**SZEMLÉR, Tamás, Dr.**

**National University of Public Service, Hungary**

**Associate Professor**

**Ph.D in International Relations**

**Hungary's Integration Experiences in the Last 25 Years**

In 1989/1990, as in most countries of Central and Eastern Europe, major systemic changes have taken place in Hungary. In line with the general direction of the changes, exactly 25 years ago, in December 1991, Hungary has signed its Europe Agreement, creating an association between the country and the European Community (today: European Union).

Since then we have been witnessing an increasing deepening of the Euro-Atlantic relations of Hungary, culminating in becoming a member of the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development, of the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation and of the European Union. In order to be able to realise these steps, the country had to fulfil the requirements of membership of these “clubs”; especially in the case of the European Union, this has been a very complex task.

Most of the steps required in the context of integration have been in line with the country’s general interests regarding its political and economic development. Thus, being mostly a “policy taker” has not caused significant problems for Hungary. Still, with gaining experiences – similarly to some other countries that have experienced a similar political and economic development path in the last quarter of a century – the need for a more active role in the design of (Euro-Atlantic) policy steps has increased.

This need for becoming a “policy maker” is an important source of some relatively new phenomena, one of the most spectacular among them being the increased importance of the Visegrad cooperation, a potential “special club” within European integration.

KEYWORDS: Hungary, Euro-Atlantic integration, European Union, Visegrad cooperation