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THE UKRAINIAN CRISIS - AN UNPREDICTABLE EVENT?

Ana Maria COSTEA (GHIMIS)*

Abstract: *For years Ukraine tried to balance between the EU and Russia. The strategy proved to be inefficient due to the fact that Ukraine did not hold the required leverage for this kind of strategy and the consequence was observed in the current instability from the Ukrainian state. At the same time, these events are the effect of an announced Russia's change of strategy. Crimea's annexation and the violent acts from Donbas put under question mark the security and stability of the entire European continent. The EU's legitimacy vis-à-vis its global power status given its inability to act regionally in an efficient manner. Additionally, Russia was perceived as a revisionist state that did not follow the international rules anymore. To a certain point the events from Ukraine were viewed as a new type of war in terms of tactics. The present article aims to analyse the degree to which the events from Ukraine were predictable. The main research question of the study revolves around the following: Taking into account Russia's perceptions over itself, Ukraine and the EU, was the Ukrainian crisis a predictable event? Regarding the methodology, the article will concentrate on document analysis (primary and secondary sources), in order to emphasize the correlation between the different/similar meanings that are displayed within the strategic, official documents and the discourse level, to see if there were some hints regarding the events that were to be developed.*

Keywords: EU; perceptions; predictability; Russia; Ukraine

JEL classification: F51

Introduction

"Nothing in politics happens by accident. If something does happen, it was planned that way."

- Franklin Roosevelt.

In August 2008, the demarcation between the East and the West was clearly established. It was a pivotal moment for the Russian foreign policy towards the West as it highlighted the change of paradigm from cooperation towards competition. The Georgian war proved both the Russian power and readiness for unilateralism when considered a suitable option, but also its limitations in terms of interdependence between it and the Western powers. Although Medvedev might have been perceived as a more pro- Western leader since his discourse was based on emphasizing the readiness of Moscow to cooperate with the West, the Georgian war proved the contrary. After 2008, the United State (US)

* Researcher, National University of Political Studies and Public Administration, Romania, e-mail: anamaria.costea@dri.snsa.ro



and the European Union (EU) implemented the reset policy and tried to rebuild a predictable relationship with Russia. Simultaneously the EU developed the Eastern Partnership which was perceived as a competitive program against the Russian influence in the area by the latter. The program was designed to offer intensives for six Eastern States (Azerbaijan, Armenia, Belarus, Georgia, the Republic of Moldova and Ukraine) in order for them to reach the European standards for economic benefits like the Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Agreements (DCFTA) and the Association Agreements (AA), but without the final political advantage, namely the membership perspectives. In response, using the direct proportionality method, the Russian Federation implemented what was to be called the Eurasian Union project. Since the Russian frustration against the Eastern states like Moldova and Ukraine pivoting towards the West was evident, Moscow's behaviour may be seen as predictable. Using the stick strategy of cutting the energy exports towards these states or increasing the prices per 1000 cubic metres in terms of natural gas, banning their imports of good (ex. the Moldovan wines) on the Russian markets, etc. were traditional foreign policy tools for Putin. But, what was to be called the game changer came in March 2014 when Russia annexed Crimea, breaking the provisions of the international principles, laws and the provisions of the Budapest Memorandum from 1994. However, if we analyse the Russian behaviour and the discourse of Vladimir Putin since he came to power in the 2000s, we may acknowledge the fact that maybe the events from Ukraine were not a surprise and that the Russian authorities may have taken into consideration a war in Ukraine as a viable option. We may also realise that the EU, especially, should have acted differently, or at least it should have reacted sooner. The present article aims to analyse the degree to which the events from Ukraine were predictable, in the sense that the West might have expected the Russian reactions given its behaviour since especially the Georgian war, but also the way it defines itself. Regarding the research questions that I intend to answer to within this article, they are the following: taking into account Russia's perceptions over itself, Ukraine and the EU, was the Ukrainian crisis a predictable event? Is Ukraine a grantable cost for Russia to become the unilateralist power of the system? Regarding the methodology, the article is part of a larger research regarding the predictability of the Ukrainian events, taking into consideration the strategic documents of the Russian Federation since Putin came into power and his discourses regarding the EU, NATO, US and Eastern Europe. The present article will concentrate on the document analysis (primary and secondary sources) in order to emphasize the correlation between the different/similar meanings that are displayed within the strategic, official documents and the discourse level, and nevertheless to see if there were some hints regarding the events that were to be developed. From a theoretical point of view, I will use the neo-realist paradigm proposed by Mearsheimer (2001) in

which the international system is anarchic, states are rational and act on offensive manner in order to protect themselves and even to survive.

1. Return to the Russian exceptionalism and competition

After the end of the Cold War through the disbandment of USSR, Russia, the official follower, lost its status of a great power that was equal among the group of states that influenced the international relations scene. From this status of being a previous global power that lost even its regional influence, Russia succeeded in emerging itself as a great power that has the capabilities to defend its international interests and prestige by using its military and economic instruments. In order to understand the Russian recent unilateral behaviour and the Ukrainian crisis we must firstly analyse the Russian behaviour over the years, in relation with other players, be them great powers or not, thus, the emphasise will be on resuming and highlighting the main Russian behaviour patterns in relation to the West. Also, we have to take into consideration some constant elements when defining the Russian foreign policy and its perceptions over itself: Russia was and still is the largest country in the world, with no natural borders. This lack of natural protection against the outside may give instability in terms of national security, hence over the years the Russian borders expanded and contracted periodically. This need to find secure frontiers generated in Moscow an expansion need based strategy which can be seen during the First World War in its attempts to seize Dardanelles and Poland and during the Second World War with Eastern Europe. This expansion based strategy had its limits in 1917, in the case of the Russian Empire, and in 1989 with the Soviet Union when the system could no longer sustain itself (Mankoff, 2012, pp. 265-266). The Russian desire and perceived need to be a great power remained constant over the years and it can be seen even today with some variations. Although the disbandment of USSR is seen as “the greatest geopolitical catastrophe of the century” (cited in Bigg, 2005) in the eyes of Russian leaders, nowadays a return to that status quo is unlikely and even irrational from the costs-benefits point of view.

On the one hand, this permanent perceived need of the authorities to secure the Russian borders by expanding them, has generated a fundamental need to be a regional hegemon with no challenger in its region. On the other hand, the current need to protect its developed influence beyond the Russian national borders can be explained also by the fact that Moscow has two neighbours with an expanding influence, at the West the EU and NATO and at the East China. Apart from this need, we must also keep in mind other constant elements: the fact that Russia has huge energy resources and infrastructure in order to export them, possesses a nuclear arsenal that is comparable with only that

of US, is a permanent member of the Security Council within the UN, and is part of BRICS and Shanghai Cooperation Organization. Hence, Russia had and still has the means to be an important player at international level.

In terms of behavioural pattern, I will relate to Andrei Tsygankov's classification of Russian behaviour throughout history. He identified mainly three patterns of behaviour in terms of foreign policy: cooperation, defensiveness and assertiveness. In the case of the first pattern we can recall the following examples: the Holy Alliance (1815-1853), the Soviet effort to stop Hitler and the war on terror (2001-2005). Russia proved patterns of defensiveness in its trying to contain the NATO's expansion after the Cold War (1995-2000) and became assertive in the case of the Cold War period, the Georgian War (Tsygankov, 2012, pp. 8-9) and I will add the current Ukrainian crisis. These episodes coincide with the perceived external pressures that may change the power of Russia at its external borders, the case of the latter being the 2008 Bucharest Summit and the mentioning of Georgia (thus the expansion of NATO), the 2013 Vilnius Summit and the signing of the AA between Ukraine and the EU (thus the expansion of the EU's influence and possible of NATO's).

The Near Abroad territories had a special place in the Russian foreign policy since the '90s in the sense that they were perceived as being the Russian right and responsibility in terms of projecting its interests in the immediate neighbourhood especially after the EU and NATO expansion in Eastern Europe (Poland, Romania, the Baltic States, etc.). Feeling the constant need to protect its borders, and keeping in mind the Russian capabilities and its status over the years, the Russian foreign policy proved itself to be rather constant and did not witness a fundamental change over the years. Rather than that, it faced fluctuations in terms of power and not in terms of interests (Mankoff, 2012, p.265). Taking into consideration these fluctuations, Russia almost obsessively felt the need to demand its right to have an independent policy first from the Holy Roman Empire (Tsygankov, 2012, p.31) and nowadays from the West. This is a constant also in Putin Speech from the 2007 43rd Munich Conference on Security Policy:

“Russia is a country with a history that spans more than a thousand years and has practically always used the privilege to carry out an independent foreign policy. We are not going to change this tradition today. At the same time, we are well aware of how the world has changed and we have a realistic sense of our own opportunities and potential” (President of Russia website, 2007).

Therefore, we can see a country that perceives exceptional in itself, comprising two continents, the largest state in the world that is claiming its right to be independent. For Putin the international

balance of power should change as it comprised only one superpower that was creating a unipolar world and this order was not suitable for Russia's interests since the American power represented the traditional competitor since the Cold War. More likely, Putin was in favour of creating a system of great powers that resembled with the Concert of Europe from the nineteenth century, hence a multipolar system in which Russia is part of the group and has its influence, interests and security protected by this balance of power. In his view, Russia had the right; therefore it had the legitimacy to conduct a foreign policy that was independent, thus distinct from the one of the sole superpower. Taking this aspect into consideration this policy was different, if not divergent from the others. This aspect was seen one year later when Moscow proved that it must be taken into account by the Western powers especially when conducting politics in its area of influence (ex: Eastern Europe-the Georgian war from August 2008). For Putin this was the potential that Russia had and he had to regain Russia's former status. According to the discourse, this demand is seen as a moral duty (Costea, 2015, pp. 78-79).

Referring to the domestic level in the early 2000 before Putin came to power, the lack of external power projection was partly explained by the fact that Russia faced some international changes that needed time in order to produce positive results. The president at that time, Boris Eltin proposed a domestic policy that emphasised the liberalisation of the market and the external cooperation with other states, players like US and the EU. The economic policy of what was called the "shock therapy" had negative outcomes for the Russian society that was already passing through the loss of international prestige once the Cold War ended. The unemployment rate increased, the national currency depreciated thus decreasing the life quality of the Russian citizens. Additionally, the political climate from Russia was facing large contradictions due to numerous misunderstandings between the executive and the legislative bodies (Hill and Gaddy, 2013, p. 18). All these aspects generated discontent among the Russian voters for Eltin's reforms and prepared the ground for a more traditional assertive president. The new elected leader of the Russian Federation, Vladimir Putin, won the elections from 2000s and came to power as a man "from nowhere" (Hill and Gaddy, 2013, p.3) in particular, with little known personal history. Unlike his predecessor, Putin emphasised Russia's role at international level through cooperation, as it was in the case of war on terror, but at the same time, when referring to Russia's area of influence he sustained Russia's natural right to defend it and to imply its own interests upon it, regardless of the fact that it may be in contradiction or in competition with other regional powers. He reaffirmed the Eurasian distinct identity of the Russian Federation, emphasizing its national exceptionality in one of his famous quotes, immediately after he became the country's president: "*Russia has always seen itself as a Eurasian country*" (Dughin, 2014, p.20), thus

not solely a European state, nor an Asian one. The reestablishment of this distinct identity from the West was strongly political grounded and reminded the Western decision makers of the classic geopolitics (Costea, 2015, pp. 75-80). Moreover, as Russia approached the assertiveness status and saw Europe as a threat in terms of identity it stopped defining itself as being European. One example in this case is the draft Foundations of the Russian Cultural Policy from spring 2014 developed by the Russian Ministry of Culture, where the statement “Russia is not Europe” was introduced. One month after the statement was deleted, but the strategic relationship towards the West remained clear (Lipman, 2016).

Russia’s main competition in its area of influence according to Russia’s perceptions is the European Union’s and NATO’s expansion towards East. Apart from the elements that pertain to Russia as a great power and thus of its natural area of influence (Eastern Europe), Ukraine is a quintessential element for the Russian European identity and the Russian language. For many years the Russian Federation tried to rebuild the so-called “Russian-Soviet identity”. According to this belief, the Ukrainian people are presented as “*Russian people that speak one of the dialects of the Russian language*”, therefore in Russian mind-set, Ukraine was seen as a natural part of Russia, and not as an independent and autonomous state with its own national exceptionalism (Perepelytsia, 2010, p.105). Therefore, when Ukraine started to develop a closer bilateral relation with NATO in 2008, after the Bucharest summit, Moscow reacted very strongly and declared that it intended to “*aim nuclear missiles at Ukraine if its neighbour and former fraternal republic in the Soviet Union joins the NATO alliance (...)*” (Finn, 2008). At the same time, the Russian logic and philosophy regarding itself generated an assertive behaviour, since Russia felt threatened and needed a defensive response to an expanding West towards Russia’s own backyard.

Therefore, in order to understand Moscow’s behaviour, we must look through Russian lens, thus we must understand how Russia is defining itself. In this sense, I would cite Emile Durkheim “*As long as there are States, so there will be national pride, and nothing can be more warranted*” (Durkheim, 1992, p. 75). But in order to develop a glibly analysis over the predictability or unpredictability of the Ukrainian crisis, simultaneously we must analyse the policies that the EU implemented in the Eastern European region since it is perceived as being a challenger to Russia’s regional hegemonic position.

2. The European Union and its Eastern Neighbourhood

After the big bang enlargement, the EU transformed itself from an international organization that had 15 member states mainly Western powers to a 27 members international organization that comprised central and eastern European states. At the same time, we must take into account the fact that the EU saw itself as a global power (EU Security Strategy, 2003, p.1.), hence, as Russia it had the legitimacy, capabilities and responsibility to act beyond its territory. As Russia may seem dependent on its own geographical location, the interests the new EU member states were predictably mainly located at the Eastern frontier of the EU, namely, Ukraine in the case of Poland, the Republic of Moldova in the case of Romania, and the Eastern frontier in the case of the Baltic States. The EU decision makers saw this change since 2004, when the European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP) was launched. The policy aimed at creating a neighbourhood characterized by a high level of stability and security and encompassed three distinct regions: the Mediterranean region (Algeria, Egypt, Israel, Jordan, Lebanon, Libya, Morocco, the Palestinian Authority, Syria and Tunisia), the Caucasus (Georgia, Armenia, Azerbaijan) and Eastern Europe (the Republic of Moldova, Belarus, Ukraine). Although the Russian Federation was invited to be part of the policy's programs, it denied. The choice is rather predictable if we think of the Russian aforementioned logic and almost obsessive demand of equality with other international powers. Being part of the ENP would have meant in the Russian eyes the acknowledgement of the fact that the European soft model was a better model than the Russian one. This would be a clear message for the non EU eastern states that orbited around Russia: the Western model is the one that should be adopted in the detriment of the Russian one which being built in antithesis with the Western one loses its meaning. Additionally, being put on the same position as Libya for example was not something that would be acceptable for Moscow since as an auto-defined Eurasian power (Sengupta, 2009, p. 38), Russia is not just a neighbour of the EU, it is already a great power.

From a political, security grounded point of view, the ENP can be interpreted as an alternative to the enlargement policy, given the fact that the EU faced the biggest wave of enlargement till present and needed time to adjust to those changes. Although some countries that are part of the ENP do not want or cannot be part of the EU due to the geographical reasons, not being part of the European continent, the Eastern states like Ukraine and Moldova expressed their choice for membership perspectives and their disapproval of being part of a policy that comprised the EU neighbourhood although they were European states. Nevertheless the ENP was an opportunity for these states since it represented a first step towards the EU. After implementation, the policy faced large criticism due

to the fact that it mainly used “a one size fits all” policy although the neighbouring states were too different to be possibly treated in the same manner. Therefore, the ENP’s success was and still is questionable, given the Syrian and Ukrainian current dynamics and the program’s objective of creating a peaceful neighbouring area.

In 2008, facing with major security challenges, the EU needed to respond accordingly especially after the Georgian war erupted. Thus, Poland together with Sweden launched the Eastern Partnership (EaP) program, which is a more focused version of the ENP. It encompassed only 6 countries (Moldova, Ukraine, Belarus, Georgia, Armenia, and Azerbaijan). The middle way offered by the EaP proved to work counterproductively for both the EU and its external partners. If we correlate the perceived needs of the partners with the activities and the purpose of the program we will see that often they do not converge, being rather a middle way in which the EU was trying to implement an incremental method in order to develop an economic and political relationship with six Eastern European states without giving clear perspectives. On one hand we can identify: states that wanted to become EU member states like Moldova, Georgia and to a certain extent Ukraine, states that did not want to develop a closer relationship towards the EU like Belarus and Armenia, states that wanted to balance both the EU and Russia like Azerbaijan, states that presented domestic vulnerabilities like frozen conflicts: Moldova-Transnistria, Georgia-South Ossetia and Abkhazia, Armenia and Azerbaijan-Nagorno Karabach; states that presented themselves with a large number of Russian speaking minorities: Moldova, Ukraine, Georgia; and states that had foreign military presence on their territories: Moldova, Georgia. (Costea, 2015, p. 93)

At the same time, although dysfunctional, the EaP came with two threatening elements in the Russian view, the AA and the DCFTA. Regardless of the fact that they did not offer the membership perspectives that Ukraine hoped for, in its case they emphasized a rapprochement of Kiev towards the Western model and a balancing action against the Russian one.

Given these regional dynamics, I will further refer to the Ukrainian crisis, developing a two level analysis: domestic and external level.

3. Ukraine within the Cold War logic

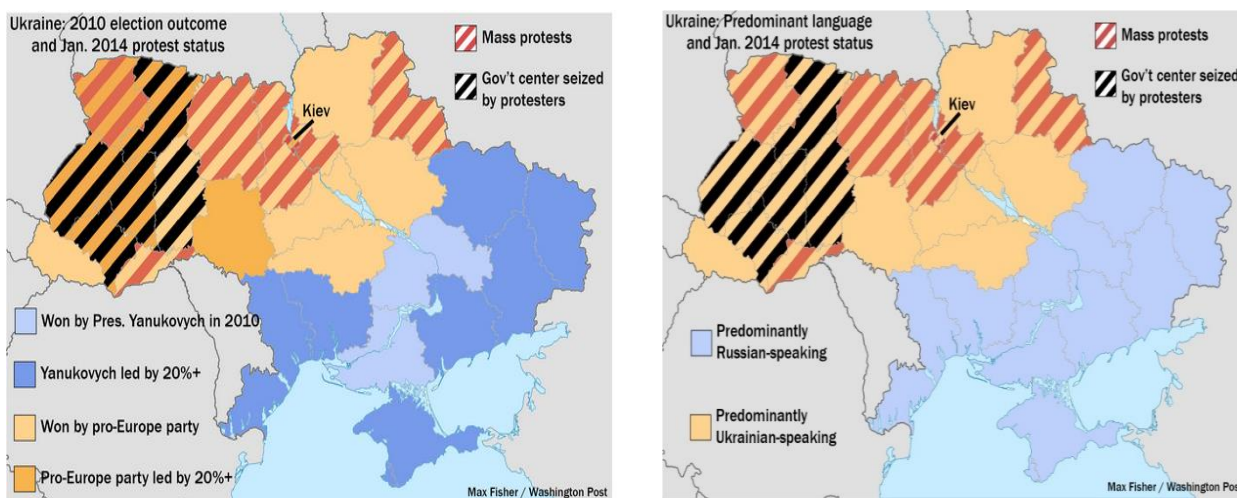
Before the Eastern Partnership Vilnius Summit in 2013 Ukraine was considered to be the preferred state to sign an AA, but two weeks before the meeting the ex-President from Kiev, Viktor Yanukovich, announced that his state will not sign it due to the economic problems that the Ukrainian state was facing. Simultaneously, it was invited to enter the Russian led Custom Union, but an

essential condition was to be exclusively part of the latter structures. This position was not a novelty for the authorities from Kiev since for years it tried to balance between the two regional powers that surrounded it, the Russian Federation and the EU. This balancing based strategy proved to be counterproductive for the Ukrainian economy and security since it proved to remain blocked in this position, a position that ultimately generated a doubtful status quo at the regional level. At the same time, in order to work, this strategy implies a relatively stable political and economic system and a limited dependency of the player vis-à-vis the powers it tries to balance, factors that are not present in the case of Ukraine as we will further see.

Yanukovich's refusal to sign the AA generated what was known the Euromaidan and the change of the Ukrainian Prime Minister, Nikolai Azarov (ITAR TASS, 2014) and ultimately of the President. At the regional level, the regional power, the EU, sustained the democratic civil moves and tried intervene and to control the already escalating acts of violence through the Foreign Ministers of Germany, France and Poland. The other part of the negotiations was the Russian Federation, which perceived the change of Yanukovich as a threat to its interests especially in relation with its military base in Crimea. The support of the Euromaidan towards the West generated fears in Moscow that Crimea may become a NATO military base (Mearsheimer, 2014), thus losing one of its strategic points in the Black Sea. As predictably, it refused to sign the agreement as it clearly did not follow its interests in the region since the current status-quo worked more in its favour because an unstable, uncontrollable and unsecure Ukraine would be unable to join the EU and approach NATO. Additionally Moscow's perceptions were that the EU was too divided so it could not have offered Kiev the needed support. Within this framework Russia offered its financial support and tried to keep Ukraine on its desired path (Oliphant and Strange, 2014), using the carrot strategy.

At the same time, I will add to the analysis the internal level. The fragmented domestic situation from Ukraine generated centrifugal behaviour patterns at the Eastern part of the state due to the fact that there lived a large part of the Russian minority that preferred the Russian led international structures. This domestic situation created a vulnerable position for the national security of Ukraine, fact that was present for years in the Ukrainian society. The following maps for example illustrate the results of the 2010 and 2014 election coupled with the places where the protests erupted adding the map of ethnicity on the Ukrainian territory.

Figure 1 – Ukraine's protests linked with the 2010 election results



Source: Fisher, 2014

After the protests erupted and the state was divided once again between the East and the West, the Russian pressures increased. Although not designed to be implemented, Vladimir Putin asked the approval of the Russian Rada to deploy military forces to protect the ethnic Russians from Crimea (The Moscow Times, 2014) since the security of the Russian citizens that live abroad is one of the main elements of Russian's right to act beyond its borders according to the Russian laws. Within its Constitution, the article 61, "the Russian Federation shall guarantee to its citizens protection and patronage abroad" (The Constitution of the Russian Federation, 1993). This was the justification in the case of the Georgian intervention and was used also in the case of Crimea. This article offered the Russian leaders the legitimacy to act having the legal support and ensured the domestic approval of the Russian voters. Additionally, this article is in accordance with the Russian philosophy of protecting itself and its people from external threats. Using this argument the actions of Moscow were not perceived by the domestic level as being assertive, but rather based on defensive grounds and more like a moral responsibility of the Russian state to protect all its citizens, not only those that live within its national borders. This element from the Russian Constitution can also be interpreted as a declaration of being a regional power that has the right, legitimacy, capability and the moral duty to act beyond its territory. Thus in Russian perception this kind of action, although defined at international level as being offensive, can and would take the form of a defensive action against an outside threat. Although it creates the suitable environment for the authorities from Moscow to act in order to protect, the annexation of Crimea can hardly be defined as a defensive act and a democratic result since the Crimean citizens were hardly persecuted and although their rights were limited, they were not vitally threatened. Thus, although the referendum results were relatively expected, 93% of

the respondents wanted to join Russia, when referring to the questions of the referendum to which the Crimean citizens had to respond to, they were the following: “*Are you in favour of unifying Crimea with Russia as a part of the Russian Federation?*” and “*Are you in favour of restoring the 1992 constitution and the status of Crimea as a part of Ukraine?*” (Euronews, 2014) In terms of available choices, they rather did not exist, since the Constitution from 1992 offered a special status of Crimea. Therefore, ultimately the return of this peninsula to the previous ante Vilnius status quo was not possible. Apart from the annexation, the south-eastern part of Ukraine witnessed series of protests and even violent acts between the pro-Russian rebels and the Ukrainian authorities, leaving the Ukrainian state in a situation in which its territorial integrity and its domestic security are questioned by a frozen conflict building scenario.

Seen at the regional level, taking into consideration the competition between the regional players, the events from Ukraine can be explained by the EU’s lack of unity and clear perspectives over Eastern Europe. At the level of implemented programs, although it created incentives for Moldova, Ukraine, Georgia, etc. to make reforms and to reach the European standards through the EaP, the membership desiderate remained unspoken. Additionally, although EaP was designed to answer the specific issues of the Eastern European states, the six countries present themselves with different vulnerabilities and opportunities (frozen conflicts: Transnistria- the Republic of Moldova; Nagorno Karabakh - Armenia and Azerbaijan; energy importers- Ukraine, the Republic of Moldova; transit states- Ukraine, Belarus; energy exporters-Azerbaijan; countries that want to become EU member states- the Republic of Moldova; countries for which the EU membership is not a national objective- Belarus, Azerbaijan, Armenia; states that want to pertain a balancing position between Russia and the EU- Azerbaijan, etc.). Therefore, the program did not reach from its inception the Eastern countries’ needs and even more importantly, it did not take into consideration Russia’s reactions. (Costea, 2015, pp. 154-155) On the other hand, at the level of politics, as already mentioned, the EU defines itself as a global power that sustains its soft power model through its normative character to which other actors can relate. Thus, from EU’s perspective Ukraine events after the Vilnius Summit were the expression of the Ukrainian people democratic will towards the West and the actions of Russia were aggressive in their nature and represented the Russian unilateral expression of breaking the international norms like the territorial integrity, inviolability of frontiers and the right of a state to conduct its own independent foreign policy.

At the same time, taking into consideration the Russian already implemented actions and following the above-mentioned logic and Russian philosophy over Eastern European region, Putin acted in a defensive manner. Since the accession of the Baltic States both to NATO and the EU,

Russia made it clear that it would not allow a further expansion (Mearsheimer, 2014) of its two competitors in its own neighbourhood and would not accept a direct border with them if Ukraine would become a part of the Western organizations, transforming it from an orbit of Russia and a space where the Russian Federation expressed its influence, into a contestant of its regional power. Moreover, Ukraine is not only part of its area of influence, but is a strategic, core interest of Russia since it is defined as being part of the Russian identity. Although the main threat is represented by NATO and there were no membership perspectives for Ukraine neither in NATO, nor in the EU, the trend was quintessential for Russia since signing an AA with the EU would have been the first step in extracting Ukraine from the Russian orbit. Moreover, the general pattern is for a state to firstly become part of the EU and afterwards part of NATO and the nature of Russia's actions were mainly targeting NATO possible expansion, annexing Crimea thus maintaining its influence in the Black Sea and creating the precondition of a frozen conflict in the south eastern part of Ukraine making it impossible for Kiev to comply with the main NATO accession conditions regarding the conflicts with its neighbours and the presence of foreign troops within its national border. All these elements should have been considered factors of predictability and should have been envisioned by the West. Moreover, another factor of predictability should have been the neo-realist aspect of the Russian behaviour patterns, elements that years after years the West has denied to be able to explain the international dynamics. Another element is the role of perceptions upon itself and the other. The entire political philosophy of Putin was and is still based on the antithesis towards the West and the right of Russia to be an equal power that has an independent, thus different policy and liberty to develop a different model. Given the Russian neo-realist behaviour, and the soft power of its neighbour, it developed itself as a military power. Following the logic of this kind of power, it would try to impose itself as a hegemon rather than a leader with a desirable model to be followed.

