in 1990 in order to avoid an imminent collapse of the agricultural sector. In addition, the new administration also comprised the set-up of a specialised agency in charge of state property. This office while originally anticipated to last for a short period only, still operates today. Similarly, the organisations representing the agricultural population had to be re-organised. The re-organisation of the German Farmers' Union is of special prominence as both German parts were representing completely different agricultural models. Nevertheless, this is the only important organisation at national level where East Germans could stay in decision-making positions after unification. This had severe repercussions when shaping transformation policies affecting the agricultural sector in East Germany during the 1990s.

JEL: H77, P21, P36, Q18

Keywords: Transition, agricultural administration, rural associations, farmers' union, unification, Germany.

ZUSAMMENFASSUNG

INSTITUTIONELLER WANDEL DER AGRARVERWALTUNG UND LÄNDLICHER VERBÄNDE IN OSTDEUTSCHLAND VOR UND NACH DER VEREINIGUNG

Der Zusammenbruch des sozialistischen Regimes Ende 1989 sowie der immer lauter werdenden Ruf nach politischer Einheit seit Beginn 1990 bedingte einen schnellen und radikalen Bruch der ostdeutschen Institutionen. Dieser Bruch umfasste auch eine komplette Neuausrichtung der (landwirtschaftlichen) Verwaltung. Ähnlich wie in den anderen Transformationsländern Mittel- und Osteuropas mussten die Inhalte, Funktionen und Aufgaben entsprechend den Anforderungen einer demokratischen Gesellschaft sowie der Marktwirtschaft angepasst werden. Darüber hinaus musste jedoch die Verwaltungsstruktur Ostdeutschland dem verwaltungsmäßigen (territorialen) Aufbau Westdeutschland angepasst werden. In der Praxis bedeutete dies, dass die sozialistische Struktur abgebaut und aufgelöst, während gleichzeitig eine neue aufgebaut wurde. Dieser Prozess bedingte auch die komplett neue Einstellung von Personal, obwohl Ehemalige sich neu bewerben konnten. Der Zeitrahmen für diese Transformation war extrem begrenzt. Im Unterschied zu den anderen Transformationsländern

konnte hierbei jedoch auf die massive Unterstützung durch Westdeutschland zurückgegriffen werden. Zurückblickend ist diese Transformation der Agrarverwaltung sehr erfolgreich verlaufen, da in dieser Periode ohne nennenswerte Probleme Milliarden von DM an die landwirtschaftlichen Betriebe ausgereicht wurden, um den drohenden Zusammenbruch der landwirtschaftlichen Produktion zu verhindern. Die landwirtschaftliche Verwaltung musste jedoch nicht nur transformiert werden, sondern es wurden neue Verwaltungseinheiten geschaffen, besonders um das Staatseigentum an Grund und Boden mit dem Ziel einer raschen Privatisierung zu verwalten. Allerdings erhielt diese Verwaltungseinheit, die ursprünglich nur auf kurze Zeit ausgelegt war, im Laufe der Jahre einen permanenten Charakter. Neben der Verwaltung mussten sich auch die landwirtschaftlichen Verbände neu organisieren. Von besonderer Bedeutung war die Vereinigung und Neuausrichtung des Deutschen Bauernverbandes, da beide Ursprungsverbände ein völlig konträres landwirtschaftliches Leitbild vertraten. Dies ist jedoch der einzig bedeutende Verband Deutschlands, in dem ostdeutsche Personen nach der Vereinigung an der Verbandsspitze verblieben sind. Diese Konstellation hatte tiefgreifende Auswirkungen auf die Ausgestaltung der Agrarstrukturpolitik in Ostdeutschland während der ersten Jahre nach der Vereinigung.

JEL: H77, P21, P36, Q18

Schlüsselwörter: Transformation, Agrarverwaltung, ländliche Verbände, Bauernverband, Vereinigung, Deutschland.

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1 INTRODUCTION

More than 20 years have passed since West Germany ("Federal Republic of Germany", FRG) and East Germany ("German Democratic Republic", GDR) had been united, i.e. at 3 October 1990. In late 1989, the collapse of the socialist regime in East Germany happened almost overnight and nobody in the East and the West had been prepared for the transformation process leading to unification. In addition, while in early 1990 it had been anticipated that the transformation and unification process will take about two years, it actually had become a matter of months or even weeks. Among others, this process required a radical change of the institutional structure, i.e. it quickly resulted in a complete transfer of the West German system to the East (LEHMBRUCH, 2000: 88). A new administrative system had to be established in the East, while the socialist one had to be dismantled at the same time. This institutional change also required a new set-up of organisations representing the people in the political system (political parties) as well as with respect to their interests (lobbying). While the German experience seems to be exceptional when compared to the development in most other transition economies, it might provide some lessons for a possible path on the Korean Peninsula.

In this contribution, we will focus on the institutional change concerning the agricultural administration and major organisations representing agricultural producers in East Germany. This change has to be analysed in light of the introduction of the economic, monetary and social union between the two German states and the adoption of the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) in the middle of 1990 leading to an almost complete bankruptcy of the agricultural sector overnight. The whole agricultural and food sector had been in a very critical stage. Already before unification, the West German government provided emergency funds to the rescue of the sector. These funds amounted to 4.9 billion DM in 1990 and 4.2 billion DM in 1991, respectively (WARBECK, 2001: 219). The smooth transfer of the financial support had to be handled by the administration which itself had to be reorganised. The legal basis was laid by the Agreement on the Economic, Monetary and Social Union ((*Wirtschafts-, Währungs- und Sozialunion*), signed 18 May 1990; effective 1 July 1990) and the Unification Treaty (signed 31 August 1990; effective 3 October 1990).

When looking at the literature, it is surprising that not many analyses about the institutional transformation concerning the agricultural sector are available. In an analysis of the topics of articles of the major German weekly dealing with the agricultural sector ("Agra-Europe") during the first phase of transformation, i.e. 1990-1995, just three percent focused on agricultural administration and associations (THIELE, 1998: 32). The major topics were the CAP, privatisation and decollectivisation. There seemed to be almost no complaints and the management of public tasks seemed to have been handled smoothly. How this had been accomplished will be discussed in this contribution. Due to the lack of detailed analyses, the major sources will be personal reports of actors who actively participated in the transformation process themselves.

This paper is structured as follows. In the first part the transformation of the agricultural administration from the socialist system to the West German one will be discussed. This covers not only the transformation of the existing system in adopting new roles and functions, but also the establishment of new organisations in facilitating the transformation process, e.g. the set up of the Agency for Reprivatisation which got in charge of all state owned assets including land. In the fourth chapter, it will be analysed how the organisations representing the agricultural population in East Germany have adapted to unification. This is followed by a brief comparative assessment between the German development

and the one of the other transition states in Central and Eastern Europe. In a final chapter the major lessons will be discussed.

2 TRANSFORMATION OF PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION

In this chapter, the general administrative set-up in West and East Germany before unification will be presented. This is followed by a brief overview of the agricultural administration in East Germany during the socialist period. The major part is dealing with the transformation of the agricultural administration, its new tasks and the major problems.

2.1 Administration in general

The administration in East Germany had been set up after World War II under the Soviet occupation. Like in West Germany, i.e. in the American, British and French Occupational Zones, federal states were established which had – depending on the respective state – quite strong or relatively loose historical roots. Under the Soviet occupation five federal states were set up in 1945/46, i.e. Mecklenburg-Pomerania, Brandenburg, Saxony-Anhalt, Thuringia and Saxony. At 7 October 1949 the German Democratic Republic (GDR) was declared as an independent state. In 1952 in order to centralise the administrative system the federal states had been abolished and 14 regional districts (plus East Berlin as a special unit) became the highest administrative level under the national one. Below the regional districts came the districts (Table 1). Hence, there had been three levels of administrative decision-making, i.e. the national, regional district and district level. However, as a highly centralised state the decision-making power of the last two levels was rather limited. Under the district level there had been the communes, but with respect to agricultural administration this level had been of minor relevance. Actually, since collectivisation during the 1950s not the communes and their mayors were the highest decision-making unit in the rural areas, but the agricultural production cooperatives and their chairmen (WILSON and WILSON, 2001: 235). They were the main employers in the rural areas, the main source of investment and the main provider of social and cultural services to the rural population. This administrative structure had been valid up to the eve of unification in 1990.

Table 1: Administrative Structure, FRG and GDR, 1989

Administrative Level	Federal Republic of Germany	German Democratic Republic
National Government	1	1
Federal State Government	10 (+1, West Berlin)	–
Regional Districts	26*	14 (+1, East Berlin)
Districts	328**	227***
Communes	8,505	7,616

* none in the Federal States of Schleswig-Holstein, Saarland, Bremen, Hamburg and (West) Berlin; ** of which 237 rural districts and 91 urban districts; *** of which 189 rural and 38 urban districts.

Source: WILSON and WILSON, 2001: 235-236; WEHLING, 1994: 16.

The administrative set-up in West Germany looked a bit different (Table 1). There had been four layers of administration above the commune level, i.e. one more than in the East. In West Germany there had been 10 federal states plus West Berlin which had a special status. Like the national parliament the parliaments at federal state level were elected by the respective population. Due to the federal system, the decision-making power by the federal states is quite high. Below the federal state level there were regional

districts comprising a certain number of districts. Only the small federal states and the State of Schleswig-Holstein did not have this type of administrative level. The heads of the regional districts are appointed by the governments of the respective state. They are highly dependent on them as there are no elections at this level which might give them a separate power base by the people. At district level people elect their deputies in the respective parliaments or councils which used to elect the respective district chief executives.

In East Germany people had the right to vote for the national, regional district and district parliaments. But under the GDR system, these were no free, equal and secret ballots but voters just had the option to endorse the general lists of the "National Front" approved by the dominant the Socialist Unity Party (*Sozialistische Einheitspartei, SED*). In general, 99% of the eligible population voted and, again, 99% of the voters voted for the general list.

One interesting point to be mentioned is the fact that the GDR, although about half of the size of West Germany and about one fourth of the population, had a relatively large number of districts and communes. In West Germany there had been various administrative reforms during the 1960s and 1970s. Hence, the number of districts and communes declined rapidly. In the GDR, there had been no such reforms. Actually the number of districts increased during the 1950s. Hence, the number of communes had been relatively large, but about half of them had less than 500 inhabitants which means that, at least, on paper the administration had been closer to the population than in the West.

In the meantime quite a number of federal states have abolished regional districts as administrative layers. In these days (i.e. 2010) in East Germany, only the State of Saxony still keeps this administrative layer. In West Germany, too, more and more states give them up. In addition, the number of districts declined rapidly in East Germany as it became evident that such a dense administrative network with the respective staff – although already trimmed down during the early 1990s in comparison to GDR-times – could not be financed anymore.

Right after the fall of the Berlin Wall (i.e. 9 November 1989), there had been extensive exchange of visits; at the beginning more from the East to the West, but starting from early 1990 also from the West to the East (see Table A in the Annex summarising the major events concerning the transformation of the agricultural administration). Already in late 1989, first ideas of re-establishing the federal states came up. After the first free elections to the East German Parliament (18 March 1990), the far majority of deputies was in favour of it. West German federal states volunteered to act as twinning partners (lead sponsorship) for the soon-to-be-set up East German states (Table 2). The legal basis for re-establishing the federal states was laid by the Re-establishment of Federal States Act (*Ländereinführungsgesetz*) adopted by the East German Parliament at 22 July 1990¹ (GAUDE, 1996: 70). In a nutshell, it laid the basis to (re-) create five federal states out of 14 regional districts. The Regional District of East Berlin was planned to be reunited with West Berlin as a separate federal state. In general, several regional districts were merged into one federal state. However, in some cases the merger was not one to one, but

¹ The day for re-establishing the federal states in the East had been set at 14 October 1990 when the election for the respective federal parliaments was supposed to be held. At that time unification was foreseen to be accomplished by 2 December 1990 with the first free elections to the united national Parliament. However, due to the rapidly deteriorating economic situation, unification was set at 3 October 1990 with the adoption of the Unification Treaty at 23 August 1990 by East German Parliament. 3 October 1990 became the starting day of the new federal states as East Germany, due to constitutional requirements, could not join the Federal Republic of Germany as the German Democratic Republic but in form of the newly established federal states.

parts of the former regional districts were merged with neighbouring federal states (Map 1). Similarly, the size of the new federal states do not coincide completely with the one of their predecessors operational between 1946/47-1952.

Map 1: Territorial Structure of the Federal States and the former Regional Districts in East Germany, 1990



Source: MDR, 2011.

The respective twinning partners gave their support in building up the new federal states in form of training courses, practical training in West German administrations, secondment of staff to the East, etc. The major twinning partners are summarised in Table 2.

Table 2: Twinning Federal States from West Germany in Support of Setting up Administrative Structures in East Germany

East Germany	West Germany
Mecklenburg-Pomerania	Schleswig-Holstein
Brandenburg	North Rhine-Westphalia
Saxony-Anhalt	Lower Saxony
Thuringia	Hessen, Rhineland-Palatinate (Bavaria)
Saxony	Bavaria, Baden-Württemberg

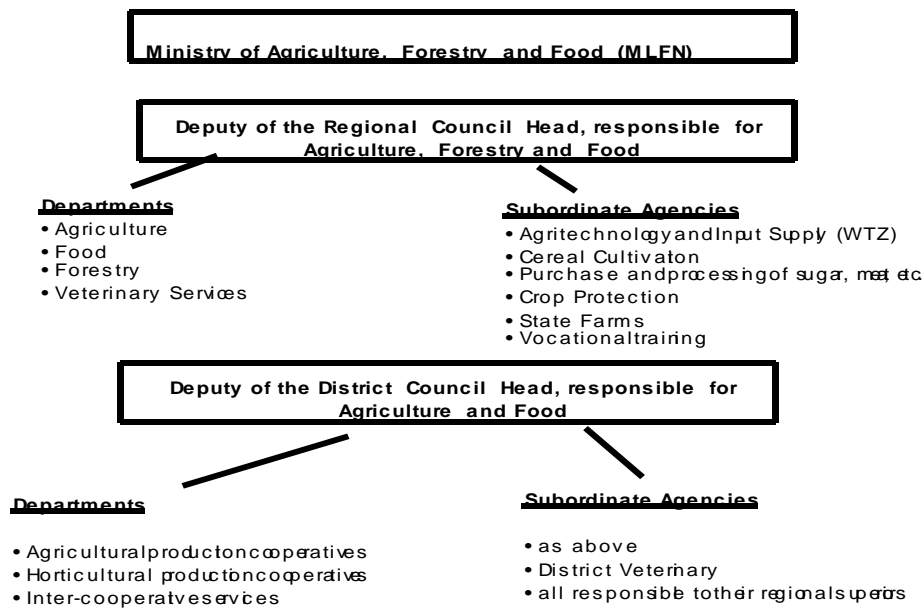
Source: AEIKENS: 12; BOEHNKE: 21; BRACK: 23-24; ZILLENBILLER: 375.

In general, it had to be seen that neighbouring states collaborated with each other, but that had not always been possible. In general, there had been just one West German state responsible for the support in establishing an East German state. But with respect to the two southern East German states, i.e. Thuringia and Saxony, this approach was not feasible. These two states had two or more partner states from the West. But it had been agreed that not all West German states involved should collaborate (and compete) in the build up of the whole administration, but should concentrate on the establishment of specific ministries (division of tasks). For example, Rhineland-Palatinate held the lead management in building up the Ministry of Agriculture in Thuringia (BRACK, 1999: 30-31).