Conclusions

The Russian Federation proves itself to be rather constant in its behaviour towards the West, especially since after Putin came to power the EU started to be perceived as a threat and NATO redefined itself and developed into a more powerful organization. After 2000 the expansion of both organizations was seen as a threat by the Russian authorities that already felt the almost obsessive need of parity with the West. These elements generated the need to protect itself from the outside, need that ultimately proved assertive in Ukraine. The events from Ukraine do not pose themselves as a surprise since almost all the elements that were developed or were already present there are

predictable. Firstly, in Ukraine the domestic fragmented situation between the voters created huge discrepancies in terms of political choices and ultimately centrifugal behaviours. Secondly, Ukraine never pursued a constant pro-Western strategy towards the West, being more than once hesitant. Thirdly, it was and remained dependent on the Russian energy exports although it was a transit state for the European importers. To all these domestic elements there added the Georgian scenario, the Russian neo-realist strategy, its constant antagonism vis-à-vis the West and the expansion of the EU and NATO in Russia's own backyard. All the aforementioned information created the preconditions of a war that would lead to a frozen conflict on the Ukrainian territory that ultimately would freeze Kiev in a grey zone in which is neither with Russia, nor with the EU/NATO. Taking all these into consideration, we should acknowledge also the West's responsibility in playing in the Russian backyard and not reacting sooner and in a more constant manner.

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FOREIGN POLICY OF EUROPEAN UNION: EURASIAN AGENDA

Oleksiy KANDYUK*

Abstract: *EU's influence at so-called post-Soviet space gradually increases and becomes a significant factor of regional policy. Today we can already speak of the European Union as a full participant in the political processes occurring in the post-Soviet and broader – Eurasian area. Foreign policy of EU is evolving under impact of reasons stemming from both structural and political context and from external geopolitical trends. At the same time, challenges in the geopolitical environment in Europe today require the EU to develop new conceptual approaches helping to deal with the problems of relations with its eastern neighbours and the Russian impact. Only the development of a new Eurasian agenda could help to improve European eastern policy, consolidate the position of EU as a geopolitical actor in this region and foster Europeanization and integration of neighbour countries.*

Keywords: European integration; Foreign policy of EU; European neighbourhood policy; Eastern partnership

Introduction

The European Union as one of the most powerful geopolitical actors has progressed along a difficult way from narrow-profile engagement between most developed European countries to a Europe-wide commonwealth in order to achieve a higher level of social and economic development. The phenomenon of the EU still requires more research. Theoretical constructs of European integration are unstable because the structure, the agenda and the very nature of the European Union are undergoing permanent change.

In this context, the EU foreign policy is also evolving under impact of reasons stemming from both structural and political context and from external geopolitical trends.

Despite the fact that the common EU foreign policy is still a vague concept, dependant on constant dialectic change within the EU itself, it is clear that now we can talk about the existence of certain rules. The assumption we make is that one of the leading trends can be interpreted as consolidation and compromise unification of European policy in general, and its foreign component in particular.

* Associate professor, Department of Political Science and State Administration, Chernivtsi National University, Chernivtsi, Ukraine, e-mail: el-duke@mail.ru



In this regard, the European Union foreign policy influence in Eurasia gradually increases and becomes a significant factor of regional policy. Today we can already speak of the EU as a full participant in the political processes occurring in the post-Soviet and Eurasian area.

At the same time, due to the complex system of political decision-making, requiring lengthy procedures, the EU foreign policy influence is often proves to be insufficient to achieve required goals.

EU enlargement to the east and south-east, the complex relationship with its eastern neighbours and Russia, as well as awareness of miscalculations and failures of the eastern vector of EU foreign policy creates an internal need for urgent formation of a new agenda for the Eurasian space.

Thus, the article will deal the following questions:

- Whether the European Union becomes a powerful geopolitical actor in Eurasia?
- Could the Eastern Partnership remain the basic tool of Eastern policy of European Union?
- Shall we witness the emergence of a new common European foreign policy paradigm and in what form it will appear?
- The answers to the above queries suggest, in our view, the following objectives:
- To examine possible and desirable changes in Eastern dimension of EU's foreign policy.
- To outline trends and prospects of EU's Eastern policy further development.
- To give recommendations on basic features of a new Eurasian paradigm of Eastern policy of European Union.

1. Theoretical framework

From the very beginning, the effectiveness of the Eastern policy of European Union has been questioned in academic literature, mainly on the grounds that the incentives offered by the EU are too weak to entice its neighbouring countries into domestic reforms (Batt *et al.*, 2003; Gould, 2004; Milcher and Slay, 2005; Kelly, 2006; Smith, 2005; Hillion and Cremona, 2007). The leverage of the EU is weak not only because no membership perspective is provided but because it is ultimately unclear what the actual award for enacting EU conditionality is.

A number of experts have noted a significant influence of the EU's enlargement policy experience on the formation of EU policy towards the post-Soviet countries of Eastern Europe (Dannreuther, 2006; Gebhard, 2007). Some researchers have looked European policy in this region as a continuation of the security policy (Bengtsson, 2008). Very popular is the idea of the European Eastern policy as of an element of geopolitical struggle between the EU and Russia (Haukkala, 2007).

Researchers from Central and Eastern Europe, especially Poland, are critical on EU Eastern policy, which is, in their opinion, inconsistent, ideological and having a declarative character. Experts generally share the view that the Eastern Partnership and the EU's Eastern policy as a whole failed to lead to a convergence between EU and partner-countries and that very approach to European integration differs to such an extent that any collective action becomes extremely difficult (Fedorowicz, 2011; Szczepanik, 2012).

Even more researchers tend to be critical on the EU's neighbourhood policy for the absence of the prospect of membership and non-efficient financial assistance, as well as for the fact that it does not take into account the specifics of individual countries in the region. A. Eberhardt draws attention to the fact that the biggest problems EU experiences with the elaboration of a strategy for those countries that are not interested in development of cooperation, like Belarus and Azerbaijan (Eberhardt, 2014). Some experts, like J. Fiszer, even argue that the European Union conducts an inconsistent policy and, in particular, acts differently towards Ukraine and Belarus, because it is afraid the reaction of Russia and accusation of interfering into internal affairs (Fiszer, 2012).

The European view of the effectiveness of EU foreign policy and, in particular, its eastern dimension is much in common with CEE authors who criticized the European Neighbourhood Policy and the Eastern Partnership for not meeting the expectations of the Eastern partners, and not creating enough motivation for reforms (Kempe, 2007; Longhurst, 2009; Jensen, 2012).

In general, despite the diversity of expert approaches to the understanding and perspectives of EU's Eastern policy issues, the vast majority of experts agree with the necessity of a radical transformation of the European Neighbourhood Policy and the Eastern Partnership, as its instrument.

2. Eastern Partnership and European diffusion

The emergence of the European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP) and its eastern direction was directly related to the EU expansion to the East, which began in 2004. During the preparation it became obvious that after the completion of this process, opportunities for integration into the EU of new members will be exhausted in the foreseeable future. At that time the formation of the future strategy of the ENP began. It should compensate reaching the expansion limits and ensure the spread of the European influence on the neighbouring countries through creation of co-operation models, which do not provide full membership.

It should be noted that European officials and strategists did not consider the rigid fixation and strengthening the EU's new eastern border because it could lead to the creation of a new dividing line

in Europe. Besides, the impulse of external expansion of the European Union maintained its strength and relevance despite the fact that the real possibility of further formal expansion was greatly reduced. Thus, it was necessary to find other solutions to the challenges related to the integration of the CEE countries.

Thereby, the policy which originally contained a defect and the basis for creation of political dilemmas in the future has been formed. In fact, Eastern Partnership (EaP) as the ENP instrument could only develop in two ways: transform into a more ambitious project, and accordingly recognize the possibility of further extension, or remain inefficient as foreign policy initiative, which is gradually degrading and losing relevance. For a long time, things were going under the second scenario.

But the year of 2014 brought some positive improvements to the Eastern aspect of the EU foreign policy. The signing of Association Agreements with Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine in June 2014 and the establishment of a visa-free regime with Moldova brought European Neighbourhood Policy and Eastern Partnership Programme to a completely new level. At the same time new challenges and threats (Ukrainian crisis, annexation of the Crimea, Russia's transition to hard line policy in the former Soviet Union area) require better unity of the EU and the development of fundamentally new approaches to its Eastern policy. In March 2015, European Commission and the High Representative F. Mogherini presented Joint Consultative Report "Towards a new European Neighbourhood Policy" (European Commission, 2015b), which initiates discussions on the future of the ENP.

Discussions within the European Union regarding the Eastern Partnership have deteriorated sharply over the conflict in the Eastern Ukraine. Two basic groups were formed, that could be so called value-geopolitical and narrowly pragmatic. According to the experts and politicians of the first group, in the context of annexation of the Crimea and Russian aggression in Donbas, The European Union has to offer countries aiming at integration (first of all Ukraine and Moldova) a deeper political and economic cooperation with more ambitious goals. It comes to the possibility of recognition of membership at least in the long term (10-20 years), and a more active investment of resources in the integration of these countries into energy, economic, scientific and educational space of the European Union. Experts admit that the lack of progress the EU is offering its neighbors will mean weakening of the European Union and recognition of failure to compete with Russia.

"Ambiguity and weakness will only demonstrate that the course Moscow has chosen is the right one and that the EU is weak in its preparedness to stand strong and united against Russia", says the expert of the EPC analytical centre A. Paul (Paul, 2015).

Pragmatists instead believe that European politicians have underestimated Russia's readiness to confront the economic and regulatory expansion of the EU to the countries of the former Soviet Union, and its abilities to do it. The destructive influence of the Russian Federation today leads to the fact that the conflict in Donbas is not frozen and any time risks to escalate into an open military conflict again. Escalation of conflict may also affect the neighbouring Moldova. Armenia actually sabotages the EaP and has chosen the Eurasian Union. In this case, there is a risk of continuation of an armed conflict between Armenia and Azerbaijan.

Generally, this approach advises to take into account the position of Russia, and in relation to the neighbouring countries to make efforts for a minimum stabilization, both military and political. For the first time this option was announced by foreign ministers of the Weimar triangle (Germany, Poland, France) at the end of March 2014 (MFARP, 2014).

It must be noted, that despite the fact that the first approach prevails in the political rhetoric of Brussels, its practical actions are more inclined to the second one. That's why the Riga summit of Eastern Partnership, which took place in May 2015, triggered a wave of pessimism among the supporters of active integration of Moldova, Ukraine and Georgia. Just before the summit the formula the EU's relations with its eastern neighbours was finally determined: "political convergence and economic integration". Hence, the EU countries once again, even under pressure exacerbated geopolitical confrontation with Russia, refused to talk about the prospects of membership in a context of the Eastern Partnership program.

Besides, in November 2015 a new document called "Review of the Foreign Policy" appeared, which was prepared jointly by the European Commission and the EU High Representative for Common Foreign and Security Policy. In fact, a new key priority of the neighbourhood policy was determined there – its stabilization. The policy "should help partner countries to become a place, where people want to build their future and deal with uncontrolled movement of people" (European Parliament, 2015).

Consequently, at the level of practical policy the European Union has determined not Russian aggression as a threat, but migration flows from the countries of the Southern and Eastern neighbourhood caused by wars in Syria and Ukraine. Planning horizons in Brussels narrowed basically to ensure minimum short-term objectives of stability at external borders.

Thus, disparity of incentives and defined goals has become more and more obvious. The lack of prospect of membership remains one of the main obstacles for serious improvements of the EU policies in Eastern direction. The EU is fully aware of how highly motivating this tool is. However, the lack of unity inside the association regarding the possibility of expansion does not allow

consolidating the European prospect for the participants of Eastern Partnership. Uncertainty of the ultimate purposes is one of the main reasons of structural weakness of the ENP and it potentially reduces the attractiveness of the project for its members. Despite the obvious and understandable need for the transformation of Eastern Partnership into a more ambitious political program, the EU is still not ready to make this move fundamentally and confidently.

Also obvious is the difference in the goals of each participant: three member countries of the program (Azerbaijan, Belarus and Armenia) do not declare their intention to join the European Union. On the one hand, the heterogeneity of participants and their motivation was partly taken into account by the EU during the first stages of the ENP as a principle of “differentiation”. Later the “regatta” strategy was developed that worked well in terms of the outspread and application of the “more for more” principle, which involved providing more support to partners in exchange for progress in reforms.

This principle – a more individual and differentiated approach to cooperation of the European Union with Eastern Partnership countries, was reflected in the results of the Riga Summit. In fact, the EU agreed to change mechanism of implementation of Eastern Partnership and determine its priorities. Thus, the depth of cooperation will be determined in each case on the one hand by the EU, on the other – by “by the EU's and partners' ambitions and needs as well as the pace of reforms” (European Commission, 2015a).

Moreover, the principle of differentiation can become the beginning of a model change of both Eastern Partnership and, broadly speaking, the European Neighbourhood Policy. Most of all it will apply to the new “core” of the EP. But it's a bigger innovation from the point of view of the EU, because Ukraine, Georgia and Moldova see Association Agreement as an already existing tool for modernization, but not the ultimate purpose of relations with the EU. So, we can acknowledge a reversal of the European Union towards a new stage of Eastern Partnership, although a slower one than it is required by time and ambitions of Eastern Partnership member countries.

3. The Russian impact and Eastern policy failure

Russia's refusal to participate in the European Neighbourhood Policy has caused increasing competition between the EU and Russia in the post-Soviet space. Moreover, Eastern Partnership can be seen as a manifestation of the first serious clash of the Russian-European interests in Eastern Europe. Despite assurances of the EU in non-opposition of the goals and objectives of the ENP and EaP to the interests of Russia, the project has been clearly perceived as anti-Russian from the very

beginning, and an additional argument in favour of this was the concurrence of the Eastern Partnership program development and the Russian-Georgian conflict in 2008.

One of the indirect consequences of the ENP was its impact on the transformation of the Russian foreign policy strategy. Eastern policy of EU was aimed at resolving the two related problems: alteration of the periphery and alteration of Russia. And according to experts, the latter task was fulfilled quite successfully, because during the first decade of the XXI century Russia started using the strategy of “soft power” (Wilson *et al.*, 2014, p.6) on the territory of the former Soviet Union. Moreover, Russia has actually adopted the EU’s methods and tools to be used in its own integration projects. Tactics of combination of incentives and rewards alongside with elements of coercion, which together form the components of the “soft power” was actually copied from the model of relationship between the EU and partner countries.

But, the situation has radically changed before the Vilnius summit, where a major breakthrough in EU eastern policy should happen and that could show the advantage of the European integration model. The Ukrainian crisis and the Russian transition from soft to hard power policy signaled the failure of not only the Russian integration strategy in Eastern Europe, but also of the European attempt to use the ENP as an instrument of soft power to influence Russia and cause its transformation.

In the context of further development of relations in the triangle EU – Russia – EaP countries, it is interesting to examine a research of an international scenario construction group upon request of Friedrich Ebert Foundation. In order to predict possible future scenarios, 20 experts from 12 countries participated in the project “The EU and the East in 2030” (Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung, 2014). As a result, four major scenarios of possible cooperation between the countries from 2015 to 2030 have been developed.

Scenario I: Shared Home

As a result of the war in Donbass and the introduction of the EU and US sanctions against the Kremlin, relations between them can be characterized as an unstable balance. At the same time there remains a serious threat of an open conflict. But, with the course of time, the EU will overcome the economic crisis and as a result of entering into a basic financial agreement the Eurozone will be saved. Due to change of elites in Russia and the initiation of economic reforms, EU Member States will be ready again to cooperate with Moscow, not least of all in order to stimulate their stagnant economy. As a result, the EU and Russia will concentrate their efforts on common interests and pragmatic cooperation, which will lead to signing a free trade agreement, including Eastern Partnership countries.

Scenario II: Common Home

Experts call this scenario the most advantageous to Ukraine. It will be possible under condition of democratic reforms in Russia. By 2024 Russia will elect a new Democratic president, and an agreement on visa-free regime between Russia and the EU will be signed, and the Eastern Partnership countries will implement successful reforms, strengthening their economies, but will not become members of the EU. Conflicts over Transnistria, Abkhazia, South Ossetia, Nagorno-Karabakh and the Crimea will have been solved by that time. As a result, the EU and Russia will join its efforts not only to resolve conflicts in Europe, but also to deal with shared threats.

Scenario III: Broken Home

As a result of the unsolved conflict in Donbas a massive military race will be started in Eastern Europe, launching a spiral of escalation. Russia will aggressively respond to the NATO's plans to expand its commitment of protection to its Eastern European member states. Russia will develop a new military doctrine, which will establish the possibility of using nuclear weapons in response to attacks with conventional weapons. A relative success of authoritarian modernization in Russia and the transition to alternative energy sources in the EU will allow both sides to act independently.

Scenario IV: Divided Home

The last scenario expects the implementation of the agreement between Ukraine and the EU to be permanently delayed due to the Russian pressure, in 2017 year this can lead to a new Maidan. Meanwhile, the solidarity of the EU Member States will continue to be challenged due to EU's economic sanctions against Russia, and Russia's response to these sanctions, which will inevitably cause damage to both European and Russian economic interests. Despite the sanctions and political tension, economic relations between the EU and Russia will continue to have a high level of interdependence, mainly because of the huge importance of energy resources and trade, as well as Russia's need for European technology to modernize its economy. This significant interdependence of economies will not allow any of the sides to slide into an open conflict. Thus, relations between the EU and Russia will remain in a deadlock situation. Such a "cold peace" will not allow any political and economic reforms to happen. Meanwhile, Eastern Partnership countries will sway between East and West.

The author believes that all the four scenarios are to a certain extent schematic, speculative and hardly feasible. However, they demonstrate well the two major trends in the United Europe's

perception of its own Eastern policy: a) continuation of focus on Russia (because forecasts do not take into account the presence of own interest in the Eastern Partnership countries) and b) perception of the Eastern Partnership as a containment tool for the EU periphery without the right of recognition it as a part of the European *oecumene*. With such an approach, not only Eastern policy, but EU integration as the whole is doomed to a failure.

4. Leadership of Germany and inner European consensus

However, there are obvious signs of changes in the EU's perception of Russia and the emerging fragile consensus on the Eastern policy.

Russian aggression in Ukraine and its transformation into an open confrontation with the West has caused the formation of two opposite groups within the European Union, depending on their position on the Russian question.

Among the EU countries, on the one hand, there are "hawks" calling to actively confront Russia, increasing economic sanctions and providing more active support to Ukraine. Some of them even back the possibility of weapons supplies to Ukraine for protection. From the very beginning such a hard line was chosen by Poland, the Baltic States and Romania. Each of these countries has its own internal reasons, related primarily to some recent historical events. The United Kingdom and the Scandinavian countries also tend to belong to this group.

On the other hand, some EU countries have opted a controversial position on Ukraine and Russia in the current war. This group of the so-called "Russia's understanders" includes France, Italy, Spain, Portugal, Greece and South-Eastern Europe. Some of them can probably veto new sanctions against Russia in the near future or try to block their prolongation. Such intentions have been repeatedly expressed by government officials of Italy, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Slovakia, Greece and Hungary.

Germany plays the most prominent role in this process of consolidation of common European position. It has taken the initiative and has been leading the process of resolving the international crisis in Ukraine. And it has managed to unite the EU for the implementation of a unified policy, and specifically, diplomatic and economic pressure on Moscow, despite the resistance of some EU countries.

The influence of Germany has played an extraordinary role not only in the imposition of effective EU sanctions against Russia in March 2014 and their expansion in July and September 2014, but also in the failure of the "South Stream" pipeline project and prevention of rapprochement

between Hungary and Russia. Moreover, Germany has persuaded France to join the sanctions, having left the group of skeptics, and used Paris for an indirect influence on other Southern member countries. Thus, German political leadership contributed to the formation of certain inner European consensus. And even though this consensus is apparently temporary, but it is very important for Ukraine at the current state of affairs.

Berlin's efforts to form a common position of the West towards the Russian-Ukrainian conflict consist of two key components: the coordination of its actions with the United States and support of EU vision of the conflict solution. In general, the German policy at this point actually represents a common approach of the European Union and comprises three major components: searching for mainframes of negotiations to settle certain aspects of the conflict through diplomacy, sanctions against Russia and financial support of Ukraine.

The main objective of Germany, the EU and the West as a general policy in relation to Ukraine is to transfer the conflict from military confrontation to diplomatic and economic spheres. In order to lift the sanctions against Russia it is necessary to make progress in resolving the conflict. In this aspect, the goals of Germany do not always meet Ukrainian interests: its policy is aimed at a cease-fire regime and the freezing of the conflict in eastern Ukraine for a rapid "resolution" of the Ukrainian crisis.

It should be noted that Berlin was very reluctant to respond to the military aspects of the crisis. The position of Germany emphasizes that the solution of the conflict lies beyond the military aspect, so there is only a diplomatic way to resolve it. This is evident in particular in Germany's opposition to the idea of possible permanent deployment of NATO troops in Poland, the Baltic States and Romania, which was actively discussed on the eve of the NATO summit in Wales in September 2014.

Nevertheless, the current position of the European Union on the Russian-Ukrainian conflict has also demonstrated a significant modification of its eastern policy. Russian annexation of the Crimea and the war in the east of Ukraine has resulted in the emergence of a bigger realism and more unity in the EU's policy towards Russia. This gives reason to believe that in the near future the whole paradigm of the Eastern policy, and in particular its attitude to Russia and countries of the Eastern Europe and the South Caucasus may change.

Discussion and Recommendations

The last results of the EaP include the signing of Association Agreements with three countries – Moldova, Georgia and Ukraine, as well as visa-free regime for Moldova. So in terms of the EU it

was significant achievements that confirmed the viability of the EaP program and eastern policy as a whole. However, recent Summit in Riga demonstrated a striking discrepancy between the expectations of some member countries and the willingness of the EU to respond to those expectations.

Similarly, Riga has not responded to expectations of the differentiation format of relations with neighbours. The final Declaration only mentions a “sovereign right of each partner freely to choose the level of ambition and the goals to which it aspires in its relations with the European Union” (European Commission, 2015a), and the intention of the EU to develop differentiated relations between the EU and the six partner countries.

Besides, the differentiation format of relations with Eastern neighbours must be considered in conjunction with the development of a strategy of relations with Russia which is a key challenge for the foreign policy of EU on its eastern borders. From the very start Russia considered Eastern Partnership and the European Neighbourhood Policy as geopolitical projects of the European Union, tools of struggle for common neighbours. Eastern Partnership summits are becoming more and more geopolitical each year and challenge the EU-Russia relations. In the recent years the European Union has faced aggressive Russian counteraction to EU rapprochement with its neighbouring countries, especially Ukraine and Armenia, where political and economic competition shifted to an open geopolitical confrontation.

Such situation dictates the need to revise the EU toolbox in this rival toward pragmatism and moving from the purely technocratic approach to elaboration of a new “Eurasian” agenda to deal with trends and issues on post-soviet area.

The European Union should become more geopolitical and subjective in its foreign policy. Attempts to use normative powers have been successful in the expansion policy, when the EU has not actually faced foreign resistance. Today, the Eastern Partnership countries do not consider the European Union as the axis of power and a security guarantor. Hence, the regulatory impact of the European Union, with its time lag between the action and the result cannot fully compete with the geopolitical influence of Russia. Obviously, the incentives offered by the EU will take effect in the long term, but the measures of influence used by Russia, work immediately. Therefore, the existing instruments, which EU operates in its Neighbourhood Policy and the Eastern Partnership, will fail to counteract Russian levers which are based on foreign policy and economic pragmatism.

The increase in the EU's geopolitical subjectivity should proceed both through strengthening and accelerating Common Foreign and Security Policy as well as through the introduction of security features into the Eastern Partnership or may be other instrument of EU's foreign policy.

Today, the European Union is gradually becoming a geopolitical player, including in Eurasia, and the EaP in its current form is not able to be an adequate geopolitical tool. Since the Eastern Partnership initial aim was to create a safe environment on the eastern borders of the EU, a new reality outlined by the Russian-Ukrainian conflict arises the need of filling the program with security content. Moreover, under a constant threat of Russia, the European Union's rejection to create a new security concept including the EaP countries is very likely to lead to the creation of local security structures out of the EU (the Baltic-Ukrainian, the Black Sea, etc.).

The European Commission emphasizes this aspect in its document on key benchmarks of the ENP review (March, 2015) (European Commission, 2015b). That gives optimism to hope that the updated version of the ENP (and later, perhaps, EaP) will include security constructions within the CSDP.

The EU must do everything to overcome the tendencies of deconsolidation, caused by different position of member countries towards the development of relations with Russia. Russia will continue policy aimed at further deepening of contradictions within the EU, by ignoring the actual development of relations with the EU institutions. Instead, it will proceed in exclusively bilateral format of relations with each individual member states within the so-called “privileged partnership”, which provides economic preferences. Russia will also actively support parties and movements of the anti-European wing in France, Spain, Italy, Great Britain, Greece and other countries.

Therefore, Russian presence and activity in Europe, as well as the consensus principle of making decisions at the level of the EU institutions, which gives member states the right to have a significant impact on the development of a shared position on certain aspects of the Ukrainian issue, can create some pro-Russian group of countries within the EU, which would undermine the consolidating policy of Germany and France (as EU leaders), prevent the successful implementation of the European eastern policy, and actively counteract the pro-American pool of EU member states (the UK, Sweden, Poland, Romania and the Baltic countries). Such a diffusion induces by Russia can undermine not only Eastern policy of EU but European unity itself.

European Union should determinately reject the “buffering” of cross-border area. Such an approach, which has originally been incorporated into the essence of the Eastern Partnership, and, unfortunately, is part of it today, has proved to be ineffective. The EU planned to establish a zone of stability along its borders but today it facing a territory of growing instability. Gradual democratization and Europeanization of Eastern Partnership countries were expected. But now we have a more pro-Russian Armenia, authoritarian Azerbaijan and no changes in Belarus. The European

Union constantly stressed that the Eastern Partnership does not oppose Russia, but received the “Cold peace” with Russian Federation.

Thus, continuing the policy of creating a buffer zone, the European Union risks being caught in a dilemma between the belt of instability and a belt of pro-Russian autarky along its borders.

The prospect of membership should be given as a reward for those EaP countries that have made the greatest progress in implementing European standards and practices. Designing the future relations with its neighbours, European planners have chosen the most familiar and probably the most obvious way, by using a sample of the original model of relations with Central and Eastern European candidate countries. But tools and principles that operated successfully in relations with CEE countries, which had a clear perspective of EU membership, have become ineffective for the neighbouring countries. That happened cause European Union in fact, offered this countries sort of “quasi-membership” using the principle of “everything but the common institutions” (Prodi, 2002) declared by Romano Prodi in 2002.

The European Union should support the development of civil society in EaP countries. Today, we can observe gradual shift in EaP instruments from the “more for more” principle to the “back-to-the-basics” principle, both of which are only partly efficient because of their focus on institutions. Therefore, the main recipients of the reform impulses become government and state institutions. That poses a threat of corruption, reform simulation and rapid rollback even in the case of success. Encouraging the establishment of institutions of European bureaucrats overlooks potentially profound changes that can be achieved by reform of society at a grass-roots level rather than governmental structures.

EU should enhance the differentiation between “associated” and “unassociated” Eastern Partnership countries depend on the level of implementation of reforms. The European Union should focus on the leading countries: Ukraine, Moldova, and Georgia. Firstly, the success of these countries can bring new impetus to EaP policies. And secondly, it can be an incentive for outsider countries and awaken a new interest in reforms under the auspices of the Eastern Partnership.

Finally, the EU should abandon the idealistic notion that economic cooperation with Russia could help eventually transform it politically. Such an approach is untenable, because the years of Russian political development proves the opposite. By contrast, democratization of the EaP partner countries may serve as a tool to foster gradual democratization of Russia.

Conclusions

Thus, proceeding from international political realities of the early 21st century, the European Union's foreign policy eastern dimension cannot be called either successful, or effective. Dynamic global changes and a number of both internal (deconsolidation, unity crisis) and external factors (Russian aggression, Middle East issues, etc.) have transformed the instrument of Eastern Partnership into indefinite policy with vague objectives and weak impact on regional political processes.

In fact, apart from the financial support and vague prospects “for further integration”, the EU today has nothing to offer to neighbouring countries as a prize for a pro-European course of implementation of the required political and economic reforms. The problem of uncertainty of ultimate goals and the crisis of political conditionality remains today one of the main obstacles to the progress of the EU Neighbourhood Policy.

But the EU's foreign policy is evolving and the result of the evolution of the EU Eastern policy is the transition of the European Neighbourhood Policy and the Eastern Partnership from a purely technocratic instrument to a value-oriented tool and the maintenance of the EU as a regulatory actor and geopolitical player in the post-Soviet and broader Eurasian space. At the same time, challenges in the geopolitical environment in modern Europe require the EU to develop new conceptual approaches to the problems of relations with its eastern neighbors and the Russian impact over European eastern policy. Only the development of a new Eurasian agenda could help to improve European eastern policy, consolidate the position of EU as a geopolitical actor in this region and foster Europeanization and integration of neighbour countries.

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THE RELEVANCE OF EAP WITH REGARD TO REGIONAL ECONOMIC RESILIENCE CAPACITY BUILDING

Sergey LISNYAK*

Abstract: *Currently, the Eastern Partnership (EaP) develops in a very difficult political and economic conditions that may substantially affect the prospects for its existence and building of regional economic resilience capacity. We argue that the nature and pace of previous structural reforms in EaP countries is largely determined by their national institutions, history and economic conditions. It should be clearly understood that the development of this large-scale project in terms of geopolitics involves a number of difficulties and deep reforms in the participating countries. This paper aims to the previous experience and the prospects for further economic cooperation in the framework of EaP as well as to explore the relevance of EaP with regard to regional economic resilience capacity building. According to the result, we state that the formation of such important projects is possible only under favourable economic conditions and a stable political climate. Addressing the regional resilience capacity building and the world as a whole is only possible if the integration units are not created for the purpose of confrontation and isolation, but in the interest of deepening global cooperation and expanding markets.*

Keywords: resilience; economic resilience; Eastern Partnership

JEL Classification: F6; O1

Introduction

Currently, the Eastern Partnership (EaP) develops in a very difficult political and economic conditions that may substantially affect the prospects for its existence and building of regional economic resilience capacity. The concept of EaP initiative implies a fairly extensive development in the area of economic cooperation among member countries. We argue that the nature and pace of previous structural reforms in EaP countries is largely determined by their national institutions, history and economic conditions. The political situation also played an important role in determining the direction of reforms. It should be clearly understood that the development of this large-scale project in terms of geopolitics involves a number of difficulties and deep reforms in the participating countries.

* PhD candidate, Doctoral School of Economics and Business Administration, Alexandru Ioan Cuza University of Iasi, e-mail: sergeylisnyak@gmail.com



The purpose of this article is to analyse the previous experience and the prospects for further economic cooperation in the framework of EaP, as well as to explore the relevance of EaP with regard to regional economic resilience capacity building.

1. Methodology

This study is based on qualitative research methods to address the research questions and objectives. The research methodology is based on the principles of evolution and determinism.

Depending on these research questions the methods of literature review, SWOT analysis, historical and logical analysis as well as content analysis and comparative analysis will be used. Different methods will allow the different research objectives and questions to be fully explored.

2. Milestones of EaP building

Development of common objectives in the direction of Eastern Europe and South Caucasus were the first attempt of teamwork for European Union member states. The Eastern Partnership project was presented to the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Poland R. Sikorski, 26 May 2008 at the European Council.

The Eastern Partnership is based on four thematic platforms (European Council, 2009):

- Democracy, good governance and stability;
- Economic integration and convergence with EU sectoral policies;
- Energy security;
- Contacts between people.

The Partnership foresees stronger political engagement with the EU, namely:

- The prospect of a new generation of Association Agreements;
- Integration into the EU economy with deep free trade agreements;
- Easier travel to the EU through gradual visa liberalization, accompanied by measures to tackle illegal immigration;
- Enhanced energy security arrangements;
- Increased financial assistance;
- Deeper cooperation on environment and climate issues;
- Increased people-to-people contacts and greater involvement of civil society.

The Joint Declaration of the Eastern Partnership Summit in Warsaw, held in September 2011, emphasized the strategic importance of the Partnership as a way to deepen and strengthen relations between the EU and the partner countries, to speed up their political association, economic integration and approximation towards the EU and to support their modernization efforts (European Council, 2011). Later on, during the Third Eastern Partnership Summit held in Vilnius (European Council, 2013), it was scheduled to conclude the Association Agreements / Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Areas with interested parties before autumn 2014. In fact, Association Agreements / Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Areas with Georgia, Republic of Moldova and Ukraine were concluded on June, the 27th of 2014.

For both Georgia and the Republic of Moldova, the provisional application of the DCFTA has already led to the successful development of trade with the EU in 2014. The provisional application of the DCFTA for Ukraine was postponed until 1/1/2016. In the meantime, the EU unilaterally granted trade preferences to Ukraine (EEAS, 2015).

The Declaration of the Eastern Partnership Summit held in Riga in 2015 states that citizens of Ukraine and Georgia may be exempted from visa requirement only after the progress report (to be carried out by the end of 2015) on implementation of the 2nd phase of the Visa Liberalization Action Plans by Ukraine and Georgia respectively (European Council, 2015). A visa-free regime has already been in place since April 2014 for citizens of the Republic of Moldova holding biometric passports.

Regarding the other three countries, namely Armenia, Azerbaijan and Belarus, the Association Agreements / DCFTA were not concluded with the EU. The signing of the AA excludes the possibility of the participation of the Eastern Partnership countries in regional economic associations in the CIS, in particular, in the Customs Union. For instance, Belarus and Armenia have chosen a different integration project –the Eurasian Economic Union. Five post-Soviet countries are currently members of the Eurasian Economic Union: Russia, Kazakhstan, Belarus, Armenia and Kyrgyzstan.

One of the consequences of the EU–Russia rivalry is that the “common neighbourhood” now seems deeply divided between those countries that have joined the Eurasian Economic Union and those that have signed the AA and the DCFTA offered by the EU under the Eastern Partnership (Delcour, 2015).

3. The concept of regional economic resilience

Throughout the evolution of economic theory, the scientific community was not able to give an exhaustive answer to the question: what measures can lead to well-being of society? Following each

crisis, new theory appeared, hoping to find a solid foundation for sustainable growth as well as identifying new tools of regulation of the economic sphere, and so on until the next crisis.

Resilience (resiliency, resile) has a long history of multiple, interconnected meanings in art, literature, law, science and engineering. Some of the uses invoked a positive outcome or state of being, while others invoked a negative one. In synthesis, before the 20th century, the core meaning was “to bounce back”. Mechanics, aided by politics, had already started to change that: in both the literal and the figurative sense, under the aegis of the resilience concept, ductility had been added to elasticity (Alexander, 2013, p. 2710).

Crawford Stanley Holling was the first to transform the concept of resilience in independent theory. In his conceptual work, Holling (1973, p. 14) defined the concept of resilience as “a measure of the persistence of systems and of their ability to absorb change and disturbance and still maintain the same relationships between populations or state variables”. Originally his concept of resilience was applicable to ecological issues.

Most of the scientific literature refers to resilience as the ability of any system to recover from an external shock or to absorb against downturns (Briguglio *et al.*, 2009; Rose and Krausmann, 2013; Brock *et al.*, 2002; Gunderson and Holling, 2002). Thereby, resilience includes the ability to deal with external factors and reduce vulnerability, and one of its main tasks is to minimize losses and, as a result, to ensure the economic recovery in the shortest terms.

Economic resilience is a concept that is often used, but it is not always determined in detail. Pendall *et al.* (2009) determined two main concepts that conceptually define the concept of “economic resilience”. Equilibrium analysis is based on the concept of the possibility of the economic system to return to a previous state including respective indicators of economic performance. The second determines the resilience as the complex concept of adaptation in the conditions which meant adapting and changing the system, taking into account external shocks and factors.

Economic resilience means not only preserving the positive level of its economic performance, but also includes a development which manifests itself in the economic growth, that is, the trend of positive changes in aggregate indicators of economic and financial development of the system over time. In order to characterize the economic growth it is preferably to use both general and particular indicators and definitions.

Hill *et al.* (2008) argues that regions that experience negative economic shocks may experience three different kinds of responses and respectively may economically refer to the following type of regions according to their ability to be resilient:

- “resilient” regions - regions that have returned to or exceeded their previous growth path within a relatively short period of time;
- “shock-resistant” regions - regions that have been thrown off their growth path at all;
- “non-resilient” regions - regions that have been unable to rebound and return to or exceed their previous path.

As a conclusion we note that the term “regional economic resilience” is a capacious concept carrying strong semantic load. Thus, regional economic resilience can be defined as a state of the region in which its characterizing parameters (financial, operational, organizational or any others) tend to make a region “economically resilient” and at the same time capable of harmonic development and improvement at any changes of the external environment.

4. Main obstacles and background of economic reforming in EaP

In general, the nature and pace of structural reforms in the EaP is largely determined by their national institutions, history and economic conditions. The political situation also played an important role in determining the direction of reforms. In addition, the experience of transition reform suggests that the process of liberalization and structural reforms is not supported by relevant institutions, including the active and organized civil society are unlikely to yield successful results, and respectively it leads to the slowing of the process of economic resilience building.

4.1. Soviet institutional heritage

Breakup of the Soviet Union (USSR) provoked enormous economic and institutional problems of the transition period during the 90-ies of XX century. In general, countries are faced with an unprecedented challenge of creating a new and at the same time political, and economic order (i.e. the creation of new institutional mechanisms). Many of the new independent states or sovereign has never been before, and / or have had a complex history, with the result that they find themselves in an even more difficult position.

A new economic order was required by the countries of the former USSR, and not returning to the pre-existing state. The principles of planning were practiced in the former USSR, which left its

mark on the institutional structure. The negative effects of the application of these principles for many decades still continue to affect the post-Soviet countries and their ability to implement systemic reforms.

The Soviet system virtually stifled all the elements of a market economy, resulting in generations of Soviet citizens never directly confronted with the markets and institutions that ensure the functioning of a market economy. Ignorance of the market mechanism and its supporting institutions significantly affected the reform process. Of course, we cannot underestimate the scale of the tasks and deadlines required for the transition from the mentality that assumes full care of the state for the welfare of citizens "from the cradle to the death" to the conditions characterized by competition, instability and uncertainty. However, the difficult task of state-building and the novelty of the emerging-market capitalism were not the only obstacles to systemic changes in the post-Soviet space.

4.2. Military conflicts and political instability

Apart from the struggle with a heritage of the past, the new independent states emerged after the collapse of the Soviet Union were to set up and support the sovereignty and solve complex geopolitical problems. However, the collapse of communism and its state institutions has created unprecedented opportunities for the redistribution of power and influence. The combination of these factors led to the outbreak of several wars and a brutal struggle for territorial integrity. In addition, many cases of internal power struggles, which were in part a reflection of the weakness of government institutions, have led to violent confrontation over the right to make policy decisions on behalf of the community. Territorial conflicts manifested in various forms, ranging from the war between neighbouring countries and ending unilateral steps by the separatist regions of disconnect. Armenia, Azerbaijan, Moldova, Tajikistan and Ukraine have faced violence or civil strife.

Breakaway regions in Ukraine, Georgia and Moldova also turn into significant economic costs and creating obstacles to the implementation of reforms. Georgia's secessionist regions of Abkhazia and South Ossetia are the bases for smuggling activities, which leads to a decrease in government revenues and thus reduces the ability of the state to provide public goods and, in particular, to carry out institutional reforms. Similarly, the territory of Transnistria detached from the Republic of Moldova, is being used to obtain profits due to evasion of taxes and duties (as well as drugs and arms trafficking). The annexation of the Crimea in 2014 led to the subsequent escalation of the conflict between Ukraine and Russia.

4.3. Bureaucratic and corruption institutional lock-ins

The bureaucratic lock-in is caused by the specific interests of officials and of the system of government in targeted countries, its vertical structure and subordination, the fear to suggest solutions, the desire to avoid conflicts, the limited horizons and knowledge.

There is an opinion that the strategy of partial reforms implemented in almost all post-Soviet countries makes it more likely getting governments under the influence of narrow interest groups. Such interested and influential groups benefit from market distortions and corruption associated with the partial implementation of the reforms, when, for example, dismantling the old command system is functional without the proper development of market institutions, including effective judicial system.

From the standpoint of systemic reform, the existence of corruption in EaP countries is a clear symptom of improper operation of the institutional mechanisms. In this regard, the post-Soviet countries inherited institutions that do not have experience in regulating markets and, more importantly, which were formed over decades in the grip of tyranny and justice. As a result, many of EaP countries are still characterized by unaccountable public institutions and poorly functioning legal systems. The existence of corruption, which is the result of institutional shortcomings, in turn, can be a one of the main reasons for failures in the implementation of institutional reforms. Corruption undermines public trust in democratic institutions and legitimacy of the state.

As part of the transition process, corruption is especially harmful, reducing government revenues and undermining the ability of state institutions to carry out basic functions, such as the establishment of law and order. In other words, it weakens the functions of the state in areas that require strong state institutions. With the increase in the informal sector of the economy even further narrows the tax base, which adversely affects the ability of the government to provide public goods, including the implementation of structural reforms.

4.4. Educational lock-in

Educational lock-in consists in the fact that system of education established in the 90-ies of previous century was accompanied with anti-leadership in the quality of education. Low quality of education of the large part of graduates is the result of corruption for admission to universities in conjunction with low-skilled young professionals. Thus, this is one of the most serious obstacles in heading to a knowledge economy.

The main danger of this lock-in is that unmotivated students begin to be perceived as a social norm that enhances and supports the corrupt and bureaucratic lock-ins. It devalues education as such. Consistent implementation of the Bologna system, increasing the responsibility of universities for the quality of their management knowledge of the graduates will reduce the costs out of this lock-in.

Taking into account analysis of these obstacles we are about to try to present possibility of providing more objective conclusions and recommendations for further development in EaP countries in the long term (see Figure 1).

Figure 1 - SWOT analysis of economic resilience building in EaP countries

	Helpful to achieving the objective	Harmful to achieving the objective
Internal origin	<p><i>Strengths</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • foundations of an independent sovereign state • deviation from the old soviet political and economic system • qualitatively different system of values and a new type of human relations based on freedom and private-individualistic outlook • main asset is the quality of human resources, a highly educated population with a high level of scientific and creative potential • rich natural resources 	<p><i>Weaknesses</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • construction of the state is still far from completion • the goals of large-scale social, political and economic reforms have not yet been achieved • during the transition period, the majority of citizens have suffered a lot • the need for new and more civilized conditions for human development • many difficulties and there is a deliberate strategy of using natural resources • the hardships of the transition period is still very sensitive • corruption • institutional lock-in effect

External origin	<p><i>Opportunities</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the geographical position at the crossroads in the Euro-Asian region • support for reforms from foreign states and donor organizations 	<p><i>Threats</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the mentality in the spirit of Communist principles. Slowly addiction to the changes, people waiting for help from the state • reduced income and standard of living of the majority of citizens. Small middle class • new large scale of poverty and unemployment and, as a consequence, crime, drug abuse, depression and social potential of social instability • demographic depopulation, lack of qualified specialists • incompleteness and instability of legislation
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Source: author's representation

5. Current state and prospects of resilience capacity building in EaP

The theoretical analysis with application of the qualitative and quantitative methods enabled scientists to justify the use of ranking method based on assessing the significance of each economic factor to rank the economic resilience capacity of socio-economic systems. Advantages of economic resilience indices assessment caused by the fact that they allow to develop the information-analytical methodology for monitoring, taking into account the most important aspects and indicators of the socio-economic systems, as well as to establish not only the results of existing activities, but also to track trends in their appearance. In addition, such approaches to the assessment are characterized by flexibility and the possibilities of taking into account the conditions and characteristics of the operation and development of specific systems.

Presented here is the 2015 FM Global Resilience Index (Table 1). Complete rankings are provided for the overall composite index and for each of its component factors: economic, risk quality and supply chain. The index is produced for 130 countries and territories: 126 countries and three regions each for China and the US.

Analysis of indicators of the EaP countries shows a quite low level of economic resilience capacity in targeted region. Only in Georgia due to complex institutional and economic reforms carried out after 2004 (after coming to power of Mikhail Saakashvili) country showed positive tendency of economic resilience capacity building and as the result was ranked 54. In turn, 55th

place of Azerbaijan can be explained by high oil prices in recent years, but taking into account the latest oil crisis, there are forecasts to further decrease of the country's rankings (for instance, as the result currency devaluation has been carried out at the beginning of 2016). Ukraine, ranked 107, dropped more places in 2015 than any other country; a fall of 31 places. Unsurprisingly, for Ukraine, the worsening political risk, combined with poorer infrastructure, was to blame. This in turn reveals a fairly high level of risks and their impact on economic resilience as a whole.

Table 1 - FM Global Resilience Index in countries of EaP

Country	Factors							
	Composite		<i>Economic</i>		<i>Risk Quality</i>		<i>Supply Chain</i>	
	2015	2014	2015	2014	2015	2014	2015	2014
Georgia	54	68	70	77	15	54	69	74
Azerbaijan	55	72	67	78	15	54	78	87
Armenia	83	105	124	125	15	54	74	82
Ukraine	107	76	116	80	84	76	93	77

Source: FM Global Resilience Index, available at: https://www.fmglobal.com/assets/pdf/Resilience_Methodology.pdf

It appears that many of the shortcomings of the presented index arise from the fact that the indicators relate only to general economic characteristics rather than specific institutional component. Many of these indicators are contained in vulnerability indices, and the implicit assumption seems to be that resilience is just the flip side of vulnerability. At the same time institutional economics suggests that as the complexity of internal and external communications between market participants has increasingly significant impact on the economic resilience.

The experience of transition in countries of EaP shows that systemic reforms that are not grounded in suitable institutions, including an active and well-organized civil society – are unlikely to deliver successful outcomes. The choice and speed of reforms in individual countries appear to have been closely related to their national institutions, history, economic circumstances and political conditions. In some cases, the consequent failures to establish a system of political contestability and to institute an effective rule of law, have resulted in partial and stalled reforms, where those who gained from the initial wave of reforms block further progress.

Conclusions

To summarize, we note that the term “regional economic resilience” is a capacious concept carrying strong semantic load. Thus, the regional economic resilience can be defined as a state of

the region where its characterizing parameters (financial, operational, organizational or any others) tend to make system “economically resilient” and at the same time capable of harmonic development and improvement, at any changes of the external environment.

Among the most important prerequisites for advancement of economic resilience should include not only the choice of models of economic and legal institutions, but also the transition to a more efficient system of enforcement of private property rights and contractual rights and overcoming the incompleteness of the emerging market system, including real equality of ownership, "deepening" of the financial structure and the development of new financial markets.

Thus, the main task of the current economic reforms in EaP is the development of progressive system of updated institutions forms of non-market and market-based character. The value of institutions for enhancing economic resilience capacity of the country has become a universally recognized fact of modern economic science.

Analysis of indicators of the EaP countries shows a quite low level of economic resilience capacity in targeted region. For Georgia and Azerbaijan, the economic indicators show a relatively stable economic resilience. With regard to Azerbaijan, taking into account the decline in energy (oil and gas) prices on international markets, a slowdown of the economy is expected. Only in Georgia due to complex institutional and economic reforms carried out in recent years, country showed positive tendency of economic resilience capacity.

Given the fact that the Association Agreement / DCFTA with three countries of the partnership were signed only last year, it is still early to draw concrete conclusions on the actual economic effects of these agreements on the economic development of the EU’s Eastern Partnership countries. However, in the long term, this partnership maintains its relevance and significance for the EU and the EaP countries. The radical structural changes, much needed in the economy, require the formation of an institutional environment that provides high efficiency and economic growth, rapid economic agents adaptable to ever-changing challenges.

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THE “EASTERN PARTNERSHIP” PROJECT: DOES POLAND’S VOICE STILL MATTER?

Ivanna MACHITIDZE*

Abstract: *When in the year 2009 Radoslaw Sikorski and Carl Bildt, architects of the Eastern Partnership project, launched the ambitious scheme of bringing the six post-Soviet countries closer to the EU, they could hardly predict that in nearly five years the tremendous diplomatic, political efforts to design an effective soft power approach would find itself on the verge of failure. In this relation, Poland’s role in bringing the EaP countries under the umbrella of the project long before becoming the EU member, however, most productively since joining the organization, could not be underestimated. Despite a complicated historical legacy with some of the EaP members, namely, Ukraine, Belarus and Moldova, Poland together with the Baltic countries turned out to be a vocal proponent of bringing the former ones under the initiative, aiming to empower them with the leverage against Russia’s successful efforts to destabilize the region and preserve domination in its immediate neighbourhood. Nevertheless, taking into account the changes in Poland’s political climate, namely, victory of the Law and Justice Party in both presidential and parliamentary elections of 2015 as well as its pessimist stance towards effectiveness of the Eastern Partnership project, the question arises whether Poland’s voice still matters in the future of the EaP and whether it sees itself as the moving force of the project.*

Keywords: Eastern Partnership; strategy of marginality

JEL Classification: N4, N44

Introduction

Despite being addressed as the irrational one, Vladimir Putin’s foreign policy strategy turned out to stick to the least desired for the EU but definitely not the least expected (Motyl, 2014). The events of the Russian - Georgian August War of 2008 and a sophisticated strategy of introducing the “fifth column” into Ukraine’s politics under Viktor Yanukovych’s presidency reaffirmed the central role of keeping the former Soviet Union members under the close eye of the Russian Federation. Taking into account the disproportionately ambitious objectives in comparison to its limited capabilities, Russia managed to make use of indecisiveness of the newly created states’ political elites, especially their highly corrupted nature, through creating areas of instability in most of them. As a result, claims for the undisputed dominance in the post-Soviet space have been reconfirmed in the year 2013 in the boldest manner since the collapse of the USSR. Eventually, turbulence, marking

* International Relations BA Program Coordinator, Faculty of Social Sciences, International Black Sea University, Georgia, e-mail: imachitidze@ibs.u.edu.ge



the EU politics throughout the last two years and its unwillingness to spoil relations with its “Big Neighbour”, has made questionable the whole rationale of the Eastern Partnership project.

Notwithstanding complicated historical legacy with such countries of the EaP as Ukraine and Belarus, Poland is perceived to be the initiative’s most staunch supporter among the European Union member states. Since the collapse of the Communist bloc, Poland played central role in the successful outcome of the Visegrad group project and was promoting, however less successfully in terms of any tangible achievements, various Baltic-Black Sea cooperation initiatives (Agh, 1999). Hence, Poland’s active involvement into facilitating Central and Eastern European countries’ integration with the European Union could be hardly disputed. Simultaneously, the countries that joined EU through the same enlargement wave in 2004, as well as Romania and Bulgaria in 2007, have not demonstrated similar enthusiasm of assisting its neighbours to the East in overcoming considerable challenges while coming to terms with the demanding standards of the EU.

The vivid illustration for Poland’s missionary vision of assisting its counterparts to the East became the idea of the Eastern Partnership which was pushed through the institutions of the EU by its two optimists, Carl Bildt and Radoslaw Sikorski. Presently, almost 7 years after, Poland is by far the most staunch promoter and defender of the EaP countries’s pro-European intentions, despite the criticism of the scope of Association Agreements and success of the project as a whole. It seems that Poland could have been also assigned negotiator’s role in the Minsk negotiations aimed at resolving the crisis in Ukraine, as it was done during the Orange Revolution’s Round table negotiations. Nevertheless, former PM Donald Tusk, is presiding over the European Council and Radoslaw Sikorski, the former Minister of Foreign Affairs, is still regarded a high profile political figure, enjoying influence in Europe’s political circles.

Taking all things mentioned above into consideration, the goal of the paper is to evaluate Poland’s significance for the Eastern Partnership project since its introduction in 2009, determine the origins of Poland’s commitment to supporting the Eastward enlargement and, finally, assess the stance of its current government to the EaP project. The article is divided into the following sections: first of all, I will present the account of the core events leading to the current state of the Eastern Partnership. Secondly, I will discuss the statehood approaches with the view to uncover Poland’s devotion to initiate the project. Thirdly, key transformations will be highlighted in Poland’s attitude towards the EaP since 2009 till now.

1. Poland’s Role in the Eastern Partnership: the Background of the Project

Even before joining the EU in 2004, Poland was already looking forward to promoting the integration projects that could involve the countries of the Eastern Europe such as the non-paper issued in 2003 by the Polish Ministry of Foreign Affairs (EEAS, 2016). The document was aimed at facilitating multilateral cooperation with the EU between the countries of the post-Soviet Union, namely, Ukraine, Moldova and to a lesser extent, Belarus. After the initial intention of following the “two track” policy with the objective to achieve stable relations with the newly established states as well as Moscow as the center of the former USSR, in the year 1994 Poland passed on to implementing the different task, namely, paying closer attention to such countries as Ukraine, Belarus, Moldova and the Baltic States. Only the latter eventually joined the EU in its unprecedented enlargement wave of 2004.