The re-establishment of the federal state structure implied that the 15 regional districts had to be dismantled. At the district level, no large-scale adjustments were required.

2.2 Agricultural Administration during the Socialist Period

The agricultural administration was based on three levels (see Figure 1). At the national level there had been the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Food (*Ministerium für Land- Forst- und Nahrungsgüterwirtschaft*, MLFN). The main tasks had been to ensure a high output of agricultural products in line with the central planning system. At the regional district level there had been the Office of Agriculture, Food and Forestry led by the deputy head of the respective regional council. This office comprised the departments of agriculture, food, forestry and veterinary services. In addition, it was closely linked to the subordinate offices responsible for agritechnology and input supply, including extension (*Wissenschaftlich-Technische Zentren*, WTZ), cereal cultivation (i.e. cereal purchase) as well as the purchase and processing of other food products, crop protection and state farms. In addition, this office had been responsible for basic and advanced vocational training. At the district level, there had been an Office of Agriculture and Food which was mainly responsible for the agricultural and horticultural production cooperatives. In addition, it had close links to the district veterinary and the district offices of the respective regional subordinate agencies. During the socialist period there had been about 230 district offices. They reported through the respective regional district offices to the national ministry about the state of the agricultural production every week (WEGGE, 1999: 358).

Figure 1: Administration of the Agricultural Sector, GDR, 1989

Source: ROELOFFS, 1999: 286; BROCKHAUS, 1974: 1044.

In addition to this administrative structure of the state there had been – like in all socialist countries following the Soviet model – a parallel structure of the Socialist Unity Party (SED). Within the politbureau of the SED one member ("secretary") was responsible for food and agriculture. In addition, there was a department of food and agriculture under the Central Committee. Both, the secretary and the head of the department had more power than the minister himself. At the regional district and district levels the same power structure applied. The Party personal used to focus on more strategic issues. In general, party and government officials worked hand in hand, but in case of disagreement it was the Party which had the upper hand.

Already in late 1989, as the absolute power monopoly by SED had been broken, this parallel structure became obsolete. In addition, following the Polish experience from early 1989, "Round Tables" were formed at the national, regional district and district levels which discussed first ideas about re-organising the political system in the GDR. At these round tables not only the representatives of the socialist regime, but also newly formed opposition groups representing people pushing for a regime change were presented (BREITSCHUH et al., 2005: 70). The major function of "Round Tables" had been to guide the transition process until the parliaments at various administrative levels had been elected in a democratic manner as those parliaments which had been elected during the socialist period were no more accepted as legitimised representative of the people anymore. The members of the regional district and district committees who represented the socialist regime retired in late 1989. Already in December 1989 many "Round Tables" elected provisional members to the respective regional and district councils (HOFFMANN, 1999: 126).

2.3 New Set-up of the Agricultural Administration with Unification

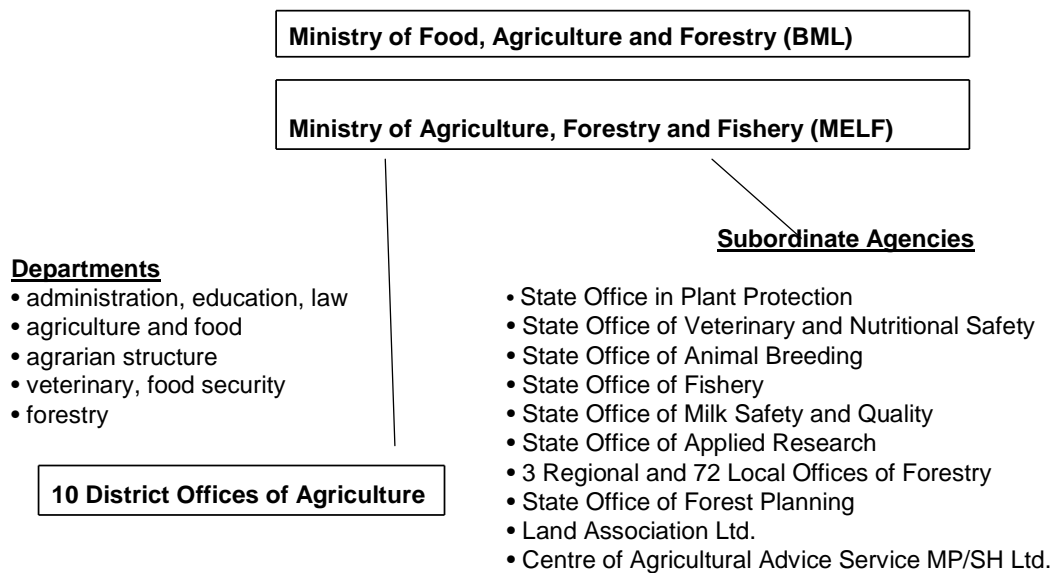
Early 1990 it became evident that the administration had to be reorganised not only with respect to the new administrative set-up due to the re-establishment of the federal states, but more important due to the new tasks the administration had to fulfil in order to support agricultural producers in managing their farms effectively in a market economy and in line with the CAP. In Germany, agricultural administration comes under the responsibility of the individual federal states (GROBKOPF, 2000: 172), but these had to be established themselves as well. After the first free election to the East German Parliament an overwhelming majority of MPs were in favour of the federal state system. This meant that the GDR structure focusing on regional districts had to be dismantled while at the same time the new structure had to be built up.

The local and district elections at 6 May 1990 ensured a democratically legitimised political structure at local levels. In the following weeks working groups for drafting the role and functions of the new federal administration in all five (to be established) federal states had been convened. All those parties could send representatives who had been legitimated by the state and/or district elections. One sub-group dealt with "food, agriculture and forestry" which later on became the nucleus of the ministry (ERNST, 1999: 65). By the end of September 1990 these working groups had finalised their work (BREITSCHUH et al., 2005: 70). From the West German side, in general, one or two civil servants had been seconded in order to support these working groups.

In general, these groups made proposals about the major tasks and functions of the new ministries, although that might have been revised once the ministries became operational. One main decision refers to the question whether the federal agricultural administration should be based on two levels, i.e. federal state and district or on three levels, i.e. federal state – intermediary level – district level. Since Germany is a federal republic, all federal states were free to choose their model according to their own wishes. A certain influence by the respective twinning partner could be observed. Hence, the agricultural administration in the various federal states is not uniform, e.g. Mecklenburg-Pomerania adopted a two level system (MUUS: 226), Thuringia a three level system with an agricultural branch within the State Administration Office (*Landesverwaltungsamt*) as the intermediary level (BREITSCHUH et al., 2005: 75) or Saxony-Anhalt a three level system with the three regional district offices (AEIKENS, 1999: 10). Figure 2 reflects the situation with respect to Mecklenburg-Pomerania in 1991.

In general, the federal ministries of agriculture were planned to be made up by 4-5 departments and about 20 divisions. Each federal state was free to put the focus on specific issues. E.g. in Figure 2, rural development is not specifically emphasized while in Thuringia there had been a separate department of rural development which comprised, amongst others, village renewal, land consolidation and environmental issues (BREITSCHUH et al., 2005: 72). The intermediary offices, if any, and the district offices were directly under the supervision of the respective federal ministry. Similarly, the ministries had supervisory functions over the subordinate offices. Concerning the focus of the various departments, it has to be emphasized that this shifted over time and many departments were renamed and divisions restructured since 1990.

Figure 2: Administration of the Agricultural Sector in Mecklenburg-Pomerania (East Germany), 1991



Source: ROELOFFS, 1999: 285; GAUDE, 1996: 70.