Upon launching the European Neighbourhood Policy in 2004, Poland’s Foreign Relations Ministry immediately started to cement the future coalition for pushing the project of Eastern Europe’s integration to the EU, as for example, lobbying the political elites of the Visegrad countries (Tyschenko, 2014). Furthermore, Poland’s intention was to narrow down the focus of the European Neighbourhood Policy due to a diverse nature of its participants ranging from Africa and Middle East to Ukraine and Azerbaijan. In this regard, the most effective strategy would have been a different project based on solely Eastern direction, which the EaP turned into since the year 2009. The ambiguous attitude towards Poland’s intentions, according to Copsey’s and Pomorska’s research, were not admitted seriously from the very beginning due to the fact that Poland itself was not the member of the organization and was not yet acquainted with the specifics of the decision-making process inside the EU (Copsey *et al.*, 2014).

Later, having become the full-pledged member of the organization, Poland became convinced that such an ambitious project, aiming to facilitate the development of the Eastern direction only, would be too demanding for the old members of the EU, especially France and Germany, which did not experience the same sentiment towards newly created states as Poland did. Eventually, as the specifics of the decision-making process in the EU demonstrated, achieving the same objective gradually, through small, consecutive steps, would guarantee eventual success of the project in the long-term perspective (Bil *et al.*, 2008). The designation of what will be known as the Eastern partnership would be giving the countries, who demonstrate the will as well as the results of implementing the European standards, the perspective of the EU membership. According to this approach, the former Soviet countries would be preserved from sliding into authoritarianism and

closer integration with undemocratic Russia through a thoroughly built strategy of attracting them to the EU integration project. As it becomes evident later, the Russian Federation will manage to convince Belarus and Kazakhstan to join it in creating the Eurasian Customs Union in 2010.

Having taking into account previous experience, another proposal on rethinking the role of the Eastern Direction project was prepared in the year 2006 by Poland's Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Its peculiar feature was simultaneous recognition of Ukraine's leading role in any integration project with the EU, emphasizing the need to enhance visa liberalisation process with the latter. Despite its great significance, Ukraine was not the only issue on the agenda of the proposal - the document also called upon the European Union member countries to take initiative in resolving the conflicts in Caucasus and Transnistria (Copsey *et al.*, 2014, pp. 425-426). To sum up, the two documents reviewed above, laid ground for Poland's further actions in promoting the final version of the Eastern Partnership. It should be mentioned that the countries of the Caucasus were never abandoned from the similar initiatives, recognising the crucial necessity to cement the democratization process in the post- Soviet space.

The final move in designing the Eastern Partnership Project was implemented through issuing the non-paper in the year 2008. The result was approval of the proposal by the Council and recommendation for the Commission to further elaborate on its development. This was done in collaboration with Sweden. However, according to the evidence of Copsey's and Pomorska's research, the similar proposal advocated by France on the Mediterranean direction, was approved in a much more detailed shape than the Polish-Swedish one (Copsey *et al.*, 2014).

The core objective of the Eastern Partnership was to bring six countries of the post-Soviet bloc closer to the European Union by offering perspectives of access to the market of the EU member states through the DCFTA, as well as financial support for major reforms aimed at transformation into fully-fledged democracies together with the visa-free travel regime. However, the project to advance the political association and economic integration itself fall short from offering its participants any viable perspectives of joining the organization in the nearest perspective which caused a lot of criticism (Klatt, 2011, p. 8) Despite the official position by the EU authorities on the fact that the EaP would not harm bilateral relations of each of the states with Russia, the latter immediately moved towards pursuing aggressive policies aimed at pushing the countries of the Partnership to refuse from participating in the project. The Euromaidan events and refusal of President Yanukovich to sign the Association Agreement at the Vilnius Summit in November 2013 turned into what became known as the Revolution of Dignity, with Ukraine losing control over the largest part of the Donbas region and annexation of Crimea (Spiegel, 2014). According to Thomas de Waal, "the

EU cast the partnership as a bureaucratic and economic project, without sufficiently mapping out the politics to prepare for certain contingencies” (Park, 2014). Final results of the Eastern Partnership and the influence it exercises at Ukraine in particular are yet to be seen, and in this respect, a lot depends on the ability of the states actively involved in the Eastern Partnership to demonstrate their political will to carry out necessary reforms.

Visibly enough, the countries of the European Union are increasingly divided in terms of their support for Ukraine’s and other states’ integration perspectives with the EU. While the “Old Members” of the EU assign the foremost priority to stable and balanced relations with Russia, the countries of the Eastern and Central Europe, and specifically those of the Visegrad Group, are supportive of Ukraine with Poland at the forefront (Klatt, 2011). It should be also taken into account that the Eastern Partnership is only the part of wider ENP policy including its Southern direction. The countries like Spain, Italy and Greece are especially supportive of assigning a higher emphasis to the African countries. This argument became especially relevant in the light of the EU refugee crisis. Another competing project for the Eastern Partnership is the Black Sea Synergy (since 2007) which unites the countries of the Black Sea as Bulgaria, Romania, Cyprus, Turkey, Russia, Greece, Georgia, Armenia, and Azerbaijan. Taking into account a high level of competition for the EaP project in general, Poland is considered to be a key actor in making this initiative relevant, especially in the light of criticism on the lack of funds that EaP can offer to the participants.

2. Theoretical Framework

The pattern of relations built by Poland since its independence represents a complicated intersection of the different legacies and state formations it was part of. In a very general approach, the current historical memory of Poland represents mosaics of imperial domination of the Rzeczpospolita with consecutive dependence on the Russian Empire as well as USSR in combination with ideas about Poland’s missionary role in facilitating the development of the countries of its immediate neighbourhood. With the view to shed light at the moving forces for Poland’s “Ostpolitik”, analysis of the visions of nationhood by two core personalities in its history, namely, Josef Pilsudski and Roman Dmowski, would be help to elaborate on strategies undertaken by the post-Communist Poland. Pilsudski was supporting expansion of Poland to the borders of Rzeczpospolita, including Lithuanian, Belorussian as well as Ukrainian territories. He also was inspired by the idea of the Federation of the Eastern European peoples in the area from the Adriatic to the Black Sea in the South and Baltic Sea in the North (Mieroszewski, 1973). This state formation was called upon preserving

those territories from Russia's and Germany's influence which was known as the "Jagellonian concept" of the Polish state. Indeed, since its independence, Poland has been acting from the position of common history of statehood certainly feeling the responsibility to assist the "younger brothers" lagging behind, namely, the western territories of Ukraine and Belarus, which were the constituent parts of the kingdom before its partition by Russia, Prussia and Austro-Hungary.

Along with the "Jagellonian" concept, another competing approach to the Polish statehood was a so-called "Piast" concept which main ideologist and author was Roman Dmowski. The politician and Minister of Foreign Affairs during 1923 was highly critical of Rzeczpospolita and its legacy. Instead, he was emphasizing the German threat for the future of Poland and in perspective Eastern Europe's other independent states. The thinker was emphasizing the fact that because the East European states were not ready for statehood yet, Poland's "Ostpolitik" was still less relevant in comparison to building partner relations with Russia (Noskov, 2012).

In addition, memories of the partitions Poland experienced throughout the Second World War, when Germany and the Soviet Union divided its territory based on the Molotov-Ribbentrop pact of 1939, left a deep trauma for the Polish people making them feeling responsible for sharing their experience of statehood with Eastern Europe. Six years after, with the victory of the Allied Powers, Poland inherited some of the German Lands that became part of its territory as well as a "liberated country" under the Soviet sphere of influence. In this relation, if other European countries could underestimate the potential of Russia to obstruct Ukraine's move westward through such old-fashioned moves as annexing certain parts of territory, it was not Poland that ignored Russia's revisionist stance.

In line with Pilsudski's views on the advantages of the federalized political system judging from the conviction that Poland manages to fully restore its independence and return the previous influence in Europe's international affairs, in 1960-s, Paris-based political-literary journal in exile "Kultura"s leading figure, Jerzy Giedroyc together with another high-profile journalist, Juliusz Mieroszewski, were advocating an opportunity to reconcile with Russia under the condition that it abandons its ambitions of dominance in the Eastern and Central Europe and recognizes the priority of the Western-type standards of core values and human rights (Snyder, 2012). Future events, especially those after the collapse of the Soviet Union, would prove the overestimation of Russia's ability and, first of all, its will to transform itself into a member of the civilized part of the Western world.

In comparison to the Jagellonian and Piast approaches, the Giedroyc-Mieroszewski's paradigm assigned much higher importance to the region called "ULB", namely Ukraine, Belarus, Lithuania area, recognizing the necessity to reject the claims for the territorial control over these lands and give

them a chance to enjoy the privileges of using the right for national self-determination and independence in the framework of the newly created states. It should be mentioned that after the collapse of the Soviet Union, Poland adhered to the latter approach, combining at the same time the most prominent features of the Jagellonian doctrine and Giedroyc's updated version of it. Juliusz Mieroszewski was critically disposed to a narrow alternative of the Polish or Soviet dominance. The same criticism was expressed on behalf of the Head of the Institute of the Eastern European Studies of the National Academy of Sciences of Ukraine, Jaroslaw Pelenski (Bovdunov, 2016).

In line with reviewed concepts of the Polish statehood, criticism of the Civic Platform leaders, especially former Prime Minister Donald Tusk, by Jaroslaw Kaczynski was precisely the former's intention to improve relations with Germany and Russia. The country in the core of the EU, Germany, sees its relations with Russia as strategic one, however, is also interested in stabilizing the Eastern border for the EU. Especially in the light of Russia's aggressive actions in the East of Ukraine, the position of European states, including Germany, seems to be directed at achieving the solution that comforts Europe through the vision of "democratic elections" carried out in the Occupied Territories, pressuring Ukraine to accept the solution even without any guarantees that the separatist troops are fully withdrawn (Getmanchuk, 2015). The current mood of adaptation to the new realities became visible at the Riga Summit of 2015 where the core discussions were turning around the Ukraine issue which makes it sometimes seems as Ukraine-EU summit with participation of witnesses.

Apart from the above-mentioned concepts of Poland's statehood and its foreign policy, another explanation providing the theoretical framework for Poland's enthusiasm for the EaP is the *strategy of marginality*. Makarychev utilizes the case of Finland as well as Sweden as the countries that extended the Northern dimension of the EU integration project to Russia. Furthermore, both countries proved themselves as the supporters of the idea of Eastern Partnership together with Poland (Makarychev, 2004). The core proposition of the marginality theory is that the countries on the orbit (edge) are able to use their location on the intersection between one project and another one with the view to bring the "outsiders" closer to understanding of the benefits of joining the undertaking. Importantly enough, Poland does fit the case as this country does not put forward other foreign policy objectives outside of the West or suggesting any viable alternative to being part of the West, however, at the same time Poland is the country that shares with Ukraine the painful memories of the Communist past, albeit not inside the Soviet Union. Taking all factors mentioned above into consideration, Poland perfectly fits into the theory. Here, the division between the "hard" and "soft" regionalism is necessary to be drawn with the hard regionalism stemming from the top-down, state-centred approach and soft regionalism allows for the grassroots to be in the core of activity. Poland

stands out as the country that is able to benefit from being located on the intersection of a few regions, namely, the Western, Central and Eastern Europe as well as having access and sharing the Baltic Area.

3. The “Two Track” Policy as the Pretext for the Eastern Partnership Project

Based on the ideas of Giedroyc and Mieroszewski, the Polish foreign policy in the East was far more sophisticated than an ordinary balance of powers approach. From proclaiming its own independence till a complete demise of the communist bloc, Poland was pursuing a thoroughly weighted combination of maintaining relations with the Soviet Union and separately with the Soviet republics, especially, Ukraine, Belarus, Lithuania and Russia. Secondly, foreign policy strategy towards the above-mentioned countries was founded on Poland’s successful case of resolving the “borders issue” with Germany after the latter became unified (Snyder, 2012, p. 291).

Krzysztof Skubiszewski, Poland’s Minister for Foreign Affairs in 1989-1993, was the architect of the foreign affairs realm in the transition period, taking as a guidance Giedroyc’s and Mieroszewski’s vision, namely, belief that creation of the Polish state and not the unification of the Polish nation on the expense of territorial integrity of its neighbor countries must be regarded of the highest value. The minister preferred utilizing state interest in counterweight to the national interest. Skubiszewski’s significant contribution to the “Eastern Program” by “Kultura” was giving priority to the European institutions and the European idea which was not present in Giedroyc’s and Mieroszewski’s thinking (Pomorska, 2014). Another important difference was his belief in practical importance of the international law which was regarded as the guarantee for peaceful resolution of possible conflicts based on the national grounds inherited from the past.

The third dimension for Skubiszewski’s foreign policy before the dissolution of the Communist bloc was relations with the opposition groups to the Communist party inside of each Soviet republics. In this regard, arranging contacts with dissidents were of special importance. In case of Ukraine, their establishment was the most successful due to the fact that the Polish diaspora in Ukraine decided to support Ukraine’s struggle for independence. In terms of the movement that was supported by the Polish, its title was the “Rukh”, one of Ukraine’s prominent political parties throughout the 1990s. Thus, Poland became the first state to officially recognize the independence of Ukraine in December 1991. Therefore, due to the extent of support for Ukraine’s first moves on its independence path, Polish-Ukrainian relations were developing with such an impressive pace.

While marginality strategy together with the “Jagellonian” and “Piast” approaches to the Polish statehood provide a strong explanation for Poland’s support for the EaP, the paradigm offered by “Kultura” was reiterated by Lech Walesa as well as Alexander Kwasniewski while building Poland’s foreign policy agenda during their presidencies (Klatt, 2011, p.10) However, in contrast with Poland’s consecutive leaders, whether Civic Platform or Law and Justice party-led governments, Poland throughout the 1990s was criticized for its ambiguity in terms of attempting to support the newly created states, as Belarus, Baltic States, Ukraine, Moldova and at the same time being influenced by inertness of the Polish foreign policy after decades of dependence on the Moscow–projected line of behaviour. Its demonstration was Poland’s inability to include Ukraine as one of the prospective members of the Visegrad group as well as failure to create a military-political bloc union between Ukraine and Poland.

In the same vain as Poland was practicing the “two directions” policy with the Soviet Union, upon collapse of the USSR, its government launched the process of developing active relations with the EU which in the year 1992-1993 looked unrealistic. Poland’s intentions were evaluated as too ambitious due to the fact that EU itself was still skeptically reviewing enlargement to the East. Despite this fact, Poland turned out to be predictive and the policy of supporting the nation-states in the Eastern Europe together with developing the European standards policy improved relations between them. Hence, this factor explains Poland’s active interest in the Eastern Partnership project, the former was willing to launch the integration process having already arranged territorial as well as minorities issues with its neighbors to the East.

Poland’s strategy of promoting the European standards assigned a foremost preference towards achieving immediate and multilateral understanding between the countries in the framework of their existing borders. However, the most significant factor was that strategy of Europeanization was not introduced from the outside or was not itself initiative of the EU member countries. Poland took over the case to resolve the conflicts before Europe would become aware of them and even before those conflicts would turn into obstacles for its EU membership perspectives. Another very significant intention of the newly independent Poland was adhering to the priority of the European norms over the other possible alternatives which became especially relevant in terms of Ukraine’s refusal to sign the Association Agreement in November 2013, the Revolution of Dignity of 2013 and current crisis in Ukraine. According to Timothy Snyder, Poland’s foremost intention was convincing the other countries at its Eastern borders that introducing the European model and standards should be regarded as the most important priority to be fulfilled (Snyder, 2012, pp. 318-322).

In this respect, Poland was different from the other countries of the former Communist bloc, as Hungary and Romania, which were waiting for conditions to be put forward by the European Union in order to resolve conflicts between themselves. Other cases, as Yugoslavia, which throughout the 1990s became the scene for ethnic cleansing and genocide, as well as Russia that was ignoring the position of the Western institutions while intervening in Chechnya, Caucasus and Moldova. As a result, the chain of “frozen conflicts” destabilizing the post-Soviet space emerged in the initial years after the demise of the USSR, lasting till the present days.

4. Poland’s Role in the Eastern Partnership: Current State of Affairs

As mentioned in the context of the theoretical framework, whereas the Jagellonian approach was envisaging Poland’s future foreign policy priorities through a close control over the former parts of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, namely Ukraine and Belarus, the “Piaśt” approach aimed at decreasing Germany’s influence with Russia’s support. While the latter vision was mostly influential during the interwar period, the Jagellonian paradigm recognised the fact that the transition towards the Western values would be problematic for the countries of the Eastern Europe, therefore, the Polish guidance would be obligatory. This type of behaviour can be characterized as the messianic vision of Poland’s role in terms of civilizing the other countries to the East, at the same time building the bridge between the Western and distinctive Slavic values. Therefore, the traces of the Jagellonian approach can be observed in Poland’s dedication to the idea of the Eastern Partnership. Moreover, the “Law and Justice” party was also actively supporting the messianic vision of Poland’s foreign policy throughout their electoral campaign in the year 2005.

Taking into account the theoretical approaches to the Polish statehood and its foreign policy priorities mentioned above, Poland expects to benefit from the six EaP members becoming closer to the European Union. Significant importance as Ukraine’s ally in transition towards the Western direction Poland deserved during the Orange Revolution when President Kwasniewski offered his support in mediating the conflict between the opposition in the face of the “Our Ukraine” bloc and Leonid Kuchma, the former President. Together with Georgia, Ukraine became to be considered as the country that would become core of the Eastern Partnership project after the events of the Russia-Georgia war in August 2008 and Russia-Ukraine gas dispute of December-January 2008 (Reichardt, 2015). Another influential factor for Poland being at the forefront of the Eastern Partnership project is that its participant countries are among those who would turn into the most perspective markets for

Poland’s burgeoning economy and because of already available close trade relations, comparatively cheap prices for the Polish production that would be beneficial.

When Poland under the leadership of Donald Tusk made restoring the relations with Russia as one of the core policy priorities, there were doubts that the Eastern Partnership project would be assigned a second-rate priority, however, this proved to be not the fact (Shapovalova and Kapuzniak, 2011) Indeed, PM Tusk was aiming at making Poland the linchpin between Russia and the EU, because worsening of relations with Russia, as it took place previously under the Law and Justice party government, would have influenced Poland losing the necessary leverage as the country on the border. Poland was pursuing this type of policy before, being engaged into promoting the Southern Dialogue during Lech Walesa’s presidency as well as being involved in dialogue with Russia as well.

Upon the launching of the Eastern Partnership project, Poland was given more space in promoting the initiative, while holding the Presidency at the Council of the European Union. The timing for the EaP to be paid more attention at, was influenced by the events in the Northern Africa and the Middle East through what became to be known as “Arab Spring” and the chaos that the wave of uprisings against the authoritarian regimes took place. However, Poland managed to turn these events into one of its successes. Emphasis on the support for democracy in the countries of the Eastern Partnership resulted in establishing the Endowment for Democracy (“Eastern Partnership - European Endowment For Democracy”, 2016) The current Polish government and presidency represented by Andrzej Duda and Beata Szydlo does not refrain from criticizing EU authorities of underestimating the importance of Ukraine and Eastern direction in general for the future viability of the organization. These declaration take place in the light of unprecedented probe into the Polish judicial reform on the subject of its adherence to the EU core principles and standards (BBC, 2016) The most alarming sign for Poland’s actions as seen itself indivisible member of the organization was Duda emphasizing that “EU as a union of nation-states that cooperates especially in the economic field, without interfering in matters that should remain in the area of national sovereignty,” (EurActiv, 2016)

The EaP, which had originally been envisioned as the creation of a buffer zone between Russia and the EU, had been „a catastrophe”, according to the words of Poland’s new Minister of Foreign Affairs Witold Waszczykowski (Eastern Partnership Civil Society Forum, 2016). It definitely seems that Poland’s pursuing of the “reset” policy with Russia together with the emphasis on its Europeanisation direction brought gains in the influential and strong message that the EaP could offer to the countries of the former Soviet Union. Current government found itself in an uneasy position of being locked between its unwise policy of Euroskepticism and anti-Russian stance which considerably decreased Poland’s ability to influence the formation of agenda inside the EU.

Right after the inauguration ceremony President Andrzej Duda announced that it is Estonia that would become the country of his first official trip, the small country in the nearest proximity to Russia which Duda accused of being “alarming due to a rebirth of the imperial spirit, of imperial nostalgia that threatens other neighbours” (Cienski, 2015). In turn, Petro Poroshenko after the uncontested victory in the presidential elections of 2014, made his first official visit to Poland with the view to demonstrate that Ukraine does recognize Poland’s contribution on its difficult path to Europe. However, the difficulty lies in the fact that the Eastern Partnership is the project that united too different countries under the single title of being post-Soviet. Poland’s success in introducing transitional reforms, putting it on the democratic path and turning it into the success story of the newly accessed members does not guarantee the same story for the Eastern Partnership countries. Moreover, out of six members of the project three of them, namely, Armenia, Azerbaijan and Belarus, do not exhibit any interest in actively pursuing the initiative which reaffirms the point that the objective of the project was not achieved. Another problematic point stressed by current Polish leadership in the face of Andrzej Duda is that conviction that the successful Eastern policy can be carried out only through the European Union channels is criticized due to the fact that the most decisive incentive for the countries to join the initiative is not offered to them, namely the European Union membership.

Conclusions

Poland will continue to be a core facilitator and supporter of the Eastern Partnership due to the fact that there is a general consensus between its political elites that realize, without the project’s existence EaP countries’ fragile transition process as well as those achievements that took place in terms of transforming the public opinion in favour of a pro-European one, creation of the DCFTA as well as progress in introducing the visa liberalization policies in Ukraine and Georgia, while Moldova already enjoying free access to the EU territories under the specified conditions, would fail.

Uniqueness of the Polish position can be regarded as the direct consequence of its statehood vision in the beginning of the XX century, before Poland fell under the Soviet sphere of influence. Having carrying out the analysis of the place the so-called “Ostpolitik” occupied in the foreign policy priorities of Poland since the collapse of the Soviet Union, we can indeed observe that the marginality theory provides a strong explanation for why Poland is so active in pursuing the rapprochement between the EU and the Eastern European countries. There is also a strong evidence for the “Jagellonian” and “Piast” theoretical approaches competing with each other, the former being supported by the Kaczynski administration in terms of overall distrust to both Germany and Russia

and putting more emphasis at defending the traditional, conservative Christian values. In this relation, even the violation of certain democratic principles on which the EU rests may become acceptable. The Civic Platform representatives, on the contrary, are more leaning towards the “Piast” approach suggesting that Poland should not harm its relations with Russia as its strategic partner, however, this building of relations should not occur on the expense of Eurosceptic moods and turning away from Poland’s active participation in the EU institutions.

Despite the varying nature of the theoretical approaches, Poland’s support for the idea of enhancing support for the East European countries and their European integration seems to be reaffirmed by every single administration coming to power. However, the shape of this strategy directly depends on whether the political party and political elite promoting these policies consider itself as part of the EU. In the light of the Law and Justice party having returned to the forefront of the political arena, Poland reaffirmed its support for the priority of the Eastern direction in its foreign policy, especially support for Ukraine and Georgia. However, there is a strong evidence that Poland’s belief in the Eastern Partnership is been fading. The same reciprocal trend can be observed in the EU core decision-making circles regarding the doubts that Poland manages to keep its influence with the view to having a say in the current EaP project or decide its fate in the future unless certain changes occur.

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HORIZONTAL OBJECTIVES OF EU PROGRAMMES AND THE SOCIO-CULTURAL CONTEXT FOR EAP MEMBERS

Irina Teodora MANOLESCU*

Adriana PRODAN**

Carmen Claudia ARUSTEI***

Abstract: *As the Eastern Partnership (EaP) was founded in 2009, between European Union (EU) and six countries from Eastern Europe, its main goal was to create adequate conditions for economic integration, social and regional development of the EaP country members. Based on the same principles as the EU was built, international law and fundamental values (e.g. human rights, freedom, democracy, rule of law), sustainable development and also good governance, the EaP was regularly analysed and renewed (once every two years) in order to better respond to the needs of Eastern European countries. Even so, while the economic context was especially considered, there are still some actions to be undertaken with regards to socio-cultural factors. Therefore the aim of the paper is to analyse the socio-cultural context of the six Eastern European EaP members (Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine) in order to make recommendations regarding their absorption capacity when integrating the horizontal EU objectives into the funding neighbourhood instruments. Our main research question is: what is the right approach for developing operational funding programmes (individual/bilateral or partnership/multilateral participations) for EaP members: is it by maintaining the EU horizontal objective or by adapting these objectives from the beginning considering the socio-cultural context?*

Keywords: socio-cultural context; EaP members; EU horizontal objectives

JEL Classification: O22; O29; O52

Introduction

Every year, the EU activates different instruments and resources in order to support regional development. In 2014, a budget of 550 million euro was allocated within the European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP) for Eastern Europe, while another 730 million euro were targeted for the next three years, 2015-2017.

The horizontal objectives of European programmes are the key principles relevant to all areas where the EU funds projects. Their purpose is to support the common principles of European development. According to European Commission, the horizontal objectives are: regional development, employment, training, SME, environment, research and innovation. Between 2008 and

* Associate professor, “Alexandru Ioan Cuza” University of Iasi, Romania, e-mail: irina.manolescu@gmail.com

** Professor, “Alexandru Ioan Cuza” University of Iasi, Romania, e-mail: adaprodan@gmail.com

*** Assistant professor, “Alexandru Ioan Cuza” University of Iasi, e-mail: carmen.arustei@gmail.com



2013 the funding allocation increased for each objective, a high amount of money being constantly allocated to training and for the last three years of the period mentioned above, an increase was registered for environment protection, including energy saving (European Commission, 2014).

Within the EaP, these objectives are indirectly presented through the basic principles: international law and fundamental values. This approach is considered to be an attempt of the EU to become more flexible, more open to dialogue when considering the partnership (Korosteleva, 2013). Among all the horizontal objectives, our research pays particular attention to the following two which could be adapted to the context of EaP member countries: on one hand, it focuses on gender equality and equal opportunities and, on the other, on sustainable development. The reason is that for EaP programmes the focus for intervention is on these secondary horizontal objectives.

Firstly, gender equality refers to equal visibility, autonomy and participation of men and women in various societal roles. In the case of EaP countries, the legal status of women might register some improvements, but a real implementation of the legal framework and having equal opportunities is still limited. Even though women have same rights as men, they do not always have access to same opportunities like men or exercise their rights.

Equal opportunities refer to offering the same chances to achieve an objective, without considering gender, religion, age, vulnerability, sexual orientation issues. Likewise, diversity is a broader concept, and it is used more for organizations. It covers identifying and valuing differences in attitude and values, projects or work experiences. An organization which values diversity treats employees with dignity and respect, and is opened to a wide range of doing things. Both concepts are considered within the EU horizontal objective.

Secondly, sustainable development has a wide range of definitions, but all converge around the same idea, that the present generation should satisfy its needs without compromising the needs of future generations. All programmes and funding instruments of the EU take into consideration this objective which was proposed in 2005 through European Council declaration (Commission of the European Communities, 2005). This objective is operationalised through focusing on other three interconnected objectives: environment protection, social equity and cohesion and economic prosperity.

As such, our paper inquires whether the socio-cultural context of the EaP member countries influences the implementation of the EU programmes and the way in which the countries embrace the EU horizontal objectives. We consider that on one hand, cultural dimensions, like Hofstede's ones, could influence the country's affinity for embracing the horizontal objectives more easily (e.g. masculinity cultural dimension), or the way in which the countries succeed to implement funding

projects. On the other hand, the social factors (e.g. education, poverty, religion, other particular people's needs), may have an impact on the country's ability to attract and manage European funds and also on the country's interest for those funds. Due to the socio-cultural particularities, a more customised funding agenda is required and also better prioritising the EU interventions.

Thus, the paper looks into the way the strategic and horizontal objectives were adapted to each country's socio-cultural context, how they were operationalised and whether prioritising interventions was considered. Looking at the socio-cultural context of the six EaP member countries we have decided to analyse the five cultural dimensions of Hofstede (of the initial model) and their structural impact on the partnership in terms of: strategic objectives implementation (including action plans, administrative infrastructure and projects implemented). Regarding the social indicators, the most relevant two indicators which have been considered are the "ease of doing business" and "corruption", since the two are directly linked to the operationalisation of the funding programmes and the implementation of projects.

As far as the methodology concerns, a descriptive-exploratory analysis was conducted which focused, firstly, on identifying and describing the socio-cultural variables, and, secondly, on the possible link between these variables and the two horizontal objectives chosen (sustainable development and gender equality and equal opportunities). Moreover, a qualitative design was employed, along with documentary analysis and comparison techniques in order to identify the level of adaptation and operationalisation of horizontal objectives within the ENP funding instruments. The documentary stage was conducted considering three levels of impact of the EaP documents: strategic objectives (strategic), action plans (tactic) and projects implemented (operational). With this aim, we paid particular attention to country strategies (2007-2017), progress reports (2010-2015), memos, brochures and projects dealing with the ENP/EaP¹. The projects considered for analyses were those presented on the ENI official website.

After gathering the data, we analysed it from the horizontal objectives point of view, in order to see if a possible influence of the socio-cultural context should be considered when operationalising them through the EaP. A comparison between the progress registered and the socio-cultural variables chosen for each EaP member country was made in order to identify the main similarities and discrepancies. In the end, the countries were ranked according to their scores for each of the seven socio-cultural variables taken into consideration - ease of doing business, corruption, power distance,

¹ The information regarding projects from each country were collected from the European Union External Action Service website: <http://eeas.europa.eu>.

individualism, masculinity, uncertainty avoidance, long term orientation - in order explain (using content and logical analysis) the socio-cultural influence on ENP programmes implementation.

All the results obtained could represent the starting point in developing insights into the way the EU should integrate horizontal objectives into neighbourhood funding instruments, considering the cultural and social particularities of the six countries, including specific adaptations. The recommendations emerged also from the existing pressures and challenges of other EU countries, in order to help the EaP members' transition be more satisfactory and the East-West partnership behaviour – in terms of motivation and availability of projects initiatives - be more predictable.

1. EU horizontal objectives and socio-cultural aspects of the six membership countries

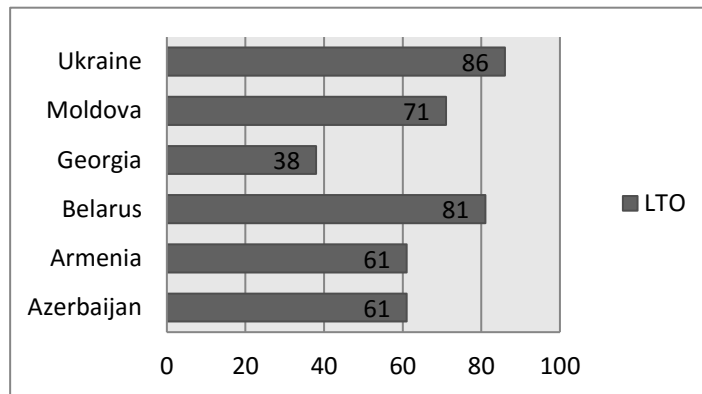
The link between few cultural variables and one EU horizontal objective (sustainable development) was previously analysed for 21 European countries, including some of the EaP countries (Ukraine and Moldova), and some relations were emphasized (Talmaciu, 2015). However, the socio-cultural factors of the six EaP country members and their influence on the two horizontal objectives considered have not yet been researched. We also consider that further investigation is necessary around cultural dimensions chosen as variables, as Hofstede cultural dimensions are the ones which are currently used.

In his studies, Hofstede shows that cultural differences depend on a dominant social paradigm even though some alternative or opposite sub-cultures exist, considering the values shared. His research included the following variables: power distance; individualism - collectivism; masculinity - femininity; uncertainty avoidance, long term orientation and indulgence. According to Kaasa (2013) above average scores for masculinity (competition) is registered in Azerbaijan, Armenia, Moldova and Georgia, while Belarus and Ukraine are focused more on life quality issues, having lower scores for this dimension. Regarding uncertainty avoidance, high scores are registered for Georgia, Moldova and Armenia, rather low scores for Ukraine and Belarus and extremely low for Azerbaijan. According to these results we may assume that the state institutions (including the ones managing European funds) from the first countries mentioned above could operate with more specific rules and have a higher level of bureaucracy.

Many studies (e.g. Balanh and Hesapci, 2015) correlate sustainable development with long term orientation, defined by Hofstede (2005) as the strength to be oriented to future rewards, ability proved through determination and moderation. A low score for long term orientation define the short term

orientation, which refers to past and present country/individuals orientation, high respect for customs, gaining social responsibility and keeping appearances.

Figure 1 - Long-term orientation for EaP membris



Source: AFS International Programs, [Hofstede's Cultural Dimensions VALUES.pdf](#)

According to Figure 1, long term orientation dimension registers relatively lower scores for the countries which are more normative and conservative (Azerbaijan, Armenia). Belarus, Moldova and Ukraine have above average scores, which could be favourable for implementing European projects, in general and for sustainable development objective, in particular. Georgia registers the lowest score for this dimension among the six countries, that could have a direct or indirect impact on sustainable development or it may have an influence on the way the funding system is operationalised.

Research has shown that the majority of the Orthodox and post-communist countries (the case of five of the EaP member countries) are considered having an average score for the tradition-authority dimension and a dominant score for the ‘survival’ dimension (as opposed to the countries with a high capacity of self-expression) (Inglehart *et al.*, 2004). For developed countries authority models have usually replaced the traditional component of hierarchical style with a friendlier one (Inglehart *et al.*, 2004). A comparison “masculinity”- “femininity” was made considering the way social interaction happens: while men are tempted to emphasize competition, women tend to emphasize cooperation; while men tend to emphasize dominance, women tend to have a driving style more focused on support (Minikov, 2013).

For reasons that are rooted in the nature of advanced societies, the "female" leadership style tends to be less effective than the hierarchical (masculine) style, which previously prevailed. Cultural changes associated with changing gender roles and "feminization" of leadership styles (emphasizing self-expression) are closely related to the spread of democratic institutions.

Beside indicators used in the literature (demography, employability, health, culture, education, corruption index, doing business, local identity and citizen safety), the socio-cultural context was explained also through the ideological reference model developed by Todd.

In his study, the anthropologist Todd (1985) focuses on explaining the relations between the philosophy of family and social systems, showing that family relationships extend into society especially considering the relationship between the individual and authority. The family shapes the worldview for children, furthermore generations reproduce beliefs and values absorbed, and the system is self-preserving. Those values create outline expectations that the individual has which should come from social, economic and political relationships, all beyond his family. Political ideologies resulted are nothing but family relationships, extrapolated to another scale.

For example, in egalitarian family, specific to Latin America, Poland, Romania, Greece, Portugal and Southern Spain, there was a permanent tension between individualism (progressing on their own) and equality to inheritance (their right to family inheritance). The result is a contradiction at the society level, between liberal democracy and centralized bureaucracy, which can generate anarchy / militarization. This can be found also in Moldova, Belarus, Georgia, Ukraine and Armenia considering that these countries are Orthodox and former communist. Tackling horizontal objectives could have the same resonance as in the case of Romania - the same reactions regarding including women in the disadvantaged group on the enrolment forms for the target groups, may appear.

In Azerbaijan, families are endogamous and they are characterized by rules on inheritance, cohabitation of married children with their parents, and through frequent marriages between cousins. This anthropological reality exists apparently under the influence of Islam, focusing on known groups or clans. The authority is represented by the father, relations are more horizontal than hierarchical, and relationships with siblings are the most salient (Todd, 1985). Islamic tradition recognizes two institutions as being fundamental: religion and family. Therefore, the State and administrative entities are less relevant, and this approach leads to political fragmentation (Todd, 1985). Islamism rejects the Western approach that sustains the individual is separate from his family and state (and follows his life), and also the communist approach through which the individual is separate from his family as he/she is loyal to the state (Todd, 1985). Instead, Islamism recognized two levels of social integration: family and religion community. The values, norms, beliefs and paradigms are not just beliefs, but guidelines for action and legitimacy, functioning often as ideologies (Todd, 1985). As such, in this country we expect that a better EaP functionality will involve adapting horizontal objectives according to these visions.

2. EU and EaP membership countries cooperation and horizontal objectives operationalization

Because of its complex nature of multi-level structure of governance, analysing the EU horizontal objectives operationalisation within the EaP is rather challenging. However, a brief analysis of each country member was conducted considering, first, the strategic objectives proposed, second, the way state institutions are developed in order to accommodate the EaP requirements, and, third, the nature and purpose of the projects funded and implemented through ENI financial schemes.

2.1. Armenia

EC and Armenia's contractual relationships started in 1996 and entered into force in 1999. The two parts signed a Partnership and Cooperation Agreement which was implemented through an Action Plan in 2006. For the 2006-2013 period the cooperation was focused on five strategic objectives, out of which four can be directly linked to the two horizontal objectives taken into consideration in this paper. These objectives are in the area of political dialogue and reform, economic and social reform, poverty reduction and sustainable development, cooperation in specific sectors, including transport, energy, environment and people-to-people contacts with a focus on education and health.

The Action Plan focused on eight priorities most of them referring to developing the legal framework for democracy and economic development, strengthening respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms and reducing poverty. However, considering the annual country progress reports, the progress seemed to be rather limited in most areas of intervention. Considerable efforts were made for human rights, sustainable democracy and offering better social services, but the results are still far from being satisfactory. Efforts have been undertaken to introduce a law for discrimination and domestic violence (equal opportunities), however, no framework for complaints was developed, thus complaining about inequality remains limited to social media and internet (European Commission, 2015a). The 2014 EC progress report underlines a concern regarding inequality between women and men motivated by "deeply rooted patriarchal attitudes and stereotypes" that easily determine high levels of domestic violence (European Commission, 2015a, p. 8).

Considering the projects that were funded through ENI, out of 57 projects classified in six areas of interest (which were directly linked to the two horizontal objectives considered), most of them (31 projects) were on governance, democracy and human rights and support for economic and institution

reforms. Gender equality was directly linked with three projects totalising 1.35 million euro. The projects focused more on establishing and developing proper administrative capacity, migration issues, as well as on justice challenges.

Furthermore, great financial support was directed to projects that directly focused on developing better management for migration services and increasing awareness of human rights issues (mistreatment in prisons, at work and issues concerning children's rights). Regarding the sustainable development objective, the projects funded encouraged natural agriculture development, adopting sustainable technologies and food security.

The primary objectives for the next funding period (2014-2017) remain the same: poverty reduction, good governance and greater respect for human rights. It is expected that by the end of 2016 the anti-discrimination law and the law on domestic violence and equal rights and opportunities will be adopted and will also start to be rigorously implemented.

2.2. Azerbaijan

Under the agreement with the EU, in Azerbaijan most programmes and projects were aimed at strengthening state and civil society institutions and tackling some of the challenges existing at social level, challenges related to education, economic development, energy, food quality, justice, poverty reduction (EU Neighbourhood Info Centre, 2011).

Thus, during 2006-2014 several projects directly related to sustainable economic development were focused on capacity building and also towards investment in less developed regions. Among the most relevant actions in the field is "Support to the Ministry of Economic Development 2009 -2011" programme, having specific objectives for improving human resource management within the ministry and also for analysing the impact of the oil-led economic growth and prospects for economic development of non-oil sectors. Other approaches have included Support to Investment and Export Climate, targeting economy diversity, energy reforms, agriculture and rural development. Considering projects that have focused on civil society organizations, relevant for sustainable development has been "The Adult Training Centres as an Opportunity for Poverty Reduction, Education and Social Inclusion - COPE" project has been relevant for sustainable development, having objectives that stimulates increased employability and social inclusion in rural areas of Azerbaijan. Other projects relevant for sustainable development referred to: strengthening 20 village municipalities capability to provide public services in rural areas from central Azerbaijan as a result of a partnership between local authorities, civil society; developing several community approaches in

six disadvantaged regions in rural Azerbaijan for a healthy environment and poverty reduction issues, as a result of best practices exchange with other regions having successful projects.

Regarding environmental protection, some indicators show an improvement, others a worsened situation (Spurgeon *et al.*, 2011). Within the Eastern Partnership framework there were no relevant projects conducted in this area, but the specific objectives were achieved indirectly through projects from the action Promoting Development of Sustainable Energy in Azerbaijan.

Another set of projects was directly oriented towards providing administrative support and legislative and institutional harmonization in order to facilitate implementing and monitoring of the European programmes. Thus, a specific example in this context is the programme called Technical Assistance to the Energy Reform Support Programme in Azerbaijan, which was meant to be a support for "Mechanism of Disbursement of funds by the European Commission Transferred to the State Budget of the Republic of Azerbaijan for Programmes Implemented under the ENP". Other projects were aimed at increasing the capacity of civil society to develop plans in partnership with local communities that would help developing and promoting initiatives with direct results on community development and other urgent issues.

Very few projects have focused on gender equality (and when the topic was approached that was in an indirect manner), while no project was geared directly toward that goal. All the steps taken were for supporting and strengthening the administrative capacity of civil society to address social issues in general. Among the relevant projects there are "Support to the enhancement of the capacity of the Ombudsman administration and to the development of awareness on Human Rights and Discrimination", "Strengthening civil society message - meeting the needs of disabled children and their families" and "Improving legal environment and organizational capacity of civil society organizations in Azerbaijan". Quasi-absence of the actions taken in this area is noteworthy, even though the country indicators regarding equal opportunity and gender do not suggest a favourable situation. The last progress report shows that the national plan for gender equality is at drafting stage, more consistent actions being needed in this area (EU Neighbour Info Centre, 2015).

2.3. Belarus

Even though Belarus represents one of the six country members of EaP, it does not fully participate in the ENP. In spite of establishing a Partnership and Cooperation Agreement in 1995, the contractual relations were frozen in 1997. However, the cooperation between the EU and Belarus continues in the fields of democracy, education and economic development, being directly linked to

the minimum civil society needs. Information about the country progress is briefly described in annual memos where the main contribution of EU is presented.

Most of the initiatives were multilateral, the country being involved in regional projects related to environment, education and cross-border cooperation. There are 11 projects presented on the ENI official website, among which more than half were or are implemented by United Nations Development Programme. The projects with less than 1 million budget were implemented by other local entities, while all the United Nations Development Programme projects have budgets larger than 1 million euro. The initiatives directly addressed social needs, like health related issues, education and also environment issues like green economy development for sectors like energy, agriculture, sustainable tourism.

The bilateral assistance to Belarus for the current period (2014-2017) focuses on the same issues underlined before: the environment, social inclusion and local and regional economic development. A total amount of 19 million euro were committed to Belarus for modernisation of vocational schools and training system in order to facilitate labour market insertion and also assisting an university to function (13.5 million euro) and support to civil society and developing an independent media (5.5 million euro).

Despite the fact that Belarus is a highly centralised country and the level of corruption is high, the EU continues to offer support also through continuous dialogue with the civil society, developing different online platforms in order to facilitate reforms development, including a legal framework for easier international cooperation.

2.4. Georgia

The contractual relationship between EC and Georgia started in similar conditions to those between EC and Armenia and were based on a Partnership and Cooperation Agreement from 1999. Starting with 2006, an ENP Action Plan was approved for a period of five years.

The EU-Georgia partnership relied on five strategic objectives, among which, four of them are from the same areas of objectives as in the case of Armenia, meaning: a mutually beneficial partnership promoting Georgia's transition, the smooth implementation of the ENP and the EU-Georgia ENP Action Plan, security challenges and development policy objectives. In addition there is also an energy security and diversification objective, through which new sources of energy, including green ones are prospected. Regarding the two EU horizontal objectives considered in the paper, they are directly linked with the last three objectives. For example security challenges refers

to offering help in reconstructing different areas from the conflict zones in order to offer a sustainable development. Also the objectives referring to development policy align to the three main principles of EU: poverty reduction, promoting good governance and greater respect for human rights.

The priorities of the Action Plan are similar to those of EU-Armenia, the difference coming from the hierarchical order, having economic development and business climate improvement among the first positions. Analysing progress reports from 2010-2015, it appears that Georgia made some visible progress even from the beginning, regarding democracy and human rights as many relevant laws were adopted and implemented, creating a proper framework to work against corruption, discrimination and other inequalities. The last available report concludes that important achievements were made especially in the area of fundamental rights, including equal opportunities, while cooperation with civil society continued. A special action plan on gender issues was also proposed and integrated into human rights action plan in order to prevent and combat violence against women (including domestic violence).

However, the most oppressive social priority remains the poverty level of population, as one third of the population lives below the poverty line, high differences being registered between various country regions (European Commission, 2015c). Georgia's economy grew slowly after 2013, but by the end of 2014 it was expected to downsize again. In this context, among approximately 100 projects funded through ENI mechanism between 2006-2015, many projects addressed sustainable economic development issue indirectly, focusing more on developing collaboration between institutions, and on facilitating integration into society of former prisoners, minorities, children, women (vulnerable groups in general) without giving specific details regarding the integration measures. Projects were framed into the same six relevant sections like for Armenia, although a special section dedicated to environment and sustainable management of natural resources was added. Besides the administrative capacity and infrastructure development, a clear focus was also on children's rights, education and protection. Few projects could be directly linked to women's rights issues, including diminishing domestic violence, most of the progress being registered within the legal framework.

The most remarkable initiatives considering sustainable development objectives were registered in *environment and sustainable management of natural resources* sector where five projects on climate change were implemented. The projects covered all countries from South of Caucasians and addressed the biodiversity issues, proposing intervention solutions/plans for diminishing the effects of climate change. A total amount of approx. 4 million euros was allocated for 2011-2014, and countries like Armenia and Azerbaijan were also beneficiaries.

2.5. Moldova

Moldova has a clear orientation towards European horizontal objectives (Government of Republic of Moldova, 2013), because out of the eight long-term development goals, three refer to equal opportunities (ensuring access to compulsory education; promoting gender equality and professional development and empowerment for women; improving maternal health) and five of them to sustainable development (eradicate poverty and hunger; reducing child mortality; combating HIV / AIDS and tuberculosis; ensuring environmental sustainability; creating a global partnership for development).

A discrepancy can, however, be noticed between these strategic objectives, monitored through regular reports, and the 2020 National Strategy (Republic of Moldova Parliament, 2012), where the priorities are the economic objectives and measures. Another deficiency was that in some areas, strategic coordination was unsatisfactory, having major investments without adequate logistic support, which led to funds obstruction and lack of conclusive results.

As for the legal framework - building administrative systems for better implementation and monitoring of programs - significant progress has been made in the 2006-2014 period. Legislative harmonization between Moldova and the EU is planned to last ten years, until now 20% of the specific actions being covered (Ministry of Foreign Affairs and European Integration of Moldova, 2016). A strong partnership with the civil society was developed, many of the projects being initiated and/or implemented by NGOs or different consortiums.

Orientation towards gender equality and opportunities is demonstrated through multiple projects having women as target group, or through diligent monitoring of gender indicators and of the progress registered in the field. Moldova is placed on an honourable 10th place, considering the women managers indicator, as 44.1% of managers are women (International Labour Organization, 2015). The target indicators regarding the percentage of women in decision making structures are similar to those of the EU, a legislative initiative that proposes a quota of 40% women in political structures being in a draft stage.

Regarding sustainable development projects there are wide issues addressed, from funding and supporting citizens' information centres in terms of responsible consumption, to environmental protection and afforestation, to poverty combating and developing competencies needed on the labour market, especially for young people.

2.6. Ukraine

Ukraine case is a very special case. If at the starting point of the partnership the country's progress has been significant, similar or, in some areas, even superior to the other EaP countries (Moldova and Georgia), after the exacerbated political problems there was a slowdown and even a sharp reduction of actions aimed at achieving the objectives agreed in cooperation with the EU.

Regarding ongoing projects with European funding, Ukraine proved to be an active player, implementing numerous projects especially in the field of good governance support and human rights, and also water and energy area. Some projects were funded in partnership with Moldova, Belarus and Romania, or with other countries with common borders, this situation offering an advantage in identifying common issues that led themselves to common solutions.

As for the projects implemented, out of more than 100 projects presented on the official ENI website, only one project directly focused on equality and gender opportunities (Equal opportunities for young mother -students in getting profession in higher education establishment). Considering sustainable development, efforts were directed especially to rural areas and on supporting biodiversity and protected areas. Within the last two years the EaP funding focused more on civil society demands in order to help them become involved in the decision-making process of the community.

Because of suspending most funding directions, until clarifying the strategic framework at political and legal level, it is difficult to frame this country in the structural matrix of collaboration within EaP – the following steps taken by this country will be critical.

Conclusions

The original research question of the present paper referred to prioritising the EU intervention in the context of the extremely complex EU non-member countries, and, especially, to what extent adapting of strategic and horizontal objectives, is considered in order to match with the socio-cultural context of the EaP countries.

The issue of prioritization is becoming salient considering the increasingly restrictive framework of EU support in the EaP region: limited funds, critical monitoring system and access to the data, discrepancies between the EU and the partner countries legislation, lack of competent human resources in project management field and, polarized economic areas, with multiple regions dominated by poverty and social problems. Difficulties in prioritization also identified in the EU member states, leads to a waste of EU funds, diminished confidence in the effectiveness of

community programs, demotivation of groups involved in supporting these programmes and a lack of sustainability of project results. Within the matrixed balance – already extremely fragile – between the thematic, functional priorities, on one hand, which are so important in the first stage of strengthening an effective system, as being considered by EU, and horizontal priorities considered like a burden of community interventions, on the other hand, the specific constraints of the socio-cultural context of the partner countries bring increased difficulties in setting appropriate, tailored and sustainable solutions.

Considering these difficulties we align with the solution proposed by Slusarciuc (2014), who emphasized the need for covering several steps when making priorities at national level, among which a stakeholder consulting phase is very important (Slusarciuc, 2014).

Another challenge is represented by the efficiency of management systems for national programs implementation. The progress reports of all the six partner countries underline the difficulty of the funding system: partial involvement of institutions in assuming European objectives; loss of institutional memory, with the political changes; skipping different phases, because of misunderstanding the importance of a minimal mandatory infrastructure needed to cover priorities more specifically to developed EU countries; lack of databases and poor access to information; lack of some key indicators; more focus on formal aspects using quantitative approach; financial and human resource constraints; partnership with civil society non-existent or cumbersome. However, on average, the EU funding absorption rate, for all the six countries, is considered to be satisfactory, being registered a percentage of 67%, until 2014.

Regarding the seven variables describing socio-cultural context of the EaP members, the six countries were ranked considering their positive influence on attracting the EU funds. Thus for the indicators: ‘doing business’, ‘power distance’, ‘masculinity’, ‘uncertainty avoidance’, and ‘long term orientation’ smaller scores represented better ranking, while for the rest a smaller score represented a lower ranking. The results are presented in the appendix.

As a result of the qualitative analysis, two sets of conclusions could be underlined, conclusions that should be considered as hypothesis for the next research. First, regarding the interest in projects that support horizontal objectives, the most interesting initiatives were those from Moldova and Georgia, as they had a large number of projects that were directly linked to the two horizontal objectives. Also high scores for long term orientation, variable that could easily be tied up to sustainable development could predict an interest for this type of projects (Moldova, Armenia, and Azerbaijan). The case of Belarus could be considered special, as they have other political issues that have an overwhelming influence on the EU funding relations. The interest for developing gender and

equal opportunities policies may be also explained through a lower or medium score for masculinity cultural dimension, as registered for Georgia and Moldova.

On the other hand, a short term orientation could be associated with the capability of being efficient and flexible, competences that help to better project implementation, and thus, more funds attracted (like the case of Georgia). Also a higher score for individualism cultural dimension could set the scene for the mechanism of funding competition. Again, Georgia represents a good example in this case too.

The second set of conclusions should refer to the implementation system coherence and efficiency. Therefore it should be mentioned that having a centralized system and bureaucracy may raise some challenges at operational level. This situation may also occur in countries with high scores for power distance and uncertainty avoidance, in our case Belarus and Ukraine. In association with high level of corruption, it is easy to assume that these countries have difficulties in developing an efficient and coherence system.

The issues raised in this section could represent a starting point for a research paper where the hypothesis could be tested. However, considering the progress reports and projects implemented by each country, it is obvious that Moldova and Georgia made the most remarkable progress, followed by Armenia and Azerbaijan.

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Appendix

Table 1 – EaP country members ranking considering the scores of socio-cultural variables

Country	Doing business	Corruption index	Power distance	Individualism	Masculinity	Uncertainty avoidance	Long term orientation
Armenia	2	2	3	2	5	3	3
Azerbaijan	5	5	3	3	6	1	3
Belarus	3	4	5	4	1	2	6
Georgia	1	1	1	1	3	5	1
Moldova	4	3	1	4	4	6	5
Ukraine	6	6	6	4	2	3	2

Source: Created by the authors based on Hofstede (2010), Kassa (2013), European indicators (2016)

EU ROLE IN THE REPUBLIC OF MOLDOVA EUROPEAN INTEGRATION WITHIN EASTERN PARTNERSHIP

Cristina MORARI*

Abstract: *The article presents an analysis of the role of European Union in the European integration process of the Republic of Moldova in the context of Eastern Partnership and it was supported by a Marie Curie International Research Staff Exchange Scheme Fellowship within the 7th European Community Framework Programme. The European integration of the Republic of Moldova is a complex process that implies external and internal efforts, but internal transformations generated by this process are determined primarily by the EU initiatives. This fact is based on both, the necessity of the Republic to correspond to European norms and the EU interest to have reliable and stable partners from economic and political point of view. The Association Agreement, DCFTA, visa liberalization are main bonuses that Moldova has received from EU within Eastern Partnership. At current stage, EU continues to play an important role in domestic transformation and stabilization of the country, by providing assistance and consultation. The interdisciplinary approach and methods as analysis of official documents, comparison and observation gave the possibility to estimate the level and results of how EU establishes and influences both, the agenda of European integration and domestic transformations of the Republic of Moldova.*

Keywords: Eastern Partnership; EU; Republic of Moldova; European integration; Association Agreement, conditionality

JEL Classification: F5

Introduction

European integration of the Republic of Moldova represents a complex and multidimensional process, because it includes efforts on both dimensions, domestic and foreign, these two being interdependent, as realization of domestic transformations was and it is dictated by the European community requirements and initiatives. This fact is determined not only by the necessity of the country to correspond to European standards, but also on the EU interest to have reliable and stable partners from economic and political point of view as well.