In parallel, the former regional district offices were gradually downgraded. Starting in June 1990 their (provisionally appointed) heads had been replaced – again on a provisional basis – by persons representing those parties which had been elected in the free elections. Some of their staff had been recruited as the secretariat of the working groups "food, agriculture and forestry". But, in general, most of them could only apply for a new job once the new ministries became operational at federal level. The regional district offices of the GDR were finally closed down by the end of 1990 (BREITSCHUH et al., 2005: 71). Similarly, the head of the agricultural offices at district level had been appointed (in some cases re-appointed) by the newly elected district chiefs (BREITSCHUH et al., 2005: 69).

While the district offices were kept as the lowest administrative level in all new federal states, not all of them could stay on. Actually, their number was downsized significantly, e.g. in Mecklenburg-Pomerania from 34 to 10 (MUUS, 1999: 226), in Saxony-Anhalt from 40 to 8 (AEIKENS, 1999: 10) or in Thuringia from 36 to 12 (BREITSCHUH, et al. 2005: 83). In general, the staff from the district offices was re-recruited for the new ones, although their number declined and many became unemployed. Those district offices which were no more needed were closed down during 1991. Nevertheless, these offices had an important task in 1990 in processing and distributing the national emergency funds in support of agricultural producers (SÖNNICHSEN, 1999: 325).

The unification could be relatively easily handled at national level. All ministries of the GDR-government, including the Ministry of Agriculture, were closed down. In general, some staff was taken over by the national ministries. In addition, the former GDR-ministry

became the liaison office of the respective ministry located in Bonn. Only with the decision of National Parliament in June 1991 to shift the capital from Bonn to Berlin, the government fostered the process of re-locating ministries to Berlin. In Summer 1999 Parliament and government moved to Berlin. Some ministries, like the Ministry of Agriculture, still have their main offices in Bonn (based on the Bonn-Berlin Act, 1994), but a second office in the capital.

2.4 New Tasks of the Agricultural Administration

With the establishment of the new agricultural administration its role, tasks and function had to change. During the socialist period, the administration had an important task in making sure that agricultural and food production was in line with the central plans (see Figure 1). It could directly influence the production plans of the agricultural production cooperatives and state farms. Since 1990 agricultural producers were totally free in their decision-making while the administration had the role to give them the best support possible. The most important task was to avoid the immediate collapse of agricultural production in processing and distributing emergency funds to the producers.

Right after unification (3 October 1990), the most immediate day-to-day tasks referred to the need of drafting a budget for 1991 and the organisational charts of the new ministries as well as of the new district offices reflecting their new roles and duties. However, everything had to be done on a provisional basis since the final decision rested with the newly elected federal state parliaments which were elected at 14 October 1990. In general, the seconded staff from West Germany relied on the organisational set up of their respective home ministries (BRANDT, 1999: 36). In addition, the daily tasks of the offices had to be fulfilled (as listed below). Since there was not that much staff available and there was still no hierarchical order, everybody had to do everything; mostly just on short notice (ERNST, 1999: 66; ROELOFFS, 1999: 276). All this work had to be done under heavy time pressure. In short, the task had been to set up an efficient agricultural administration as soon as possible. The new administrations were now fully accepted partners by the national ministry and the West German state ministries. This meant that starting from 3 October 1990 the still preliminary offices were "flooded" with all type of information about any new changes concerning the national and EU policies (BRANDT, 1999: 38). Similarly, the new federal states had to bring in their own priorities when it came to setting priorities of national agricultural policy, like e.g. the negotiations about the future focus of the Common Task for Improving Agricultural Structures and Coastal Protection (*Gemeinschaftsaufgabe zur Verbesserung der Agrarstruktur und des Küstenschutzes*, GAK), one of the basic documents of national agricultural support policy, by 22 October 1990 (KOLT, 1999: 180-182).

Once the federal ministries had been officially approved by the parliaments of the respective states, the major tasks can be summarised as follows (BREITSCHUH et al., 2005: 72-73):

- Recruitment of staff at the various administrative levels in order to fulfil the necessary tasks;
- Review of all subordinate agencies and, if necessary, dismantling them;
- Restructuring of the subordinate agencies in line with the constitutional administrative structures;
- Implementation of the Agricultural Adjustment Act adopted at 29 June 1990 by East German Parliament with all the problems concerning the restructuring of the agricultural production cooperatives, conflict settlements with respect to privatisation of farm assets and the consolidation of separate ownership titles of land and buildings on it;

- Implementation of the national agricultural policy as well as CAP (even if there were short or no transition periods at all);
- Drafting laws concerning the agricultural and food sector for federal state parliaments as well as preparing recommendations for the state ministers in influencing national agricultural policy.

In this respect, the tasks can be divided into short-term ones related to the (re-)organisation of the agricultural administration and its subordinate agencies, short to medium ones related to decollectivisation and restructuring and long-term (i.e. permanently on going) ones related to the implementation and supervision of national and EU agricultural policies and to the participation in the national political process.

2.5 Major Problems in Setting-up the New Agricultural Administration

Although – as stated in the introduction – the transition of the agricultural administration was not a big issue to be discussed, it had been a tremendous task. At that time nobody had any experience in such an undertaking. Once it became evident that the GDR will open up to the market economic system and become a pluralistic democracy, it was understood that this could not be achieved with the existing (agricultural) administration. This implied that the staff had to be completely newly recruited. Different to most other transition economies this transformation process had to be carried out within a very short period, but – on the other side – East Germany could rely on the strong support by the West German governments at national and federal state levels in accomplishing this transformation process. In the following, we will focus on two major problems with respect to the set-up of the five federal ministries of agriculture, viz. (1) logistical problems and (2) problems in recruiting appropriate staff.

Logistical problems

The new ministries had to start from scratch. On a provisional basis they took up their work in August/September 1990 but all had to be officially legitimised by the respective federal state parliaments whose elections took place at 14 October 1990. Hence, they had to look for, at least, provisional offices. When the West German advisors who had experienced as civil servants all the advantages of a smoothly running administration took up their (temporary) assignments in the East, they had to meet a number of logistical problems first. In summary, the most important ones looked as follows (BRANDT, 1999: 37-38; BOEHNKE, 1999: 20; MUUS, 1999: 227; ROELOFFS, 1999: 274):

- Poor working facilities: Offices might be still used by other organisations and the equipment available used to be quite simple;
- Lack of technical equipment: At the beginning there had been no telephones, copy or fax machines, etc. As one seconded staff recalled "We had to walk when we wanted to communicate" (BRANDT, 1999: 38);
- Lack of service infrastructure: There had been no writing pools, janitors or messengers.
- Lack of a proper system for financial transfers although high volumes of funds had to be transferred to the agricultural producers;
- Lack of proper job descriptions for drawing up employment contracts for thousands of staff at federal state and district levels, which had a direct influence on the tasks and duties as well as salaries of the respective persons. Right after unification the federal pay scale for public employees as well as the civil servant payment schemes could not yet be applied, and

- No legal foundation at federal state level with respect to administrative and financial rights and obligations in public administrations.

In this respect, the staff had quite a lot of liberty in executing its activities which was particularly appreciated by the seconded staff. Since housing conditions had been simple for the seconded staff, only those volunteered to "go East" who had a strong dedication. On the other side, they received a topping-up of the salaries, but, in general, working time came up to 12-14 hours per day.

Staffing

As shown above, all the ministries but also the offices at lower levels had to recruit their staff from scratch. Anybody could apply, particularly those persons who used to work in the predecessor offices during the socialist period (BOEHNKE, 1999: 17). But, in principle, anybody with the necessary background could apply, i.e. people from the upstream and downstream sectors, including West Germans. However, most of the new staff had been recruited from the predecessor offices, but there had been two major problems: (1) professional background, and (2) personal record during the socialist period.