EU plays an important role, without any discrimination, in the preparation of all states that intend to obtain EU membership, let these states be candidate states, potential candidate states or states that have declared their European aspirations as in the case of the Republic of Moldova. This role of the EU, that can be defined as EU factor too, is realized through all actions, declarations and presented opinions by EU structures and officials regarding these states, and in this way, influencing the

* Lecturer, PhD student, Faculty of International Relations, Political and Administrative Science, Moldova State University, Republic of Moldova, e-mail: morari.kristina@gmail.com



evolution and development of EU relations with these states, causing domestic transformations within them, and often playing the role of mentor of these changes. The EU role and presence is felt through meetings, dialogues, documents signing etc. In a great measure the EU role or factor is reflected through EU conditionality towards these states.

1. Theoretical aspects of EU conditionality

By the conditionality policy, in vision of Kubicek P.J., is understood the linkage between the percept benefits, as political support, economic aid or membership status of an organization or fulfilment of a certain program. So, continues the author, “conditionality is used for direct influence on others by using the tactics of carrot and stick in order to persuade, determine and sometimes to impose the states to adopt the desired policy” (Kubicek, 2003, p.7).

Ordinarily, there is positive and negative conditionality. When conditionality is realized through encouragement, being afforded diverse benefits, privileges, releases, then it is about the positive conditionality. This type of conditionality influences in different ways relations between the parties, making possible, in this manner, the achievement of some objectives and goals in both domains, economic and political. Negative conditionality is more difficult to be observed than the positive one, as it is often hidden behind the scenes of some indirect threats that result from the authority of the one who promotes the policy of conditionality. This type of conditionality can include such elements as sanctions, postponements, interruption and/or freeze of negotiations (Puente, 2014, p. 58).

Accordingly, the EU uses both types of conditionality. As Schimmelfennig F. and Sedelmeier U., (2004, p. 671) underline, EU advance its rules of functioning as conditions which states with European aspirations should accomplish in order to be able to receive anticipated awards. The awards may include aid and institutional ties, varying from cooperation and trade agreements to association agreements and EU membership. EU offer the award if a state is able to fulfil the conditions and call it back if the state fails. At the same time, even if the state fails to fulfil the conditions, EU can intervene in, mostly by giving support than using coercion, in order to change the behaviour of this government.

Hence, preference is given to the positive conditionality. This fact is based on the assumption that it is the best option for a democratic and amicable relationship as well as for having long-standing prosperity and stability at the borders of the EU. Also, an important role has the credibility of EU conditionality, and namely the confidence to receive the promised bonus, especially that of the final

objective – the EU membership, as according to the article 49 of the European Union Treaty, any European state that observe declared principle in the article 6 (these refer to the democratic principles and human rights observance) may apply for accession to the EU (Barbulescu, 2006, p. 28).

Conditionality policy has begun to be put into the practice mostly since the declaration of European aspirations of the states from Central and Eastern Europe. This peculiarity reflects mainly the changes of the late of 1980's and necessity of elaboration of a European policy towards newly independent states from this region. Namely the perspective of an enlargement towards the East has generated a new political dimension for the EU agenda, directed to specify the general objectives in relationship with these states. This one could include for instance an agreement regarding the direction to which relations should evolve (e.g.: "standard" foreign relations, "special relations"; or a possible membership) and regarding the policy tools on which should be based the development of relations. These tools consist of decisions on general framework of the policy (for instance agreements in the domain of the sectoral trade, partnership and cooperation agreements, association agreements, control regime), and decisions regarding the policy domains that will be included (trade, political cooperation etc.) (Sedelmeier, Wallace, 2004, p.439).

In this context, the Copenhagen criteria were established by the European Council in 1993. Conditions were formulated in order to minimize the risk that new member states could become instable from political point of view and disadvantaged from economic point of view, as well as to assure that states with European aspirations will be able to adopt all EU rules.

Another aspect of EU conditionality is reflected through diverse agreements concluded between EU and states that have declared their European aspirations. It is about the Partnership and Cooperation Agreements, European Agreements, Stabilization and Association Agreements etc. All these agreements contain a guideline based on the advanced conditions of European community for pointed states. European agreements, named Association Agreements as well, offer the prospect of accession to EU and represent the sign that a state has fulfilled a part of requirements and has received as award the status of candidate state. These agreements represent the judicial framework between the candidate states and EU, establishing political and economic relations between the partners and having as objective creation of a favourable framework for a progressive integration of the candidate states in European community. In this way, respective agreements covers the majority of domains of *acquis communautaire* and are designated for helping candidate states to establish a national program to assume the *acquis* and community judicial rules before the accession (Scaunas, 2005, p. 199). Within Eastern Partnership another kind of Association Agreements has appeared. These agreements

do not provide the prospect of EU membership, but offer to the participatory states the possibility of gradual rapprochement to European family.

Also, is worth to mention another aspect of EU role in the European integration process that can be observed through the pre-accession strategy of EU, which after Copenhagen criteria formulation has engaged to monitor and direct the process of preparation of states for their integration in community structures. Thus, the pre-accession strategy has at its base: bilateral agreements; accession partnerships and national programs for *acquis* adoption; participation at community programs, agencies and committees; political dialogue; monitoring of progress of states registered by the European Commission; pre-accession assistance and co-financing from international financial institutions (Barbulescu, 2009, p. 690).

So, these conditions or criteria can be qualified from the perspective of states with European aspirations as conditions that come from outside and their fulfilment requires numerous meetings with European officials, negotiations, structural dialogues and signing of important documents on specific domains. But at the same time, there is a necessity to establish a program that will allow each associated or being on its way to associate country to prepare itself, with support of EU, to fulfil commitments that imply the access to the single European market and activities of European structures.

2. The EU role in European integration of the Republic of Moldova

In the case of the Republic of Moldova, the EU role was very important from the initial stage as the Republic has been guided and monitored by the EU since the Partnership and Cooperation Agreement came into effect in 1998. In general, studying the evolution of relations between the Republic of Moldova and EU, it can be noticed that these were guided mainly by EU structures. All concluded agreements between the Republic of Moldova and EU were initiated by EU, as well as invitation to take part at diverse European initiatives as European Neighbourhood Policy and Eastern Partnership.

Eastern Partnership is the framework that has regulated the cooperation between the Republic of Moldova and EU since 2009 and represents an important evolution in the Republic of Moldova – EU relationship, even if it does not confer the prospect of EU membership. This significance comes from the fact that the main aspects of Eastern Partnership are based on the internal dimension of the European process, and namely on the promotion of the political, economic, social and cultural transformations through the adoption of European norms and values. Hence, according to the

European Commission's communication (European Commission, 2008) new elements that has brought the Eastern Partnership for its beneficiaries are: a) new association agreements, including deep and comprehensive free trade agreements, for those willing and ready to take on the far-reaching commitments with the EU that these entail; b) comprehensive programs funded by the EU to improve partners' administrative capacity; c) gradual integration into the EU economy (with the asymmetry appropriate to the partners' economies) including legally binding commitments on regulatory approximation; d) the conclusion of "mobility and security pacts", allowing for easier legitimate travel to the EU while at the same time stepping up efforts to combat corruption, organized crime and illegal migration; e) creation of four multilateral policy platforms: on democracy, good governance and stability; economic integration and convergence with EU policies, energy security; and contacts between people to further support partners' individual reform efforts etc. Also, the initiative provided additional financial assistance – a substantial increase from € 450 million in 2008 to € 785 million in 2013.

Hence, within Eastern Partnership, interpreted as a dimension of its European integration process, the Republic of Moldova was focused on three main tasks: to sign Association Agreement, to obtain visa liberalization and to conclude the Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Agreement. In this context, it is worth to mention that in the Government's Activity Program „European Integration: Freedom, Democracy, Welfare” that lays out a framework for Moldovan governing policies for 2009-2013 is stated that European integration is a fundamental priority of the domestic and foreign policies of the country and in order to achieve this objective it is necessary to implement the commitments deriving from the European course of the republic, as European integration means, above all, internal transformation of the country. Also, the document establishes, besides the above mentioned three main objectives, a range of tasks as: to involve the whole society, all the political forces and relevant foreign actors in the process in order to turn the Republic of Moldova into an European state with real prospects of joining the EU; to acquire and promote European values and standards in all the areas – political, economic, social and legal – by implementing the Copenhagen criteria and commitments made at the Council of Europe; to bring the national legislation in line with the EU acquis; to improve the legal and institutional framework needed to promote European integration at the level of Government in general and each ministry in particular, so that the European integration process becomes a major priority for each governmental entity; to capitalize fully on the opportunities provided by the “Eastern Partnership” etc. (MFRM, 2009).

In general, it was considered that once the strongly pro-European Alliance for European Integration (AEI) came to power in September 2009, Moldova became the strongest case of European

Union model power in the neighbourhood. The European Union responded to the change with more active engagement, including additional assistance and launch of negotiations on an association agreement and visa liberalization (Raik, 2011, p.7). So, in January 2010 negotiations began between Moldova and the EU over an Association Agreement (AA). The negotiations were based on four main thematic blocks: 1) political dialogue, reforms and cooperation in foreign and security policy; 2) economic and sector cooperation; 3) justice, freedom and security; 4) people to people cooperation (Caldare, 2011, p. 185). The dialogue on setting up the Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Area (DCFTA) between the Republic of Moldova and the European Union was started too, as part of the Association Agreement with the EU. The European Union's assistance to Moldova was also relatively larger considering the small size of the country. Moldova's short-term expectations were more realistic, but the longer-term motivation for pursuing an ambitious reform agenda and taking the European Union's conditions seriously was the hope of one day joining the club (Raik, 2011, p. 7).

Evaluation of Moldova's progress within Eastern Partnership had appreciated Moldova as the best performer in fulfilment of advanced commitments. Moreover, Republic of Moldova was considered the "story of success" and the best student of the Eastern Partnership's class. As result, there were obtained from the EU a range of bonuses. As Bucataru V. (2012, p. 7) indicates, among the results obtained by the Republic of Moldova by using the framework of the Eastern Partnership on the bilateral dimension can be mentioned: a) *Implementation of the Republic of Moldova - EU Mobility Partnership*, implementation of projects and initiatives in the field of document security, migration policies, fighting illegal migration, contributes directly to the implementation of the requirements set by the EU in the context of visa liberalization for Moldova. The development of the extended migration profile and the assessment initiative of the Mobility Partnership as a tool of the Global Approach to Migration and Mobility are considered pilot practices that will be replicated to other countries that are already implementing Mobility Partnerships; b) *The Accession of the Republic of Moldova to the European Energy Community* (May, 2010), which implies, in particular, the fact that the Republic of Moldova undertook the commitments stipulated in the Energy Package II and III; and 3) *Regional development*, in addition to the Memorandum of Understanding, a joint declaration related to the dialogue on regional policy was signed. Also, the European Commission introduced a new instrument, namely pilot regional development programmes intended to finance short-term programmes that will contribute to strengthening the social, economic and territorial cohesions of the partner states in Eastern Europe, thus, contributing to the economic integration and convergence with

the European Union. The European Commission has allocated 2 million Euros to the Republic of Moldova for 2012 - and 5,000,000 Euros for 2013.

Also, as result of the fulfilment of all conditions advanced by the European community within the Visa liberalization Action Plan, on 27 November 2013 EU allowed visa-free travel to the Schengen area for Moldovan citizens holding a biometric passport. This means that Moldovan citizens can travel in European countries for three months during six month without employment possibility. Following this, there are some conditions that should be implemented by the Republic of Moldova, but also it has a financial support of 20 million euro that is given for a three years period in three tranches. (Ciurea, 2015, p. 6)

However, the main awards that Republic of Moldova have gained within Eastern Partnership are: 1) the Association Agreement between the Republic of Moldova and the EU that was signed on 27th June 2014 and approved by the Parliament of the Republic of Moldova on 2nd July 2014, establishing in this way a new judicial framework for the advancement of the relations between the Republic of Moldova and EU to a superior stage, that of political association and economic integration with EU, and 2) the Agreement of Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Area, due to which it is expected an increase of the GDP of the Republic of Moldova with 5,4% for a long term (MERM, 2015).

For the Republic of Moldova, Association Agreement, even if it does not offer the prospect of accession to EU, can be considered as grouting of the European course of the country and these supposes the beginning of major changes in country, and taking into consideration that the enlargement door of the EU is still open for the Republic of Moldova, the main action plan of the Republic is Europeanization and efficient implementation of reforms in order to adopt European standards. According to former Vice prime-minister, minister of Foreign Affairs and European Integration Ministry of the Republic of Moldova, Natalia Gherman, in the case if all assumed commitments, which are included in the Agreement, will be fulfilled with good will, the republic will be able to apply for candidate state status (Mihai, 2014). So, in order Republic of Moldova be able to apply for EU membership, it should obtain a positive reaction from the EU and prove that country really fulfils its commitments.

Respectively, Moldovan government is conscious about the fact that the agreement conclusion is not a finality, but just the beginning of a new long-term and quite difficult period of time, which requires expectance and considerable efforts directed to the achievement of the objective of a potential candidate state status obtaining.

In this context, was adopted the Association Agenda between the Republic of Moldova and EU. It replaces the Action Plan Republic of Moldova- European Union and provides a list of priorities for a common work that was designed to be realized in the period of time 2014-2016 and presents a good example of interdependence of external and internal dimensions of the European integration process of the Republic of Moldova. According to the document, EU will support Republic of Moldova in the accomplishment of the established objectives and priorities provided in Association Agenda. EU will use different ways to support the republic, as well as by sharing its experience, aid, the best know-how practice, information exchange, supporting of capacities development and institutional consolidation. Also, EU will encourage and try to coordinate the support of other partners of the Republic of Moldova (MFAEIRM, 2014a).

Thus, the agenda comprises political elements such as political dialogue, rule of law, reforms for democratic institutions consolidation, independence of justice, human rights observance, and cooperation in the field of security and foreign policy and peaceful conflict resolution, cooperation in the field of justice, liberty and security. The agenda provides the economic and trade aspects too, inclusively a sectoral cooperation in energetic, transport, labor market and social protection domains (MFAEIRM, 2014a).

Another instrument for Association Agreement implementation, but exclusively a national one, is the *National Action Plan for implementation of the Association Agreement* adopted for 2014-2016 years. This one is elaborated in accordance with the objectives of the Association Agreement and includes necessary actions that will be developed by the responsible institutions according to each Agreement's compartments and annexes, including the part regarding the Agreement of Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Area, within established terms and with specified necessary financial resources. Final version of the National Action Plan, adopted by the Government of the Republic of Moldova on 25th June 2014, includes not only the additional proposals of the public authorities, but those of civic society too. Thus, *National Action Plan for implementation of the Association Agreement* Republic of Moldova- European Union represents the basic instrument for monitoring of the European integration process of the republic during the three years. (MFAEIRM, 2014b). However, external control of Association Agreement implementation will continue through an institutional monitoring mechanism, but also through decision-making on aspects that are in the scope of Agreement provisions. In this context, were founded the Association Council, the Association Committee and the Association Parliamentary Committee. All three entities consist of representatives of EU structures and representatives of the Government and the Parliament of the Republic of Moldova.

Also, EU after the signing of the Association Agreement, in summer of 2014, announced a new annual package of support for the Republic of Moldova. This package is focused on helping public institutions, citizens and business community to benefit from the advantages and opportunities of the Association Agreement and of Agreement of Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Area. It is about the bilateral assistance package administered to the Republic of Moldova in accordance with the single assistance framework which establishes the strategic objectives and priorities for further cooperation EU- Republic of Moldova for 2014-2017. The EU annual support package provides €101 million of bilateral allocation to Moldova and it is directed to two actions. First action, is the support to Public Finance Policy Reforms in Moldova (€37 million) in order to assist the Ministry of Finance, the Parliament and the Supreme Audit Institution of Moldova in the process of enhancing good governance, effective fiscal policy, transparent and accountable public finance policy and strengthened public financial management systems. Second action regards the European Neighbourhood Programme for Agriculture and Rural Development (ENPARD) Moldova – Support to Agriculture and Rural Development (€64 million) that is to enhance rural development through improved policy dialogue, governance and service delivery meeting the needs of private farmers while increasing the competitiveness of the agriculture sector (European Commission, 2014).

This financial and technical assistance administered to the Republic of Moldova by the EU stress, however, the necessity of a better efficiency for a possible discussion on advancement of the integration of the republic to a higher position than current one. Unfortunately, EU has demonstrated its capacity to apply the negative conditionality on the Republic of Moldova. As a result of political and economic instability the country cope with and taking into the consideration all difficulties from the banking sector and financial domain of the Republic of Moldova, EU has used some rigid measures, freezing the financing of the Republic of Moldova. EU has underlined that only an International Monetary Fund Program will represent a guarantee that existing concerns can be ameliorated and macro-financial stability assured. (Delegation of the EU to Moldova, 2015).

This fact proves that the Republic of Moldova at present is not any more the “story of success” and should try harder in implementation of required reforms and avoiding the “formal” fulfilment of the proposed objectives. In order to advance in the European integration process, it is necessary to obtain the approval of the European structures, which very often indicate the lack of the progress in the fulfilment of the assumed commitments. Thus, in its progress report on implementation of the European Neighbourhood Policy in the Republic of Moldova presented adopted on 25th March 2015, European Commission comes with a range of recommendations for the Republic of Moldova: to intensify the fight against corruption and focusing on corruption prevention; to make firm progress

on justice and law enforcement reform; to eliminate failings in the legal system that allow money laundering and ‘raider attacks’ to take place; to bring Moldovan law into line with the EU acquis to implement the AA/DCFTA and to raise public awareness and visibility of the merits of the Association Agreement; to take steps to improve corporate governance and oversight in the financial sector; to continue to engage proactively with the Transnistrian side to promote a mutually acceptable vision for a common future, and creating conditions enabling the application of the AA/DCFTA to the entire territory of Moldova; to continue to integrate national minorities etc. (European Commission, 2015).

But, EU underlines the fact that Republic of Moldova should work not only on the fight against corruption, the reform of justice and observance of human rights, but should pay a greater attention to Transnistrian Conflict and division of Moldovan society. Also, in the conditions of created instability, loss of trust of European partners and experience of negative conditionality from EU, the task to apply for EU membership could be postponed for a non-determined period of time.

That is why, at moment, the main priority for the Republic of Moldova is to implement the Association Agreement and DCFTA. Unfortunately, the progress at this chapter is slow. According to the report realized by the Institute for European Policies and Reforms from Republic of Moldova, during September 1, 2014 - August 1, 2015, only 30% of the planed actions have been implemented by Moldovan authorities. At the beginning of September, the Ministry of foreign Affairs and European Integration (MFAEI) have published the Government Report on that underlined that out of 594 EU directives and regulations laid down by Association Agreement, Moldova managed to transpose into national law 99, which amounts approximately 17% of progress index. Then, according to experts, by 31 October 2015, 92 actions were implemented, which represents an estimated total of achievements for 2015 of 19%. The remaining actions were either not performed or were partially implemented (Groza *et al.*, 2015, p. 3)

Moldova continues to implement the provisions of the Association Agreement with the EU, although progress remained modest due to unstable political situation. As, experts of the above mentioned Institute notice (Groza, 2016, p. 5), the delay in appointing a new government during the fourth quarter of 2015 and beginning of 2016 also influenced the speed and quality implementation of the key reforms. Also, according to them, the EU changed its attitude in relations with the Moldovan authorities, which was characterized by a certain degree of caution and careful calculation of messages due to a contested legitimacy by the Moldovan society of the nontransparent methods used for the creation of the parliamentary majority, but also due to a generally low level of trust of EU in the governance capacity and political will to implement reforms in Chisinau. Thus, if by 2015

the EU-Moldova dialogue was characterized by an ambitious European integration agenda, then already by 2016 the narrative of the EU-Moldova relations was the "stabilization" of the situation in the Republic of Moldova. (Groza, 2016, p. 5)

In this context, EU comes with a new set of recommendations to the Republic of Moldova. So, the European Council of EU has presented its conclusions on Moldova according to which from the republic is expected: to restore the trust through tangible results on reforms; accelerated implementation of the Association Agenda; to prioritize reforms aimed at addressing the politicization of state institutions, systemic corruption, public administration reform aimed inter alia at enhancing the effectiveness of regulatory bodies, transparency and accountability in the management of public finances as well as with regard to policy making; to ensure that the cases of fraud that affected its banking system in 2014 are made subject to a thorough, impartial investigation, also with a view to recovering the diverted funds and to bringing those responsible to justice; to implement reforms which ensure the independence, effectiveness, transparency and accountability of the judiciary and of the anti-corruption institutions; to enhance negotiations on the Transnistrian settlement process etc. (Council of the EU, 2016). Thus, from these expectations of EU from the Republic of Moldova a new conditionality appears, that one requires action and concrete, real results from the Moldavian authorities. As the response to the EU Council Conclusions, a Priority Reform Action Road-Map was approved by the Moldovan authorities. It includes a total of 69 priority actions corresponding to 13 areas. Most actions, namely 46 priority actions were planned for March-April 2016, 19 priority actions are planned for the period April to July 2016, and 4 priority actions are continuously implemented (permanent/ongoing). The Roadmap shall be implemented by July 31, 2016. But, it is stated, there is small confidence that this road map would improve the situation, especially taking into consideration that the Roadmap is not referring to all the concerns raised by the EU. For example, there are no actions that will address the politicization of the public institutions in Moldova. (Groza, 2016, p. 6)

Anyway, no matter if this is the abovementioned adopted road map or another document that establishes the activities that should be undertaken in order to implement the Association Agreement, one thing is unchangeable and this is the real commitment and action in this direction. Unfortunately, in the Republic of Moldova the domestic dimension of its European integration is a formalized one and domestic transformation usually are made in order to just obtain the positive response from European structures. That is why there is registered modest progress in such problematic domains as fight against corruption or reform in justice field. Because the Moldavian authorities act primarily

reacting to EU recommendations and not apply all efforts at domestic level, emerging from national problems and necessities, the European integration of the country develops so slowly.

In this context is worth to mention that there is a quite high risk to lose the confidence of population of the Republic of Moldova in the European course of the country, too. This risk appears because of both, the inefficiency of undertaken actions of the Moldavian government and the reticence of the EU to offer the desired award- the prospect of EU membership, even if the EU bonuses are directly linked to the level of accomplishment of the reform process in Moldova. That is way, it is very important to continue to work with and inform the population. As states Coada L., Moldova's political environment and society remain heavily polarized, with right-wing and centre-right parties advocating for European integration, left-wing parties against it, and only half of Moldova's citizens supporting the nation's accession to the European Union. Nonetheless, Moldova's European course appears to be taking root. The approximately 50 percent of people supporting European integration appear to be the more active segment of the population (Coada, 2014, p.20). In this context are relevant the results of latest research presented by Barometer of Public Opinion for April 2015, which shows that only 39, 5 % of citizens support the European course of the Republic of Moldova, while in previous years this rate were quite higher (IPP, 2015). In this way, it is necessary to improve the knowledge and understanding of Moldova citizens about the European path of the Republic of Moldova. Usually, the low familiarization of population with European Union is a result of a vision that accession to the European community is seen as the responsibility of the government, not the society's one. There is a lack of a strategic framework in this direction too. In 2007, the Department for European Integration within the Ministry of Foreign Affairs elaborated the *Strategy of Communication* in order to create an informational system about the European Union in Moldova and to make Moldova better known within European community. Unfortunately, this strategy was abolished in 2012 and there is no new one elaborated. In present, the population gets information about the European integration process of the country and in general about EU-Moldova relations from the official web pages of the government of the Republic of Moldova and of different NGOs as Association for Participatory Democracy (ADEPT), Foreign Policy Association of Moldova etc. and TV programs. Also, there are some well- functioning web portals as infoeuropa.md and europa.md.

Thus, Moldovan Government and society have a huge work to do. In this context, Moldovan researchers propose a range of recommendations that should be taken into consideration to make the European integration process of Moldova irreversible. So, according to them, the Republic of Moldova urgently needs to ensure the following indispensable conditions (that are quite valid for current situation) for a full-scale valorisation of the Association Agreement: 1) society's support for

European integration; 2) solidarity of the main governing and opposition political forces around the European option; 3) involvement of ethnic minorities in the European integration process; 4) convincing changes in the reform of justice; 5) tangible results in combating high level corruption; 6) guarantee of the freedom of the media and pluralism of opinions; 7) assuring domestic political stability (Chirila *et al.*, 2014, p. 4).

At its turn, EU experts, underline that a well-implemented Association Agreement and DCFTA would give de facto an accession perspective not only to Moldova, but to the other participants of Eastern participants as well. In order to work further efficiently with Eastern Partnership participants within a returned 'Eastern Partnership initiative' EU experts propose the clear division of the EaP countries into two groups: those that signed an AA with a DCFTA (Ukraine, Republic of Moldova, Georgia) on the one hand, and the others (Belarus, Azerbaijan, Armenia) on the other hand; further strengthening of the "more for more" principle; placement of a greater premium on contacts with civil society of these countries and to perceive the three countries that signed an Association Agreement with a DCFTA as more than partners etc. (Gromadzki, 2015, p.36).

Final remarks

The EU role has a major importance in the realization of the European integration process of the Republic of Moldova. This role does not limit only to the declarations, visits and official meetings, but is represented through consultation, assistance and support of domestic reform process. EU conditionality that is realized within Eastern Partnership is the main tool with which European community controls the level of readiness and efficiency of the Republic in its European way. Thus, the European integration process of the Republic of Moldova is characterized by interdependence between actions at domestic and external level, being based on the fulfilment of the European requirements and evaluated by the progress reports of the European structures. At the same time, it is important that this conditionality not loose from its credibility of offering the awards. At its turn, the Republic of Moldova should regain the trust of EU regarding its European integration aspirations and prove that it is able to fulfil the assumed commitments in order to advance to the next stage in its relationship with EU.