With the set-up of the new administration, it was understood that the new administration will only work efficiently if there had been enough qualified personnel who was familiar with the German agricultural policy programmes and the CAP. However, East Germans were not familiar at all with the focus and implementation of the national (West German) agricultural policy and the CAP. The ideas of e.g. "principle of subsidiarity", "support threshold" or "promotion of individual farming" were totally unknown to them (KOLT; 1999: 180). Particularly, with respect to the economic side and administrative handling of programmes many training programmes either on-the-job in the new offices or in practical training in the twinning ministries in West Germany had to be executed (BOEHNKE, 1999: 21).

The other staffing problem referred to the special East German history. The revolution in the GDR was pushed by anti-socialist groups who did not like to see a return of the most exposed supporters of the socialist system after regime change. Particularly two groups of persons were no more allowed to return to the civil service: (1) former high level cadres of the Socialist Unity Party and (2) former staff including informal collaborators of the dissolved secret service (*Staatssicherheitsdienst*, Stasi). While the first group had been relatively easy to identify, the second one gave a lot of headache. During the GDR-times the secret service had established a dense network of informal collaborators in order to know all and everything what was going on among the people. With the change of the political regime, the secret service had been abolished. However, everybody who applied for a job with the government had to be checked by the Federal Commission for Registration of the Files of the Former East German Secret Service (*Der Bundesbeauftragte für die Unterlagen des Staatssicherheitsdienstes der ehemaligen Deutschen Demokratischen Republik, Gauck-Behörde*) and had to receive a clearance for not having been a former informal agent. This had been a severe problem when setting-up agricultural administrations since quite a number of newly recruited and qualified staff had to be dismissed overnight due to the reports from that commission (BOEHNKE, 1999: 18-19; BRANDT, 1999: 40; ERNST, 1999: 68).

Hence, due to the examination of the questions of who was qualified for the new tasks and who was not troubled by his/her personal past, the recruitment of staff could only be executed on a slow pace (MUUS, 1999: 227). Nevertheless, starting late 1990 or early 1991 the various agricultural administrations expanded in size, as shown for example for the Ministry of Agriculture in the Federal State of Thuringia in Table 3.

Table 3: Staff Development in the Ministry of Food, Agriculture and Forestry, Thuringia

Date	Number of Persons
Sept./Oct. 1990	about 30 (taken over from the regional district offices)
late 1990/ early 1991	about 30 + about 40 persons seconded from West Germany (mainly from Rhineland-Palatinate and Hessen)
1991	90-100
1992	178
1993	183

Source: BREITSCHUH et al., 2005: 72.

Similarly, the personnel at the Ministry of Agriculture in Mecklenburg-Pomerania expanded on a step by step basis. While in early November 1990 the whole staff comprised 20 persons next to the Minister, it had been joined by 13 seconded staff from Schleswig-Holstein. By the end of 1990, the staff comprised already 60 persons (including the seconded staff) and by the end of March 1991 already 142 persons (BOEHNKE, 1999: 18). In general, larger groups of staff had been seconded to the newly set-up ministries of agriculture after unification when the formal approval by the respective state parliaments could be foreseen. While 13 persons were seconded from Schleswig-Holstein to Mecklenburg-Pomerania, the number of civil servants from Rhineland-Palatinate and Hessen to Thuringia stood at 12 first, but rapidly increased to 40 by the end of 1990 (BRACK, 1999: 31). During 1991 all ministries started to run smoothly and gradually the seconded staff returned to their home ministries. However, some preferred to stay on with the new ministry and asked for a transfer. In other words, they became civil servants of the newly established ministries. By about 1992 all ministries of agriculture did not recruit new staff anymore. Just retired staff had been replaced.

2.6 Concluding Remarks

By 1991 the agricultural administration in the new federal states had been set-up and was running efficiently. When looking at the reasons why this administrative transition could be handled that effectively, most participating staff mentioned the high degree of support by the West German twinning ministries. Particularly, at the beginning the new set up would not have been possible without this support. This included the secondment of staff, the delivery of technical equipment and material, the organization of training courses, but also the taking over of the tasks of the seconded staff by their colleagues at the respective home ministry (BOEHNKE, 1999: 20-21; BRANDT, 1999: 45). This support was given not only at the federal state level but also at the lower ones as well (AEIKENS, 1999: 14).

But on the other side, there were highly motivated people, both the newly recruited East German staff as well as the seconded staff from West Germany who realized that this had been a historic opportunity. There had been a "euphoric mode" (ROELOFFS, 1999: 278). Hence, they did not complain to work long hours. In addition, particularly among the seconded West German staff there had been a feeling of "pioneer work". They were used to working in a hierarchical administrative system where every step had a legal justification. But in Autumn 1990 there were no such rules in the East. All that had to be implemented over time after unification. Hence, the guiding principle of work was the motto "pragmatism and improvisation" (KOLT, 1999: 178). Since a financial budget system still had to be established but billions of DM be distributed, this might explain why there were no strong complains by agricultural producers when applying for financial support. However, at one stage only (15 August 1990), there had been a mass rally by about 250,000 East German farmers in East Berlin protesting against the imminent collapse of farm production

as the effects of the economic, monetary and social union became evident. In principle, the administration worked in a still not yet legislated area and most of the staff wanted to accomplish a good job, since "the West German reality of public administration with its perfectionist and complicated mechanism will overrun us early enough" (BRANDT, 1999: 45). There was a necessity for quick action which left no time for critical assessments as used to be done in the West German administration (GAUDE, 1996: 76). In this respect, particularly the seconded staff enjoyed the high degree of liberty in decision-making which they did not experience in their home administrations.

3 SET-UP OF A NEW SPECIALIST AGENCY FOCUSING ON AGRICULTURAL ISSUES

The transformation of the agricultural administration not only involved the transition of the former administration in order to support the agricultural and food sectors, but also the set up of new specialized organizations in order to smooth the transformation process. With respect to the agricultural sector, the most important new public administration was the Agency for Reprivatisation of Industry in the GDR (*Treuhandanstalt*, THA). It took over not only all state-owned industry but also all state-owned agricultural and forestry land. However, almost right from the start it was planned that this organisation should be phased out as soon as possible, i.e. once all assets had been privatised in a few years.

The THA was set up at 1 March 1990, i.e. already before the first free elections in East Germany. At that time it was mainly aimed at restructuring the state-owned enterprises. After the election at 18 March 1990 the focus shifted to privatisation. The legal basis for its work was laid by Parliament with the adoption of the Privatisation and Reorganisation of State-Owned Assets Act (*Gesetz zur Privatisierung und Reorganisation des volkseigenen Vermögens; Treuhandgesetz*) at 17 June 1990. At that time, most politicians still had high expectations about the resale value of the state-owned enterprises, i.e. the value of these assets minus administration costs and taxes would generate billions of DM for the East German people. It was the agricultural and food sector which was seen as the "basket" since these enterprises needed quick government emergency support in order to stay afloat. But already during the following months it was realised that the state had to provide high financial incentives (or subsidies) in order to sell these enterprises (GÖRTEMAKER, 1996: 49; WEGGE, 1999: 364).