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THE INFLUENCE OF THE REFUGEE CRISIS ON THE EU'S PERSPECTIVE OF EASTERN PARTNERSHIP

Sophia PETRIASHVILI*

Abstract: *Given paper represents analytical overview unpacking the relationship between the refugee crisis and the EU's perspective towards the Eastern Partnership countries. It reviews the journey of the creation and development of the EaP policy by paying a special attention to the changes reflected in the Joint Declaration of the Riga Summit participants. The paper also analyses the revision in the EU's Neighbourhood Policy (ENP) as well as tries to explore the intra-Union dynamics happening as a result of the huge influx of the refugees to Europe. Special attention is also paid to Russia's possible influence on the refugee crisis (considering its engagement in the Syria crisis and Assad's backing) on the one hand and EU's position vis a vis the EaP countries on the other. A key trend is identified that within the current challenging context the EU is less proactive and more cautious when it comes to its partnership with the EaP countries.*

Keywords: Eastern Partnership; refugee crisis; European Neighbourhood Policy; Russia

Introduction

Conflict and persecution in their own countries forced about 1 million people to leave their homes and flee to Europe. In the period of December 2014 and December 2015 21, 2015 972 500 had crossed the Mediterranean Sea and more than 34000 have crossed from Turkey to Bulgaria and Greece by land (UNHCR, 2015). Huge influx of hundreds of thousands of refugees to Europe has its own influence on intra-Union dynamics, impacting societal attitudes, political agenda as well as changing the foreign policy perspectives towards the EU's neighbourhood. As a quick finalization of the crisis is not expected and on the contrary the Europe expects some more inflows of the migrants trying to escape life threatening conditions in their homelands, it is of crucial importance to analyse how the refugee crisis has already influenced the EU and its neighbourhood and what the potential implications might also be.

We do acknowledge that not so much time have passed since the inflow of refugees into Europe to become able to do some in depth analysis of the refugee crisis' influence on the EU's perspective towards Eastern Partnership countries. However, we still believe that some initial overview of how the Union's position vis a vis its eastern neighbours and the refugee crisis correlate with each other (if at all) might be interesting, especially for the EaP countries fighting for their European future.

* Assistant Professor, Tbilisi State University, Faculty of Social and Political Sciences, International Relations Department; e-mail: petriashvilisophia@yahoo.com



As part of this paper we will try to answer a question: how the refugee crisis influenced the EU's perspectives towards the EaP members. Under the refugee crisis we will primarily mean the inflow of hundreds of thousands of refugees to Europe. The EU's perspectives towards the EaP countries will be unpacked in the following way. In the beginning we will try to analyse a journey of the EaP from its creation up until the Riga summit. We will continue our discourse with the exploration of the revisions of the European Neighbourhood Policy trying to find some correlations between identified policy shifts and the refugee crisis. Next we will analyse what steps the European Union took to address the refugee crisis by unpacking some legal and policy entrustments adopted in the period of May-December 2015. This will help us to see a bigger picture within which the EU's foreign policy perspectives, including the one towards its eastern neighbors, might be assessed. We will also focus on the examination of the intra-Union dynamics and Russia's role in the Syria crisis as influential factors on the EU foreign policy perspectives. In each of those cases our purpose will be to identify any changes in EU's approaches to the EaP countries or at least try to see some correlations in the EU perception shifts towards the EaP and the refugee crisis.

1. Eastern Partnership: A Journey from Creation to Riga Summit 2015

Few years after the launch of the European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP), which unified under its framework Eastern Europe and South Mediterranean, it became clear that a greater differentiation of the ENP was needed. Later, in 2008 a Polish-Swedish initiative of the Eastern Partnership was born and was officially inaugurated in May 2009 in Prague.

While it is not our primary purpose to provide in depth exploration of the content of the EaP, we believe that a brief overview of priority areas of this policy will still be helpful to understand the transformations that we will be further unpacking below.

As part of the Eastern Partnership multilateral framework following thematic platforms were created: a) democracy, good governance and stability, b) economic integration and convergence with EU sectoral policies, c) energy security, d) people to people contacts (Council of the European Union, 2009). In addition to the aforementioned, the EaP, more than any previous EU policy, paid a special attention to civil society in its member states by creating a platform in the form of the EaP Civil Society Forum, unifying representatives of the civil society, including local NGOs, think tanks, research institutions etc. from the EaP and EU member countries. One of the primary purposes of this forum was to advocate and promote European values thus making the EaP countries closer to the EU (Eastern Partnership Civil Society Forum, 2009).

While the progress in above listed areas would truly be helpful for further development of the six EaP countries, a conception of the given policy went beyond its understanding as of a simple transformational tool. In 2008, when the Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament and the Council set out a proposal for a ‘more ambitious partnership,’ aiming at bringing a lasting political message of EU solidarity to Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine (Commission of the European Communities, 2008), a perception of the Eastern Partnership as a quasi-pre-accession policy was born (Tsantoulis, 2009, p.4). Eastern Partnership’s restrictive membership – excluding Turkey and Russia – was further interpreted by some as an attempt of the European Union to pave the way to the membership advancement for at least some of the EaP members (Tsantoulis, 2009). And yet, years later before and during the EaP Riga Summit of 2015, different European leaders underlined that the Eastern Partnership was not “an instrument of enlargement politics for the European Union (Russia Today, 2015).” European Commission President Jean-Claude Juncker, when stressing that the membership issue would not be an issue of focus at the Riga Summit, also emphasized: “they are not ready, we are not ready” (Russia Today, 2015).

While the exploration of the readiness of either the EU or the EaP countries is not a key goal of our analysis, we still believe that it’s important to speculate around this issue a bit more, as it might help with answering a question, how the refugee crisis influenced the EaP.

We link the readiness to the in-country developments of the six EaP members, as we believe that the more they progress, the more their readiness for the EU integration increases. Accordingly, an overview of changes happening as a result of the EaP policy is important. When talking about success, scholars often underline that the EU has become the top trade partner for five out of six EaP signatory countries (except Belarus). Georgia, Moldova, and Ukraine have signed deep and comprehensive free trade agreements (DCFTAs) that will gradually create enabling environment for barrier-free trade in goods and easier trade in services with the EU. Mobility has also increased as travel between the EU and most EaP countries has become easier (in case of Moldovans the application of the visa-free regime was extremely influential), which has had positive spill-over effects in areas like education, joint investment projects, tourism etc. (Kobzova, 2015, p. 2). Along with signing the Association Agreements (AA) including the DCFTA (in case of Moldova, Georgia and Ukraine) as well as the visa liberation (the latter in case of Moldova only), some scholars also refer to the membership in the Energy Community for Moldova (in 2010) and Ukraine (in 2011) as indicators of success (European Parliament, 2015, pp.20-21).

One of the fact sheets of 2015 published by the European Commission provides more details about the achievements of individual EaP states. Georgia’s increase of exports within the first 6

months of the DCFTA by 12%, increase of the EU imports from Moldova by 20%, almost half a million Moldovans travelling to the EU visa free are only few among those successes described by the document with a very ambitious title: *The Eastern Partnership – A Policy That Delivers* (European Commission, 2015a).

So, if the EaP does deliver and the signatory countries do progress, how do we interpret the Riga Summit statements of the European leaders that neither side is ready for the EU's expansion? Some might try to explain this by referring to the unequal development of the six EaP countries. Scholars talk about the clear division of the EaP members into two main groups: Ukraine, Moldova and Georgia unified as one more progressed group of nations and Armenia, Azerbaijan and Belarus as the second group (European Parliament, 2015, p.34). Some experts even refer to the EU's approach to the EaP countries as *zigzagging* depending on the mixed enthusiasm of respective states (Kobzova, 2015, p.1). Riga Summit Declaration further revealed the heterogeneity of the EaP states. We also acknowledge that the signatories of the AA, including the DCFTA do reveal a greater interest for further EU integration, while for Belarus and Azerbaijan the EaP seems to be just a way of dealing with the EU somehow balancing between Europe and Russia. Armenia's membership into the Eurasian Union further weakened its positions vis a vis the other progressing EaP countries. However, a question still remains whether such diversity and differences in the levels of development of the EaP countries are what might explain why the EU is not ready for its expansion? And what does this all have to do with the refugee crisis?

Aforementioned narrative clearly represents the transformations inside the EaP countries. It shows the route of the six states that started their joint journey in 2008 under the umbrella of the Eastern Partnership up to now. While the dynamics can be explained by changes and reforms that individual states have passed through (or not) since the development of the policy, those interpretations will only be one sided. We believe that what matters is not only the in-country developments, but also how the EU perceives them, which in turn strongly depends on the wider regional and even international context and its influence on the Union.

Even though we do not aim at theory testing as part of this analysis, still neorealist theoretical perspective underlining the influence of systemic changes on individual players and their foreign policies does provide a good foundation for the comprehensive interpretation of the EU's current approach to the EaP countries. We do acknowledge that some might consider the application of the neorealist perspectives to the analysis of actions and conceptions of the European Union towards its neighbours irrelevant, proposing neo-functionalism (Haas, 1970), intergovernmentalism (Mattli, 1999) and/or liberal institutionalism (Baldwin, 1993) as best explaining the EU dynamics. However,

certain influential EU member states have been demonstrating more and national interest driven behaviour in response to the mass migration and refugee influx (for more details please see respective section in this article below). Thus, we believe that it's relevant to apply the neorealist assumption according to which in order to explain what the actors will or currently do, then, in addition to paying attention to the features of those actors, we must also look to the constraints of the strategic setting in which the actors interact (Baldwin, 1994). 2015 marks not only the year when a Riga Summit took place. It was also a year when Europe faced an influx of around one million asylum seekers, which unsettled the Union as no other crisis before. We believe, that this can be perceived as a constraint of the setting that the EU member states consider while pursuing their policies and taking steps vis a vis their eastern neighbours and other partners. Accordingly, our analysis will focus on the exploration of the effect of the refugee influx on the European Union within the changed setting.

In the Riga Summit Declaration the European Union clearly revealed its more cautious approach to the promotion of the Eastern Partnership agenda by stating that 'the Summit participants reaffirm the sovereign right of each partner freely to choose the level of ambition and the goals to which it aspires in its relations with the European Union. It is for the EU and its sovereign partners to decide on how they want to proceed in their relations' (Council of the European Union, 2015). While it is hard to show the direct causal relationship between shifts in the EU's EaP positions and the refugee crisis, considering timing and the context we believe that there is a correlation between those two. We believe that the Union's leadership as well as the individual member states do understand that the active promotion of the EaP will require more than just supportive statements towards the six EaP countries. However, considering enormous resources needed for proper management of the refugee crisis, which won't stop in the nearest future per experts' forecasts, it would not be groundless to assume that the EU de-prioritized the promotion of the EaP agenda.

We have to admit that the Riga Summit was only one more affirmation of the shift in the EU priorities in regards to its eastern neighbours. Following the arrival of the new Juncker Commission, the position of European Commissioner for Enlargement and European Neighbourhood Policy was renamed into the European Commissioner for European Policy and Enlargement Negotiations. While for some it might be just an adjustment of the title of the Commissioner under the new Commission, others perceive it (and we believe, rightly so) as an evidence of the shifted EU priorities, leaving very little (if at all) hope for the eastern neighbours like Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine to further pursue their EU membership aspirations, at least in the nearest five year period. (Hug, 2015, p.8). So, if the EU officially reflected in its structure the shifted priorities, how this can be linked to the refugee crisis and migration in Europe?

As mentioned before, the in-country dynamics do also play a big role. Crisis in Ukraine and annexation of Crimea are clearly among those influential factors having an impact on the EU's position vis a vis the EaP. However, 2008 Russian military intervention into Georgia not only did not hinder the Eastern Partnership idea, but actually contributed to the acceleration of the process of the launch of the policy (European Parliament, 2015, p.7). We acknowledge the existence of differences between Ukraine and Georgia cases and yet, we believe that changed regional and international context due to refugee crisis pushed the EU to reprioritize its foreign policy perspectives (rebranding of the Commissioner's position somewhat coincides with the influx period). Nowadays, when the Union faces the rise of the populist anti-EU parties in many member states reflecting in reassertion of national identities at the expense of the EU integration support, which has been, at least partially, a reaction to the massive influx of the refugees, the Union has not enough resources nor will to actively push the EaP countries towards their greater integration to the EU.

2. European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP) – Shifts in EU's Foreign Policy Perspectives

While the 2015 Riga Summit was one of the good examples of the EU's position shifts, for a more comprehensive picture we also need to analyse the Union's review of the European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP). As the European Neighbourhood Policy provides the overall strategic vision of the Union towards its eastern and Mediterranean neighbours, we believe, it will be helpful to unpack the revised document, which will further complement our understanding how the EU, at the time of the refugee crisis, approaches the countries in its east, including the six EaP states. What we need to remember during the analysis of the revised ENP is the timing, as the review also took place in 2015 – a year when the Union faced the inflow of around one million refugees.

In the beginning we would like to provide a brief overview of the European Neighbourhood Policy before its revision. We believe, this will help to better represent the changes and adjusted focus in the ENP II discussed below. Created in response to the largest single EU enlargement of 2004, the European Neighbourhood Policy a formal representation of the organizational vision towards its new neighbours. The document underlined the EU's commitment to do everything to avoid drawing the new dividing lines in Europe. It also stressed the importance of promoting stability and prosperity within and beyond the new borders of the EU (Commission of the European Communities, 2003, p. 4). Poverty reduction as well as the creation of the area of shared prosperity and values founded on greater economic integration, stronger and more intense cultural and political interaction, enhanced cross-border cooperation and shared responsibility for conflict prevention between the official

Brussels and its neighbourhood were indicated as priorities (Commission of the European Communities, 2003, p.9). Positive results of the EU enlargement were supposed to be spread among the organizations' member states as well that way reducing the prosperity gap (Commission of the European Communities, 2003, p. 9).

Unlike the previous ENP document, the revised one stresses the stabilization of the neighbourhood as the primary goal of the policy for the next few years (European Commission, 2015b, p.1). It does not mean that other objectives related to democratic reforms, human rights, open markets or good governance were disregarded, but their achievement would never be possible without the stable and secure environment in the EU's neighbourhood (European Commission, 2015b, p. 1).

Not only the stabilization of the neighbourhood becomes the primary objective of the Union as reflected in the revised ENP, it is also directly linked to the recent refugee crisis which is considered as central to the stabilization in the neighbourhood (European Commission, 2015b, p.15). "Therefore, the EU needs a more integrated and more comprehensive response promoting close linkages between short-term humanitarian needs and longer-term development and security responses (European Commission, 2015b, p. 17)."

All the aforementioned clearly shows us that the European Union in its revised neighbourhood policy puts the overriding priority on ensuring stability and security in the neighbourhood – a need (at least partially) taking its roots from the refugee crisis. But how does it help us with analysing the influence of the refugee crisis on the EU's EaP perspectives? Here again we would like to stress that due to objective reasons (some of which are directly related to the fact that not enough time since the refugee influx has passed to see the full scale influence of the refugee crisis) it is hard (if not impossible) to show the causal relationship between refugee crisis and shifts in the EU's attitudes towards the EaP countries. However, we believe that we can identify some trends that correlate. In this regards tailor-made relationships and vague promises to Associate Agreement countries attract our attention.

On the one hand the EU does recognize that not all partners aspire to rules and standards of the Union and accordingly the Union should take this into consideration and develop a more differentiated approach reflecting different ambitions, interests and abilities of its partners and neighbours (European Commission, 2015b, p. 4). We believe those statements can be directly linked to three out of six EaP countries (Georgia, Moldova, Ukraine) and EU's changing attitude towards them. The Union will no longer treat Armenia, Azerbaijan and Belarus the same way as Georgia, Ukraine and Moldova even though these six are still the EaP countries. Due to the changing environment and hundreds of thousands of refugees expecting support from Brussels, the Union no

longer has time nor resources to push those states towards transformation and alignment with the EU high standards who are not pioneers. Furthermore, the budget of the new ENP for the period of 2014-2020 is almost the same as the previous round budget consisting of 16 million USD to be allocated for 16 neighbourhood countries for a seven year period (European Union External Action, 2014), while the context of the neighbourhood has changed seriously. Accordingly, when the EU facing a harsh need of taking care of soft and hard security issues within and outside its borders as well as preventing (wherever possible) or following up with the refugee crisis, no time is left for the back runners. It has to and did change its approach to such countries including three EaP states.

However, the EU's changed position towards the EaP countries as a result of the refugee crisis did not apply only to the back runners. The revised ENP does not provide the Association Agreement countries like Georgia, Ukraine and Moldova with much hope related to their EU integration either. The document only talks about the chances of economic integration with the EU market in case of the successful implementation of the DCFTA (European Commission, 2015b). We believe that this shows how much the Union is concerned with the changed security challenges and the urgent need of following up with the refugee crisis.

3. EU's Response to the Refugee Crisis: Institutional, Policy and Legal Aspects

2015 turned out to be a very challenging year for the European Union. It was some sort of a test of the EU institutions and their ability to efficiently respond to the refugee crisis. Hundreds of thousands of people in difficult conditions, trying to escape dangers in their homelands, reaching the EU borders in search for shelter and support, accompanied by the huge media attention and public outcry, raised lots of concerns and questions related to the desire and/or ability of the European institutions as well as the EU member states to address the refugee needs, provide them with needed support in the most efficient manner without violating human rights or other laws. In this chapter of the given paper we will try to analyse what mechanisms the official Brussels applied in response to the refugee crisis and what implications they might or did have on the EU's perspectives towards its eastern neighbours.

In his opening statement in the European Parliament Plenary Session of July 15, 2014, President Juncker indicated that the EU had a responsibility to address daily concerns of their fellow citizens related to illegal as well as legal migration. For that the organization needed a common asylum policy and that there was much to learn in this area from countries like the United States of America, Canada and Australia. Border protection was also indicated as one of the key priorities. "Illegal migration and

the refugee crisis are not the problems of Malta, Cyprus, Italy or Greece, they are the problems of Europe as a whole,” _ said Juncker (Juncker, 2014, p. 21). Aforementioned clearly outlines the EU’s prioritization of migration, asylum and border policies. Emphasis on the need of a new migration agenda reveals lots of aspects of the EU context. On the one hand it does refer to a lack and/or inefficiency of mechanisms which would better enable the Union to address the refugee crisis. On the other hand it has also become clear that the EU de-prioritized some other areas as the development and follow up with a new migration agenda in itself would be very resource consuming. Even though the latter is not directly concluded in Juncker’s suggested political guidelines, we believe there is much evidence to reach such assumption. Re-prioritization of the EU’s foreign policy directions is well reflected in President Juncker’s Political Guidelines for the next European Commission, where it is stated that

the Union needs to take a break from enlargement so that consolidate what has been achieved among the 28. This is why ... ongoing negotiations will continue, and notably Western Balkans will need to keep a European perspective, but no further enlargement will take place over the next five years. With countries in our eastern neighbourhood such as Moldova or Ukraine, we need to step up close cooperation, association and partnership to further strengthen our economic and political ties (Juncker, 2014, p. 12).

So, how we can interpret this statement and what it has to do with the refugee crisis? We believe, that President Juncker made it very clear in his guidelines that the Union is too busy with some other urgent and important tasks to re-allocate its energy and other resources on additional responsibilities. While some hope was given to countries from Western Balkans, perspectives for the countries from its eastern neighbourhood were limited to economic and political partnership (whatever it might mean). What is extremely interesting is that when talking about the EU’s eastern neighbours only two countries – Moldova and Ukraine – were mentioned, not even Georgia was named. We believe, this once again represents how the EU perceives its eastern neighbourhood – no common attitude towards the group of countries situated on the EU’s east, something that was also addressed in the narrative above.

Under such increasingly pressing political context the European Union adopted several legal and political instruments to address the refugee crisis and related needs. One of the first mechanisms was a very controversial idea of establishment of a Temporary EU Relocation System for the redistribution of asylum seekers among different members of the European Union (Guild and Carrera,

2015). Given initiative derogated from the EU Dublin system which set a requirement of the first entry EU member state to be responsible for reviewing the asylum application. According to the new temporary system a model of the so called 'distribution key' was proposed setting criteria like GDP, number of population, unemployment rate etc. based on which it was decided to re-allocate the number of asylum seekers among the EU member states other than the first entry (Carrera *et al.*, 2015, p. 5). Per various official agreements around 160 000 persons in real need of international support were agreed to be relocated from Greece and Italy as well as 22 000 people were decided to be resettled from outside Europe (Carrera *et al.*, 2015, pp. 5-6). The idea of finding solutions to the existing crisis on the basis of shared responsibility with the application of more consolidated approach is truly a good one. So, what could cause controversies concerning the relocation plan?

The EU temporary relocation system was a truly welcomed shift from the so called Dublin system which was perceived as ineffective and malfunctioned. The member states of the Union were recalled to make changes to ensure that the responsibility of addressing the refugee crisis was shared in an equitable manner by all the members of the EU (Carrera *et al.*, 2015). And yet, even this welcomed approach raised lots of questions and concerns. Unfortunately, despite a high sense of urgency, in the first months after the announcement about the relocation plan for resettling the refugees, only 87 people were removed. At that pace it would take the European Union more than 750 years to resettle all the 160 000 asylum seekers (New York Times, 2015). Slow implementation of agreed plans might only be a symptom revealing deeper root causes hindering a more efficient follow up with the refugee needs. Whether these are technical and/or administrative problems (e.g. transportation) or a lack of political will to speed up those processes in the time of crisis, it is clear anyway that the Union and its member states will need to once again think about how to follow up with the shortcomings of the relocation plan which will further take their attention away from other less urgent foreign policy aspects, including the relationships with its eastern neighbours.

Other measures taken by the EU in response to the refugee crisis include the creation of hotspots in relatively problematic areas such as in Italy and Greece, aiming at the setting up the joint operational headquarters called the European Union Regional Task Force (EURTF). The approach included the deployment of experts by Frontex, Europol and EASO in order to screen the third country nationals and provide help to applicants requesting international protection and the preparation and removal of irregular immigrants (Carrera *et al.*, 2015, p. 7).

The Union also adopted a special Regulation according to which a list of the so called safe third countries, in particular the potential EU candidates from the Western Balkans, was developed. According to this Regulation, nationals from those states are not a priori deemed as refugees (Carrera

et al., 2015, p. 7). In order to better control irregular migration, trafficking and smuggling the European Union also adopted the Action Plan against Migrants' Smuggling, Action Plan on Return as well as the Common Return Handbook (Carrera *et al.*, 2015, p. 9). Refugee Crisis and challenges that the European Union faced while trying to follow up with the influx of asylum seekers led the Commission to the development of a special Communication and a package of legislative measures according to which a new European Border and Coast Guard Agency was created (Carrera *et al.*, 2015, p.10-11). A body of the Union with a semi-military nature will be responsible for facilitating the development and implementation of the border management standards that are common for all the EU members. It will also be supporting the frontline EU members who struggle to effectively cope with the problems related to the border control and migration (Carrera *et al.*, 2015, pp. 10-11). Creation of the Agency would also have some financial implications in the amount of minimum 31.5 million to be added to the budget of the Agency in 2017 (Carrera *et al.*, 2015, p. 11).

The refugee crisis had some additional financial implications on the Union and its member states. The EU Regional Trust Fund in Response to the Syrian Crisis (the Madad Fund) with about 500 million Euros as well as the EU Emergency Trust Fund for Africa with 1.8 billion were created to not only accommodate hundreds of thousands of asylum seekers but also to address the root causes of the crisis (Carrera *et al.*, 2015, p. 10).

We believe that the aforementioned steps taken by the EU do clearly demonstrate what the Union's priorities are and how committed it is going to be in the new several years to the refugee crisis management and some other related tasks. While several priorities are possible to exist, we believe that the crisis in Syria and Africa did and will continue to shift the EU's attention from its eastern neighbourhood. Firstly, it will be too busy with following up with all those regulations and other legislative measures that it established in 2015 in response to the refugee crisis. Secondly some steps and regulations themselves do imply the priority shift. For example the 300 million out of 500 million under the Madad Fund was re-allocated from the European Neighbourhood Instrument (Carrera *et al.*, 2015, p. 10) to be used for the management of the Syrian Crisis. For sure, the ENI does cover both southern and eastern neighbours of the Union, however, we believe, there is enough evidence to assume that such reallocation of a big amount of money does also demonstrate a priority shift.

Another interesting aspect of the EU proposed migration agenda is that it is mainly driven by home affairs and the interests of the Union and its member states. This particular aspect was even noted by the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe underlining that the organization revealed a tendency of taking efforts to keep refugees 'out or at the periphery of the European

Union'' (Parliamentary Assembly, 2015, p. 3). For sure, it is important and necessary to take care of the security and national and organizational interests of the EU and its member states. However, when this is done in a way that the EU members are reluctant to take a responsibility for the protection of the refugees or to share a burden of their resettlement (Parliamentary Assembly, 2015, p. 3), lots of questions and concerns rise about effectiveness and the ability of the EU to follow up with the refugee crisis and the real priorities of its member states. But how those dynamics inside the EU might be influencing the organization's relations with its eastern neighbours? Here again, we believe that the aforementioned context provides us with a good foundation to assume that the EU will be too busy with filling the gaps and identifying better ways to address the Syria crisis and the crisis in Africa. This will require serious commitment and resources which might further shift the view of the official Brussels from its eastern neighbours. In addition, the Union, nationalist senses have been growing complementing the not so welcoming attitudes towards the asylum seekers, might not feel ready to discuss the full integration of its eastern members into the EU – an expectation that three out of six EaP countries have been cherishing for some time.

4. Intra-Union Dynamics and the Factor of Russia

One last aspect that we would like to explore as part of the analysis of influence of the refugee crisis on the EU's EaP perspectives is to have a quick look at the intra-Union dynamics happening as a result of the refugee influx as well as speculating on the role of Russia in this changing context.

While the EU is used to diffusing problems of political nature with technocratic discussions, this did not work in case of the refugee crisis as the issue is too sensitive and directly linked to the EU's citizens. Most of the decision-makers approached the issue from the perspective of domestic politics; accordingly it became hard to lead a discussion on the refugee crisis in the format of the genuine transnational discourse (Lehne, 2016). Furthermore, a great influx of refugees revealed not only different societal attitudes (with central European countries showing less enthusiasm and moral responsibility to host refugees) but also showed a tendency of increasing polarization of the EU's political landscape between two major groups: populists and mainstream parties. Those changes are extremely important as the EU's traditional politics are based on the mainstream centre-right and centre-left parties and the shift from this tendency will put under the big question mark the EU's ability to in solidarity as a single player (Lehne, 2016).

The way how those challenges are reflected in the behaviour of the EU member states is well represented in effectiveness with which they have been implementing the EU standards and

requirements related to the asylum seekers. For example, in 2015 40 infringements decisions against several the EU member states were started for failing to meet the EU asylum legislative requirements (Carrera *et al.*, 2015, p. 14). Different civil society organizations as well as the UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights recalled upon the EU member states to ensure that the asylum seekers are treated with respect and dignity and that they are provided with adequate conditions (Carrera *et al.*, 2015, p. 15). Special concerns were caused by the behaviour of some countries like the Czech Republic (e.g. subjecting the refugees to detention for 40 days or even longer) and Hungary (building of walls in the border zones between Hungary and Croatia and Slovenia and a new Hungarian asylum law) and in December 2015 the Commission even opened infringement against Hungary (Carrera *et al.*, 2015, pp. 15-16). The focus in the G20 speech of the president Juncker that there is a need to delink terrorism and the refugee debate in Europe (European Commission, 2015c) further refers to some troublesome intra-EU dynamics.