The THA took over not only all state-owned enterprises, but also the assets of the Secret Service, the national armed forces and, after unification, the assets of the parties and mass organisations. Concerning the agricultural sector, THA took over the responsibility for privatising state-owned agricultural and forestry land. The major source of state-owned agricultural and forestry land had been areas expropriated during the period when East Germany was administered by the Soviet Union, i.e. Soviet Occupation Zone from 8 May 1945-7 October 1949. Most of this expropriated land had been turned over to resettled refugees and small-scale farmers at that time ("land reform" during the late 1940s), but a certain share was kept to establish, amongst others, state-owned farms. In addition, land had been expropriated after 7 October 1949, mostly when farmers had fled the country. In the Unification Treaty between East and West Germany (signed 31 August 1990) and the Treaty of the Final Settlement with Respect to Germany (*Vertrag über die abschließende Regelung in bezug auf Deutschland*, "Two plus Four Agreement") between the two German states and the four Allies (signed 12 September 1990), it was agreed that that land expropriated during Soviet occupation (i.e. 8 May 1945-7 October 1949) would not be restituted to the original owners or their heirs anymore. In 1990 the state-owned agricultural area amounted to about 1.5 million ha, or about one fourth of the total utilised agricultural area (UAA) of East Germany and about one million ha of forest land. With

respect to the agricultural area about 0.5 million ha were restituted to original owners or their heirs as this land had been expropriated after 7 October 1949. The remaining one million hectare was supposed to be privatised as soon as possible.

However, it became soon evident that the "normal" privatisation process of THA was not supportive to the agricultural sector. The main objective of the THA had been to privatise as quickly as possible at the highest prices possible, since it was designed as a company for a limited period². But a quick sale of one million ha would have led to a complete collapse of land prices in East Germany and, hence to marginal income effects at all. Hence, already in 1990 a special branch of THA was responsible for all agricultural and forestry land headed by a special chief representative who directly reported to the management board. In this way, it could be assured that not only financial, but also agricultural policy and regional aspects could be observed (WEGGE, 1999: 364). At 1 July 1992, all responsibility for state-owned land was passed to a newly formed public agency, i.e. the Land Settlement and Administration Company (*Bodenverwertungs- und Verwaltungsgesellschaft, BVVG*). Since the sale of state-owned land was a highly politicised topic at that time³, almost all land was rented out to interested agricultural entrepreneurs (WILSON and WILSON, 2001: 131).

During the early 1990s the conditions for privatisation were intensively negotiated in a time-consuming political process. At that time the land was leased on a short-term basis only. Gradually, more and more land was leased on a medium and long-term basis. The cornerstones of the privatisation were fixed in a special land acquisition programme according to the Indemnification and Compensation Act of September 1994 (*Entschädigungs- und Ausgleichsleistungsgesetz, EALG*) (FORSTNER and ISERMEYER, 2000: 70):

- (Former) owners of expropriated land were eligible for either a small compensation or for a subsidised purchase of a small amount of land compared to their original areas;
- All farms with a lease-contract for state-owned land were eligible to buy such land, and
- The prices of this land were about half of the common market prices in East Germany.

The privatisation of farm land started in 1994. Nevertheless, this is a time-consuming process. By mid-2010, about 390,000 ha, or about 40 percent of the total agricultural land under its disposal, had been sold to former owners of expropriated land and lease holders at preferential prices. In addition, about 255,000 ha have been sold at market prices, particularly during the last few years. But still about 370,000 ha are rented out, predominantly under long-term lease contracts up to nine years, and will have to be privatised over the next few years (BVVG, 2010: 2). During the last few years a steady increase in land prices in East Germany could be observed, so this development supports those who had argued for a gradual privatisation process. On the other side, it shows that the needed administrative set up is not just a temporary matter (as originally anticipated), but has become a long-term oriented organisation.

² The THA was liquidated at 31 December 1994. However, some smaller successor companies took over the unfinished tasks.

³ The former owners expropriated between 1945-49 went to court to claim their rights, but were finally turned down by the Federal Constitutional Court in 1991 and again in 1996 and 2000, respectively.

4 TRANSFORMATION OF AGRICULTURAL ASSOCIATIONS

Not only the agricultural administration had to be transformed and newly organised, but also the organisations focusing on the agricultural population in the GDR had to adjust to unification and its repercussions. Roughly, there had been two types of organisations representing the agricultural population; i.e. the political ones and the more associational (lobbying) ones. However, in a socialist system this is more a formal distinction, since all officially recognised parties and associations had to act – according to the Leninist principle – as "transmission belts" for the socialist system. They all were integrated under the umbrella of the National Front which was closely scrutinised by the Socialist Unity Party (SED). In this chapter, it will be briefly looked at the political parties and trade unions in charge of the agricultural sector. The major focus will be, then, on farmers' organisations and their transformation. They were the only type of association on the East German side which had, at least, some voice in the unification process. In general, associations from the West held the upper hand in taking over the East German partner, e.g. there had been an export of West German personnel to fill decision-making positions or in setting up East German branches. In some branches, as e.g. in the economic sector, these types of associations did not exist before and had been built up from scratch. Very often, the West German side tried to influence the political process to its advantage as e.g. in the transformation of the public health system (LEHMBRUCH, 2000: 96-98).

4.1 Political Parties and Trade Unions

The GDR was not a one party state, but several parties were allowed to exist side-by-side. The major reason had been to integrate those persons into the political system who had no affiliation to the SED. Needless to emphasise that these parties were just partly independent but were fully in line with the socialist ideology under the leadership of the SED. The party focusing on the farming population had been the German Democratic Farmers' Party (*Demokratische Bauernpartei Deutschlands*, DBD)⁴ which had been established in April 1948. Its objective had been to win over the farming population for building up a socialist society.

Before 1989 the DBD had a quota in the National Parliament of about 10% or 52 deputies. After the fall of the Berlin Wall, the DBD tried to transform itself into a member-oriented party and participated at the first free elections of the East German Parliament at 18 March 1990. It just received about 2.9 percent of the votes which entitled it to nine deputies. In June 1990, however, the party members decided to dissolve the party and to join the dominant Christian Democratic Party (CDU). Since then the agricultural population, while their number rapidly declined seemed to have voted mostly for the major parties as the rest of the population.

Trade union

All persons working on the state farms were regarded as agricultural workers. Hence, they were required to join the Union of Agricultural, Food and Forestry Workers (*Gewerkschaft Land, Nahrungsgüterwirtschaft und Forsten*, GLNF) which was part of the Free Trade Union (*Freier Deutscher Gewerkschaftsbund*, FDGB), the umbrella organisation of all trade unions. All trade unions were mass organisations under the leadership of the SED.

⁴ Besides the SED and DBD there had been three other officially recognised parties in the GDR, i.e. the Christian Democratic Party (*Christlich-Demokratische Union Deutschlands*, CDU), the Liberal Party (*Liberal-Demokratische Partei Deutschlands*, LDPD) and the National Party (*National-Demokratische Partei Deutschlands*, NDPD).

At the time of the fall of the Berlin Wall the GLNF had about 600,000 members. It also tried to transform itself into a membership-oriented organisation. After unification it was decided to dissolve the GLNF and recommended to its members to join the (West German) Union of Horticultural, Agricultural and Forestry Workers (*Gewerkschaft für Gartenbau, Land- und Forstwirtschaft*, GGLF). However, only a very small share of members did so (KOCH, 1999: 168, 176).

4.2 Farmers' Organisations

All members of agricultural and horticultural production cooperatives were regarded in the GDR as working farmers. Their organisation was the Association for Farmers' Mutual Help (Vereinigung der gegenseitigen Bauernhilfe, VdgB). It had been established in Autumn 1945 in support of the land reform. At that time it was mainly concerned with running machine lending stations for land reform operations. Later on, the main objective of the VdgB was the promotion of socialist agriculture and the collectivisation process (ASCHOFF and HENNINGSEN, 1996: 41). During the late 1980s its membership came up to about 650,000 persons. As a member of the mass organisations it had a small quota of deputies in the national parliament. After the elections of 1986 their number stood at 14 deputies. After the fall of the Berlin Wall, it also transformed itself into a membership-oriented organisation. At 8 March 1990 it changed its name into Farmers' Union of the GDR (*Bauernverband der DDR*). The members of the boards were newly elected and those persons who were too closely connected with the Socialist Party (SED) were replaced by others. After this transition membership had declined to about 400,000 already. In addition, the Farmers' Union of the GDR established regional organisations in each of the (soon to be established) federal states during the following months; actually copying the organisational structure of the (West) German Farmers' Union (*Deutscher Bauernverband*, DBV). The branch union in Thuringia was founded at 23 June 1990. Similar to the administrative support, the federal branches of the DBV from Rhineland-Palatinate, Hessen and Bavaria gave their support (BREITSCHUH, 1999: 103).

Up that time, agricultural policy in the Federal Republic of Germany was based on a corporatist model. Agricultural associations under the lead of DBV had almost a monopoly in representing the agricultural sector. Over time, an intimate collaboration with the national Ministry of Food, Agriculture and Forestry (BML) had been developed. This monopoly of representation was of high importance with respect to developing and refining the CAP. There had been signals from the EU that competition among agricultural associations should be avoided and the whole sector in Germany should speak with one voice (LEHMBRUCH, 2000: 100). These considerations have to be seen under the general situation in 1990: The agricultural sector in East Germany was in a very deep crisis and politicians tried to avoid anything which might have unsettled agricultural producers in the East even further.

The major farmers' organisations on both sides reacted very flexibly to push their own unification within the following months. However, it has to be recalled that they represented complete different farming models; i.e. large-scale collectivised farms on the one side and individual family farms on the other. Nevertheless, there had been already contacts during the 1980s. In 1988 both associations signed an agreement about their future, at that time, loose collaboration (BAMMEL, 1991: 74). Early 1990 the president of DBV visited East Germany. Upon his return, the East German union had been "adopted" by the DBV. Simultaneously, the East German farmers' union established federal organisations.

In conclusion, the unification between the two German farmers' unions can be seen as a success. The DBV finally ensured its monopoly of representing the agricultural sector. However, it had to accept a change of its traditional ideological general principle: This

principle was no more based on the model of private family farms, but, much more general, on a land tenure system based on private ownership. In that way, the decollectivised farms in East Germany were integrated as "multi-family farms" which were on equal footing with traditional family farms (LEHMBRUCH, 2000: 100). One important reason seems to be the fact that already in West Germany the DBV had to represent heterogeneous groups of farmers. In order to give them an equal share in decision-making the DBV is not hierarchically organised but the representatives of each of the federal member-state branches have equal rights in the national board, i.e. its federative organisational structure could react very flexibly to any changes compared to centralised-structured organisations (LEHMBRUCH, 2000: 101, 107).

But also the Farmers' Union of the GDR had to revise its guiding principle. At its transition congress at 8 March 1990 it was still called for the protection of collective property and the need for national market protection measures against (West German) agricultural imports. Nevertheless, the Union accepted private individual farming as an alternative mode of agricultural production. During Summer 1990 the Union recognised private ownership of production factors as its guiding principle which is pretty close to the changed position of the DBV (BAMMEL, 1991: 75). Once the federal branches of the Farmers' Union of the GDR became operational, they joined the DBV in their federal capacity. E.g. the federal branch of Thuringia joined as the first East German branch at 30 April 1991. Once all five federal branches had joined the DBV, the still existing national (East German) federation was formally dissolved at 21 December 1991 (BREITSCHUH, 1999: 106).

Besides the Farmers' Union of the GDR there had been several other farmers' unions representing, in general, returning and newly established family farmers; actually the traditional clientele of the West German DBV. However, these associations had been relatively small and used to quarrel among each other. A few of them finally joined DBV. There is only one bigger competitive association left, i.e. the Federation of German Farmers (*Bundesverband Deutscher Landwirte*, VDL) which had been set up in June 1990. It advocated a very radical decollectivisation process (BAMMEL, 1991: 77) and sees itself as the spokesman of private individual farmers and of private land owners in East Germany. It is highly critical of all other farm types which it sees as leftovers of the forced collectivisation (during the 1950s). There is no information about the number of its members. The association does not seem to be very active, anymore (BUNDESVERBAND, 2010: 1).

In this way, the unification of the agricultural unions is unique in associational development in Germany. In general, there was an associational transfer from the West to the East. Any ideas and experiences from the East were wiped out. Only the agricultural unions reacted very flexibly to this challenge (i.e. collapse of the socialist regime and unification) in a highly integrative and organisationally adaptive manner. This is reflected by the fact that the DBV is the only larger association where all East German branches are managed by East Germans only and these had not been replaced by "imported" West Germans (LEHMBRUCH, 2000: 100). The DBV could maintain its position as the key farm lobby group.

The East German branches could show their fast learning process how to deal in the political system when it came to fine-tuning of the restructuring process and privatisation of state-owned land (see Chapter 3) during the early 1990s. The Farmers Union undertook strong efforts that the (large-scale) successors of the collective farms were getting the same support as the newly established individual farms. With respect to the substance of the Indemnification and Compensation Act (EALG), the German Ministry of Finance would have loved to auction off all the remaining state-owned land as quickly

and at the highest prices as possible. Similarly, the expropriated owners or their heirs lobbied hard to get preferential treatment in this privatisation process. At the beginning, it looked as if the tenants of the state-owned land, i.e. the agricultural producers, would have almost no chance to get access to it (see e.g. the proposal of the Gattermann plan). In the final compromise, i.e. the EALG from September 1994, the previous owners ended up to play a marginal role, while the tenants, i.e. by majority the decollectivised farms, could greatly benefit from the privatisation programme. The major reason seems to be that the East German agricultural producers through their federal branches of DBV were able to rally public opinion, particularly in East Germany. During that period of fundamental transformation public opinion and public protests have been very important for politicians since social peace was one of the most valuable pre-requisites of successful development (BECKMANN and HAGEDORN, 1997: 125-126). In this way, this fast learning of using the (West) German political system to enforce their own priorities, proved to be highly effective for the East German producers. If they had not learned that fast, agricultural production in East Germany might be completely differently organised these days.

5 COMPARATIVE ASSESSMENT OF THE TRANSFORMATION OF THE AGRICULTURAL ADMINISTRATION IN EAST GERMANY IN RELATION TO OTHER TRANSITION ECONOMIES IN CENTRAL AND EASTERN EUROPE

During the early years following unification there had been a strong discussion among political scientists up to what extent the East German population had the option to develop the new society by itself endogenously or whether it just had to accept new institutions and organisations imposed on them by the West exogenously (e.g. LEHMBRUCH, 1996; BRUSIS, 2010). Up to what extent had the transition path been self-determined? As LEHMBRUCH (1996: 64-65) observed that the radical breach with the past administrative and economic institutions in East Germany had been the most remarkable difference to the development of the other countries in Central and Eastern Europe. Contrary to them transition in East Germany consisted of two separate, but closely dependent processes; the transformation of the socialist system of the GDR on the one side, and its integration into the political system of West Germany, i.e. unification, on the other. There had been no doubt that the Federal Republic had been the prototype in establishing new political and administrative institutions. With the collapse of the socialist regime they seemed to have been strongly legitimised (EISEN, 1996: 40).

While it is agreed that the other transition economies in Central and Eastern Europe could follow a more endogenous transition path, institutional change in East Germany has been performed in three phases which saw a changeover from endogenous to exogenous forces of influence (LEHMBRUCH, 2000: 88). Following the peaceful overthrow of the socialist regime in November 1989 East Germans re-established a pluralistic democratic system based on German constitutional tradition. The return to a universal suffrage, parliamentary democracy, federal system and communal autonomy – among the most important elements of institutional change – had been implemented by East Germans without any relevant West German support. With the adoption of the Economic, Monetary and Social Union the West German institutions of the market economy and social welfare state had been adopted which marked the second phase. Now, exogenous forces of change became more dominant. With the rapid decline of the East German economy the bargaining power of the East German government melted away. The economic collapse had been imminent and there had been a strong time pressure to accomplish unification as quickly as possible. While at the time of the first free election to the East German Parliament (18 March 1990) it

was assumed that unification would be accomplished within two years, it quickly turned up to become a matter of months and, even, weeks. With respect to international relations, the development in the USSR gave evidence to raising concern. Hence, the West German government pressed for a quick conclusion of the negotiations about the future state of Germany where the East German government has not been involved at all (STUHLER, 2010: 131). The third phase started with unification when East Germany had been integrated into the West German institutional system and ceased to exist as an independent state.

In summary, the transformation in East Germany had to be accomplished in a very short period under constant time pressure. The economic situation in East Germany and the international uncertainty about the power structure with the Soviet Union pressed for quick solutions. In times of an enforced quick change, people use to look for established, experienced patterns of institutional change and that had been the West German model. The other transition economies in Central and Eastern Europe could also rely on their historical experiences and traditions, but had more time for the transformation process with the ultimate perspective of EU membership (BRUSIS, 2010: 76). On the other side, the transition process in East Germany had been financially and logistically heavily supported by West Germany while the other transition economies had to rely on relatively modest EU support programmes.

6 CONCLUSIONS AND MAJOR LESSONS

When looking back at the transformation of the agricultural administration in East Germany, it can be stated that it had been a complete success. It had been an "institutional transfer" (LEHMBRUCH, 2000: 88) from the West to the East, i.e. the East fully adopted the Western administrative system. In 1990 the East Germans not only had to dismantle their socialist type of (agricultural) administration, but also build up a new system within a very short period. Two aspects were relevant: On the one side, the administrative structure had been revised with the re-establishment of the five federal states as a new decision-making level; i.e. a revised territorial structure of administration hierarchy. On the other side, agricultural administrations had to fulfil new tasks in order to ensure, first, the survival and, then, the competitiveness of the agricultural sector. During this period billions of DM had to be distributed as emergency aid to agricultural producers, the decollectivisation process had to be administratively assisted and policy outlines for agricultural and rural development had to be drafted and negotiated at federal and national levels. But to do that, staff had to be completely newly recruited although former staff could re-apply. The major lessons can be summarised as follows:

- Staff from former East German institutions could be recruited who showed a high level of dedication, work spirit, was open for new tasks and understood that this had been historical opportunity for themselves and their country. Although it was said that East Germans became lethargic since the Socialist Party used to decide all and everything for them, dedicated personnel was available showing a high level of decision-making. It could improvise and work under difficult logistical conditions.
- The recruitment of East German staff was quite often interrupted by the fact that capable persons had worked as informal collaborators for the former secret service. The new decision-makers categorically refused to accept anyone of these persons to be recruited for the new administration. This common will had to be accepted.
- An "institutional transfer" had not been possible without the secondment of dedicated staff from the West. While also trained in a highly hierarchical system,

these people had to show the same qualifications as their new East German colleagues. The twinning model proved to be very effective.

- Similarly, this transfer had not been possible without an intensive training programme for the East German staff. This included training-on-the-job in the new ministries and district offices, practical training in the West (for several weeks) and special training courses (from one day up to a week).

However, when planning the set up of the new administration structure, decision-makers at that time were too optimistic in financing it. Although the number of agricultural district offices had been trimmed down compared to the socialist period so that each agricultural office was responsible for several districts, the following years showed that this system had to be downsized even further. Hence, already some years later the density of agricultural district offices had to be revised and quite an additional number had to be closed down. In this respect, the lesson is to plan very conservatively right from the beginning.

In smoothing the transformation process specialised organisations are required. In Germany, the privatisation of state-owned agricultural and forestry land had been entrusted to a specialised organisation. While originally it had been anticipated that this task could be accomplished within a short period and the organisation be dissolved quickly, it had become a more long-term oriented assignment. Hence, one has to be prepared that certain tasks with the necessary administrative back-up can only be fulfilled satisfactorily, if right from the start a long-term approach is followed. In Germany, the privatisation of agricultural land takes already more than two decades.

On the other side, the transformation of agricultural associations shows that institutional transfer and innovation is not just a one-way street. The German Farmers' Union with its federative set up showed that East German farmers, although representing a complete different farming model, could be quickly integrated into a common organisation. The representatives of the East German side quickly learnt how to use the German political system to enforce its own objectives vis-à-vis well organised adversaries. The decollectivisation process and the privatisation of state-owned land in East German might have taken complete different courses if the East German farmers had chosen a separate type of organisation. But also the West German side gained through this merger process since no relevant competing farmers' organisation had been established in the East. In this respect, the lesson is that if the East German side has been accepted as an equal partner it became an active player in the political system and not just a passive recipient.

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ANNEX: SUMMARY OF THE MAJOR EVENTS REFERRING TO THE TRANSFORMATION OF THE AGRICULTURAL ADMINISTRATION IN EAST GERMANY, 1989-1992

Date	Activity
9 November 1989	"Fall of the Berlin Wall"
December 1989/ January 1990	Set up of "Round Tables" at national, regional district and district levels, among others dealing with food, agriculture and forestry Elections of provisional councils at regional district and district levels by "Round Tables" Loss of control of the parallel structure of the Socialist Unity Party
8-12 January 1990	First visit to East Germany (Stralsund-area) by State Secretary Merforth (Schleswig-Holstein) leading to first proposals to the (West) German Conference of Agricultural Ministers in support of East German agriculture
early 1990	First ideas about re-establishing the five federal states (" <i>Laender</i> ")
18 March 1990	First free elections of East German Parliament
end of March 1990	First guiding principles by the National Ministry of Agriculture for re-organising district offices
6 May 1990	Local elections at commune, city and district levels
May-June 1990	Set up of working groups at preliminary federal state level for drafting the role and functions of the new federal administration, among others working groups on "food, agriculture and forestry" (nucleus of the to-be-established ministries)
1 July 1990	Economic, Monetary and Social Union between West and East Germany (signed 18 May 1990, 1 st State Treaty) Official appointment of provisional Heads of Agricultural District Offices by district administrators
June-July 1990	First contacts from the West German side with the East German partners in setting up the new administrative system, including secondment of staff (in general 1-2 persons)
22 July 1990	Adoption of Re-establishment of Federal States Act
June-August 1990	Official appointment of provisional Heads of Regional District Offices, responsible for food, agriculture and forestry
15 August 1990	Mass rally by about 250,000 farmers against the imminent collapse of the agricultural sector in East Berlin
23 August 1990	Unification Treaty adopted by East German Parliament and signed at 31 August 1990 by West and East Germany (2 nd State Treaty)
12 September 1990	Treaty of the Final Settlement with Respect to Germany ("Two Plus Four Agreement") between West and East Germany and the Four Allied Powers, i.e. France, Soviet Union, United Kingdom and USA

end of September 1990	Final proposal for the set up, role and functions of the new agricultural administration (later adopted by the newly elected state parliaments)
3 October 1990	Unification; the five new federal states officially established
14 October 1990	Elections to the five federal state parliaments
October-November 1990	Secondment of agricultural staff from West Germany to twinning state
November 1990	Election of the governments in the five federal states, including the appointment of the Ministers of Food, Agriculture and Forestry
November 1990	Start of the recruitment of new staff for the newly established ministries
31 December 1990	Final liquidation of the regional district offices (of the former GDR)
about mid-1991-end of 1992	Gradual return of seconded staff to West Germany

Source: BREITSCHUH et al., 2005: 69-71; BOEHNKE, 1999: 17-20; BRACK, 1999: 31; ERNST, 1999: 66; MERFORTH, 1999: 215-216; GAUDE, 1996: 70; STUHLER, 2010: 243-249.

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