Changes in the political establishment of the European Union have already been reflected in more individual, even national approaches of its member states towards the refugee crisis. Some of the EU members have somehow prioritized interests of their own nations over the EU institutional positions. It signalled to the plethora of the EU's weaknesses. The current mode of the Union does not allow it to play a crucial role of the transformer and democratic reforms promoter in the neighbourhood as it is already overwhelmed with intra-Union challenges. This well aligns with the shifts unpacked in our earlier discussion on the Riga Summit and the revised ENP. While the EU stays committed to the core European values, when it comes to their active promotion in its neighbourhood, due to internal impediments and short falls the Union is less proactive and more cautious.

In the period of such challenges faced by the European Union it becomes even more important to further explore the role of Russia. The way we perceive the Kremlin's stance in the given context is more like a compounding factor which might individually influence both the refugee crisis as well as the EU's perspective towards the Eastern Partnership countries.

Considering Russia's engagement in the Syria crisis and its support to Assad's regime via providing military equipment and other means (Lister, 2015) it becomes clear that Russia has enough power to (at least indirectly) influence dynamics of the refugee crisis as well. The EU, which has been troubled by the influx of migrants from the conflicting areas, will think twice before making any serious steps that would directly contradict Russia's interests. When it comes to the changing EU perspective towards the EaP countries, we definitely do not claim that the differentiated approach and identification of two groups within its eastern neighbours is the direct result of the Russian influence

on either the EU or the refugee crisis. We also acknowledge the EU's position in supporting territorial integrity of both Georgia and Ukraine as also underlined in the Joint Declaration of the Riga Summit participants (Council of the European Union, 2015, p.2). However, we still believe that within the current context the EU would play far more cautious game, which would imply non-consideration of Ukraine's EU membership in the near future, perceiving Armenia's membership of the Eurasian Union as a sovereign country's right to decide its future (even if it was meant to get closer to the Union under the EaP umbrella) and focusing mainly on economic and market integration of those countries which will successfully implement the DCFTA. Within such a quickly changing context inside or outside the Union the official Brussels might be less inclined to take some steps which might possibly upset the Russian bear, considering that not so long ago the launch of a new game without rules was already officially announced by Putin (Meeting of the Valdai International Discussion Club, 2014).

Conclusions

Given paper was an attempt to briefly overview the influence of the refugee crisis on the EU's perspective towards the Eastern Partnership countries. While we acknowledged that not enough time has passed yet to be able to see the in depth interrelationship between those two factors, identification of trends is still possible. Accordingly, we tried to provide some analysis of how the refugee crisis in Europe and changes in the EU's perspectives towards the EaP states have been correlating so far.

Overview of the journey of the creation of the Eastern Partnership policy up until the last year's Riga Summit as well as the review of the EU's Neighbourhood Policy have revealed very clearly a shift in the official position of Brussels: due to scarcity of resources and a hard reality of addressing needs of hundreds of thousands of refugees, the EU neither wants nor is able to actively push its eastern neighbours towards more dynamic and consistent democratic reforms which might make those states closer to the EU standards. This time Brussels chooses to play a more cautious and less proactive role. That's why it has distinguished two groups among six EaP countries (front runners like the AA signatories and other three countries whose development is relatively slow or diverted) and decided to proceed further with the application of the tailor-made approach.

Intra-Union analysis also showed us that as a result of the huge influx of refugees, the EU faced a tendency of polarization of the traditional political agenda between populists and mainstream parties (centre-right and centre left which has always been the core of the EU's politics). Many EU member states prioritize their nation's interests over the Union's position vis a vis refugees. In certain cases,

even negative societal attitudes towards migrants have been traced. This in turn further paved the way towards more cautious and less active approach of the Union to promote democratic reforms in its eastern neighbours. Russia's increasing role in the neighbourhood (but not only) and its engagement in the Syria crisis made the Kremlin a special power openly going against whom would not be welcomed by many EU members.

Accordingly, within the current context the EU might still prefer not to go beyond economic integration, keeping a more reserved position in the area of active promotion of transformational processes in its eastern neighbours, while acknowledging and appreciating achievements of the EaP countries, especially the ones with the AA. Continued crisis in Syria and Africa with a little or no hope that those conflicts might be over in the nearest future, reluctance of some other outside players to take a leading role in the conflict management or limiting their actions to certain type of interventions only might further justify the EU's less active mode vis a vis its eastern neighbours. Following up with the shortcoming identified in the EU's migration agenda will further require additional recourses, time and commitment leading to the shift of Brussels' attention from six EaP countries. Due to all the aforementioned Union might stick to the tendency to de-prioritize some of its previous neighbourhood perspectives (without completely neglecting them) to be able to duly follow up with Syria and Africa crisis, intra-Union challenges and a new migration.

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THE TRANSFORMATIVE POWER OF THE EU-UKRAINE DCFTA: EVIDENCE FROM THE ONGOING DEREGULATION REFORM IN UKRAINE

Maryna RABINOVYCH*

Abstract: *The lack of genuine transformative power in the region was repeatedly distinguished as a major weakness of the Eastern Partnership (EaP) in Ukraine. However, the intensity and comprehensiveness of ongoing reform processes cause the need to revise the transformative power of the initiative in general and specific incentives in particular. Thus, the paper aims to assess the transformative power of the EU-Ukraine DCFTA, based on the evidence from the deregulation reform that represents an important prerequisite for the intensification of the EU-Ukraine economic relations. The study focuses on the general economic aspects of deregulation and combines 'black letter law' approach with an empirical insight into the reform's implementation. The results of the study show that the EU-Ukraine DCFTA holds significant transformative power with regard to the deregulation of Ukraine's economy and invite for further reconsideration of the EaP incentives' impact in target states.*

Keywords: Eastern Partnership; DCFTA; EU-Ukraine Association Agenda; deregulation reform
JEL Classification: K0

Introduction

The EU's international role and its ability to influence the domestic context in third states have gained significant scholarly attention since the successful Europeanisation of Central and Eastern European (CEE) states¹. Determining the successful incentives and strategies of transforming domestic legislation and institutions in third states is crucial to improve the EU ongoing structural foreign policy initiatives and shape the new ones.

Studying the EU's transformative power at the current stage of the Eastern Partnership (EaP) is of special interest for a number of reasons. Firstly, already in two years since its introduction the EaP started to be marked as an initiative that has only limited opportunities to exert significant impact on the Eastern neighbours. Such view is primarily associated with the fact that, unlike the CEE 'Europeanisation' project, the EaP does not include a membership perspective for the Eastern neighbours. Boonstra and Shapovalova (2010, pp.10-13) distinguished 'vagueness' of the EaP incentives, thus, pointing out to the EU's inability to deal with the dilemma between 'joint ownership'

* PhD Candidate at the Chair of Constitutional Law and Justice at the I.I.Mechikov Odessa National University, Ukraine, e-mail: marinarabi93@gmail.com

¹ On the analysis of the EU role in the transformation of the CEE states, see, for example: Lavenex (2004); Dimitrova (2002); Schimmelfennig and Sedelmeier (2005).



and conditionality principles. Korosteleva (2012) and Youngs and Pishchikova (2013) viewed the inconsistency of the EU differentiation efforts in terms of the EaP and the significance of Russia's leverage in the region (especially, in Ukraine) as further factors, leading to the failure of the EaP. While the signing of the Association Agreements (AAs), including Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Areas (DCFTAs) with three EaP countries in 2014 and the liberalization of visa regime with Moldova evidently marked the new step in the EaP development, the extent to which these events influenced the EaP's transformative power remains to be determined.

Second, despite the fact that free trade and visa liberalization are major external incentives of the EaP, there is an evident lack of studies, featuring their impact on the progress within specific reform fields in target states². In turn, ease and transparency of doing business that are to be ensured with the help of the deregulation reform constitute the important prerequisites for the intensification of the EU-Ukraine economic relations. Nevertheless, the ongoing deregulation reform in Ukraine is also reflected in a highly limited number of studies.

Third, considering the nature and scope of the EaP-related transformation creates favourable conditions for revisiting multiple concepts, associated with the EU foreign policies' impact on target states. Apart from 'transformative power', such concepts as 'civilian power', 'normative power' and 'structural power' are to be considered to create a framework for assessing the EU foreign policies' ability to facilitate transformation in the EaP states.

The above considerations determine the following structure of the argument. Foremost, the scope of the notion of 'transformative power' is explained, based on comparing and contrasting 'transformative', 'civilian', 'normative' and 'ethical' power Europe. The next step includes a brief legal analysis of the EU-Ukraine DCFTA and the major dimensions of its implementation. Then, the case of the EU's facilitation of the deregulation reform (in light of the DCFTA implementation) is addressed in three major contexts. First, the intent for launching the deregulation reform is addressed. Secondly, the means the EU uses to facilitate the reform and their implications for its implementation are discussed. Finally, the actual impact of the reform is assessed, based on the available progress reports and analytics. An overall assessment of the DCFTA in relation to the deregulation reform is provided.

² For general impact assessments of the DCFTAs with EaP states, see: Muravska and Berlin (2016); Van der Loo (2016).

1. Conceptualizing Transformative power Europe

Since the EU has become actively involved into international affairs via its Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP), there has been a debate whether the multifaceted activities, conducted by the Union under the CFSP umbrella, can be viewed as a foreign policy³. The rationale for such debate deals with the fact that “the EU is neither a state, nor a non-state actor, neither a conventional international organization nor an international regime” (Ginsberg, 1999, p. 432). Given the move to an increased consistency of the EU external action, introduced by the Treaty of Lisbon⁴, it is generally accepted that the Union has its own foreign policy, different from those of its Member States (MS). In turn, a question remains concerning the kind of power the EU has in international affairs.

One of the oldest concepts, created to address the peculiarities of the European Communities' role in the international arena, was the one of 'civilian power', introduced by Duchene (1973). Discussing the power of European Communities, Duchene (1973) emphasized that its MS are “long on economic power and relatively short on armed force” (pp. 19-20). Smith (2005) mentioned that civilian powers rely mostly on 'economic, diplomatic and cultural policy instruments' (p. 1). Underlining the dichotomy between military and non-military foreign policy means, Keukeleire and Delreux (2014) interpret the EU as a 'relevant foreign policy actor' that promotes universal values, is highly active in development assistance and acts as an active proponent of multilateral solutions (p. 75). According to Maull (1990), the major traits of a 'civilian power' include the “acceptance of the need to cooperate with others in order to achieve international objectives”; the concentration on non-military, primarily economic means to secure the international goals, as well as 'a willingness to develop supranational structures to address critical issues of international management' (Maull, 1990, pp. 92-93).

Along with civilian means, civilian ends and democratic control are viewed by Smith (2005) as an essential feature of a 'civilian power'. Initially introduced by J. Nye in the end of the 1980s, the terms 'soft power' was further extended by the author to mean 'the ability to affect others through the co-optive means of framing the agenda, persuading, and eliciting positive attraction in order to obtain preferred outcomes' (Nye, 2011, pp. 20-21). The major considered sources of soft power

³ For an overview of the debate related to the nature and scope of the CFSP as a 'fully-fledged foreign policy' see, Keukeleire and Delreux (2014), pp. 49-50.

⁴ The Treaty of Lisbon brought a number of changes into the EU foreign policy domain. Firstly, the Treaty provided the EU with express legal personality, having formally merged the European Communities and European Union. Secondly, the Lisbon treaty introduced shared principles, governing different areas of the EU external action, ranging from CFSP to trade and development issues. Thirdly, the Treaty created a unified system of the EU external representation, including the introduction of the European External Action Service and the position of the High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy.

include a state's culture, its political values and institutions, as well as the legitimacy of its foreign policy (Nye, 2011, pp. 20-21).

Empirical studies by Azpiroz (2015) and Nielsen and Vilson (2014) distinguish four EU-specific sources of soft power. First, the EU positions itself as a model for regional integration. The EU's motto 'united in diversity' is coined to show how shared goals (peace and prosperity) brought Europeans together and allowed them to rely on multiple synergetic effects. Secondly, the Union is praised for its adherence to universal values, such as democracy, human rights and the rule of law. Moreover, elaborate institutional balance and decision-making procedures in the EU contribute to the Union's being perceived as a reliable and accountable actor. Finally, the value-based approach to foreign policy⁵ and increased consistency of the EU external action following the adoption of the Lisbon Treaty contribute to the EU's legitimacy as an external actor.

'Normative power Europe' (NPE), a debatable concept, aimed to address the EU's 'ability to define what passes as 'normal' in world politics' was coined by I. Manners (2002, p. 232). According to Niemann and Wekker (2010), the EU has a "special claim to constitute a normative power" due to positioning itself as a 'Community based on the rule of law' (p. 4). While the NPE is predominantly civilian, it still differs from the concept of 'civilian power' by emphasizing ideational, rather than economic sources of influence. Similar to 'soft power', the NPE rejects the idea of coercion in international relations, relying on the universal nature of promoted norms, free from self-interest-based agenda. Operationalizing the concept, Niemann and Wekker (2010) distinguish between three levels of analysis, such as normative *intent* (genuineness of the normative commitment); normative *process* (inclusiveness and reflexivity) and normative *impact* (the evolution of norms in third countries).

While the NPE concentrates on the EU's ability to exert impact on norms via its foreign policy, the concept of structural foreign policy deals with the Union's ability to 'influence long-term processes and shape political, legal, socio-economic and other structures in third countries, in other regions in the world and at the global level' (Keukeleire and Delreux, 2014, p. 3). The framework for analysis includes policy objectives, policy outputs (instruments and budget), actual implementation of the policy, as well as its outcomes (Keukeleire and Delreux, 2014, p. 5).

⁵ According to the Art.21 of the Treaty on the European Union, 'the Union's action on the international scene shall be guided by the principles which have inspired its own creation, development and enlargement, and which it seeks to advance in the wider world: democracy, the rule of law, the universality and indivisibility of human rights and fundamental freedoms, respect for human dignity, the principles of equality and solidarity, and respect for the principles of the European Union'.

The above brief outlook of the concepts related to the EU power at the global stage testifies the fact that, despite ambiguities and criticism⁶, they can be clearly defined and operationalized. On the contrary, the concept of transformative power, frequently used to address the EU achievements in the CEE and EaP states, lacks definition and a framework for assessment (Grabbe, 2014; Börzel and Risse, 2009). To define *transformative power*, one needs to start with the notion of ‘transformation’ in relation to the post-Soviet states. According to Mungiu-Pippidi (2008), a ‘transformation’ is “a complex process of a shift from command to market economy, and from the monopolistic political system to the democratic pluralism and the rule of law” (p. 4). Elster, Offe and Preuss (1998) emphasize the role of institutions for a successful transformation. Furthermore, according to Almond (1974), the genuine transformation policy includes a range of dimensions, such as:

1. Limiting the scope and supporting the reconsideration of functions in the government;
2. Creating the rule of law;
3. Creating single political community and identity;
4. Ensuring participation and a functioning accountability systems;
5. Accumulating capital for economic development and achieving economic stability following the restructuring.

Taking into account the above approaches to ‘transformation’ and the EU power, elaborating the working definition of the EU ‘transformative power’ becomes possible.

For the purposes of this paper, ‘*transformative power*’ means an extent to which the EU is able to influence a shift from command to market economy and the creation of genuine democracy and the rule of law in a target country, emphasizing structures and using solely non-coercive means. Operationalizing the ‘transformative power’, one can follow the above patterns of normative and structural powers.

First, the Union shall assist a target state to undergo a transformation. Second, this intent shall find its reflection in specific legal and implementing instruments. Finally, the EU efforts are to lead to a tangible impact in a target state.

⁶ The major claims of the opponents of the civilian and Normative Power Europe (NPE) concern the EU self-interests it is alleged to promote in the wider world. For example, M. Merlingen (2007), a neo-realist critic of the NPE, addresses the EU foreign policy as ‘self-styled mission for humanity’, characterized by ‘epistemic violence, the technologisation of politics and administrative arbitrariness’.

2. The EU-Ukraine DCFTA. Overview of the Agreement and Major Dimensions of its Implementation

The DCFTA between the EU and Ukraine represents a part to a broader EU-Ukraine AA, as well as one of the crucial external incentives for the transformation of an economic system in Ukraine.

Importantly, the DCFTA is meant to go far beyond a traditional agreement, providing for a mutual reduction of tariffs. Apart from the elimination of tariff barriers to trade, the EU-Ukraine DCFTA provides for the compliance of technical regulations, sanitary and phytosanitary measures and public procurement legislation. The Agreement also contains chapters related to the cooperation regarding intellectual property, trade-related energy-issues, competition policy etc.

The entry into force of the DCFTA on 1st January 2016 is viewed by the EU as providing Ukraine with a novel opportunity to “stabilise, diversify and develop its economy to the benefit of all its citizens” (Delegation to the European Union to Ukraine, 2016). According to the estimations, announced by the European Commission, the application of the DCFTA is expected to increase the GDP of Ukraine by ca.6 percent in medium term and 12 percent in terms of ‘increased welfare for Ukrainians’ (Delegation to the European Union to Ukraine, 2016).

The implementation of the DCFTA includes several important dimensions:

- Both parties’ adopting major DCFTA commitments (e.g., the reversion of tariffs, application, administration of tariff quotas and administration of new rules of origin);
- Legal approximation across a significant body of economics- and trade-related legislation, as well as an adoption of specific parts of *acquis communautaire* into the national legislation of Ukraine;
- Institutional and administrative reforms (e.g., the reform of competition legislation, the deregulation reform);
- EU support for the above changes, realized through multiple financial and technical assistance projects (mainly, private sector support) (DAI Europe, 2014, p. ii).

Serving as one of the envisaged ends of the DCFTA implementation, the improvement of the regulatory environment for business in Ukraine simultaneously represents an essential prerequisite for the intensification of the EU-Ukraine economic and trade relations. However, the rationale for the EU’s support for the reform of deregulation is not limited to the intensification of the EU-Ukraine economic ties *per se*. The interplay of issues, conditioning the Union’s commitment to supporting the deregulation in Ukraine as a prerequisite and also a goal of the DCFTA implementation is considered in the following chapter.

3. The analysis of the EU transformative power in light of the deregulation

a) EU's intent. Why the reform of deregulation in Ukraine?

According to the context analysis, contained in the Commission Implementing Decision on the Special Measure 2015 for Private Sector Development, economic performance of Ukraine has been below its potential since its independence in 1991.

The study of the key EU documents⁷ related to the EU-Ukraine economic cooperation and economic situation in Ukraine, issued between 2011 and 2015, allows singling out the following tightly interrelated factors that determine an unsatisfactory economic performance of Ukraine:

- - Absence of long-term strategies and institutional weaknesses;
- - Structural weaknesses (concentration on commodity-derived exports), as well as the lack of diversification and innovation in private sector;
- - Widespread corruption and the lack of transparency (especially, in the areas of taxation and customs);
- - Unsatisfactory state of investment and entrepreneurial climate.

An important practical implication of the above issues is that Ukraine tends to be rated low in international ratings, such as 'Doing Business'⁸ and the 'Index of Economic Freedom'⁹. According to the World Bank (2016), major regulation challenges in Ukraine deal with obtaining construction permits, paying taxes, protecting minority investors, as well as trading across borders and resolving insolvency.

Analysing the regulatory issues in conjunction with the implementation of the EU-Ukraine DCFTA, experts distinguish the following problems that prevent an effective use of the DCFTA potential:

- 'Clientelistic' state-business relations;

⁷ The considered documents include ENP Progress Reports 2012-2015; Council decision of 14 April 2014 providing macro-financial assistance to Ukraine (EUR 1 billion) and Commission's implementing decision of 23 April 2015 on the Special Measure 2015 for private sector development and approximation in favour of Ukraine to be financed from the general budget of the European Union.

⁸ The 'Doing Business' rating is annually compiled by the World Bank group to assess an extent to which the conditions are favourable for doing business in different countries of the world. The dimensions of assessment include the registration of enterprises, getting authorizations for construction, acquiring the right to use electricity systems, registration of ownership rights, getting loans, the protection of minority investors, taxation, international trade, ensuring the contracts' enforcement and dealing with bankruptcy issues.

⁹ The Index of Economic Freedom is annually represented by the Heritage Foundation. It includes four basic pillars of economic freedom, such as the rule of law; limited government (e.g., government spending); regulatory efficiency (business freedom; labour freedom) and open markets (trade freedom; investment freedom).

- Inconsistent harmonization of Ukraine's business legislation to *acquis communautaire*;
- The lack of credits for the development of production plants (Langbein, 2012, pp.3-4).

Aiming to both boost the EU-Ukraine economic relations and improve economic situation in Ukraine (especially, in relation to investment climate and conditions for doing business), the EU takes steps to counter the factors, leading to Ukraine's economic underperformance. According to the European Commission (2015), a key action shall deal with "urgent and far-reaching reforms of doing business in Ukraine" and the promotion of diversification and innovation by small-and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) (p.8).

Along with multiple required changes (e.g., creation of anti-corruption institutions, revision of anti-trust legislation etc), removing additional regulatory barriers is an essential step for improved investment climate and the development of SMEs. (ICPR, 2015, pp.5-6)

To sum up, the EU's support for the reform of deregulation in Ukraine represents a crucial aspect of the EU's strategy, aimed to improve an economic situation in Ukraine and promote the implementation of the free trade area.

b) Implementation of the reform

The EU influences the implementation of the deregulation reform in Ukraine in a number of ways.

Foremost, the EU-Ukraine bilateral agreements (namely, the EU-Ukraine AA and the EU-Ukraine Association Agenda) contain Ukraine's obligation to conduct internal reforms, including the reform of deregulation. The Ukraine commitments under the EU-Ukraine Association Agenda include the reduction of excessive regulations for business (especially, SMEs); conducting SME policy, based on the Small Business Act for Europe and the EU 'best practices' and the establishment of the bilateral dialogue with SME representatives (EU-Ukraine Association Council, 2015). Moreover, the Association Agenda obliges Ukraine to harmonize its legislation with the EU norms in a range of business-related fields, such as company law, corporate governance and the protection of minority shareholders, accounting and auditing (EU-Ukraine Association Council, 2015).

The EU-Ukraine bilateral documents also serve as a basis for the elaboration of domestic framework legislation on deregulation. Rather general formulations of numerous steps to be undertaken to improve business conditions are contained in the Decree of the President of Ukraine 'On the Strategy of Sustainable Development 'Ukraine-2020' of 12 January 2015.

In turn, the Agenda on deregulating business activities provides for 131 specific tasks that are to be completed by various ministries and state regulatory bodies over the period from 2015 to 2017. Among the advantages of the Agenda experts single out clear and specific formulations, as well as addressing pressing issues in crucial business sectors (agriculture, food, electric energy, construction, information technologies and telecommunications) (ICPR, p.8).

Second, the deregulation reform is tightly interconnected with the approximation of Ukraine's legislation to *acquis communautaire*. The Agenda on the implementation of the EU-Ukraine Association Agreement concentrates on achieving convergence of the EU and Ukraine's regulatory environments. The steps to be taken include *inter alia* the approximation of technical regulations, standards and assessing compliance; improvement of product marking requirements; the approximation of Ukraine's legislation to *acquis communautaire* in the field of sanitary and phytosanitary measures etc. Special emphasis is made of the promotion of trade through the simplification of customs rules and their approximation to the EU standards (Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine, 2014).

Moreover, the EU supports the approximation of Ukraine's legislation to *acquis communautaire* through a broad range of projects (including Twinning initiatives)¹⁰.

Third, it is worth mentioning that the EU-Ukraine AA is characterized with enhanced conditionality that has historically been a key strategic tool of the ENP. As opposed to the vast majority of the association agreements with third states, the EU includes the 'dialogue and cooperation on domestic reform and 'cooperation on justice, security and freedom' as essential elements of the agreement for the purposes of the conditionality clause (Van der Loo, Van Elsuwege and Petrov, 2014, p. 12).

Thus, the government's failure to implement domestic reforms, envisaged by the AA and the EU-Ukraine Association Agenda may lead to a suspension of the AA, if a conditionality clause is invoked. Along with the 'common values' conditionality, the AA also provides for a so-called 'market access' conditionality, directly linked to the process of legislative approximation¹¹.

In turn, the extent of Ukraine's access to the Single Market is conditional upon the stage of the approximation process. Thus, strong conditionality clauses and an inclusion of elaborate monitoring

¹⁰ The major projects, touching upon deregulation, implemented by the EU in Ukraine over the period from 2010 to 2015 concentrated on (1) promoting mutual trade by removing technical barriers to trade between Ukraine and the EU; (2) harmonization of Public Procurement system in Ukraine with EU standards; (3) supporting Ukraine in approximating its phytosanitary legislation with the EU standards etc.

¹¹ For an in-detail legal analysis of the phenomenon of 'market access' conditionality and the examples of conditionality clauses (related to the legislative approximation process), see: Van der Loo, Van Elsuwege and Petrov (2014).

procedures¹² help to ensure quality and timeliness of the Ukrainian government's fulfilling obligations that stem from the AA.

Fourth, the EU promotes the involvement of multiple stakeholders into conceptualizing the reform by welcoming such involvement through diplomatic means and granting financial support to reform-oriented NGOs¹³. Thus, an important feature of the deregulation reform's implementation deals with the fact that the reform team includes the representatives of civil society and business community, and involves at least two independent coordination mechanisms.

In particular, the concept of the reform, elaborated by the Ministry for Economic Development and Trade of Ukraine provides for the creation of the Better Regulation Delivery Office (BRDO).

The BRDO is an independent project that is financed by international donors (including the EU and the Government of Canada). Focusing on the areas of regulation, most sensitive for SMEs (e.g., construction, food and agriculture retail), the BRDO office realizes a range of own projects and coordinates the activities of different members to the deregulation team, such as state agencies, business community and civil society representatives (BRDO, 2016). The coordination function is also exercised by the National Reform Council.

The civil society's and business community's representatives participate in the development and realization of the deregulation initiatives via several avenues, such as:

- Common working groups, facilitated by the Deregulation Office, established by the Ministry for Economic Development and Trade (Ministry for Economic Development and Trade, 2015);
- Thematic forums, organized by civil society and international donors;
- Participation in discussing draft laws in terms of parliamentary committees.

Given the emergence of the modes of the work of the reform-oriented NGOs and the volume and scope of the EU's civil society support, the ongoing reform process can be viewed as an important forum of NGOs empowerment.

Along with empowering civil society actors to contribute to the design of the deregulation reform and the monitoring of its implementation, the EU links the creation of favourable conditions for business with empowering SMEs.

¹² Apart from the Ukrainian government's obligation to provide reports to the EU in accordance with the respective deadlines, envisaged by the EU-Ukraine AA, Art. 475(3) of the AA envisages the creation of "on-the-spot missions" to monitor the approximation process. These missions can include the representatives of the EU institutions, agencies and bodies, as well as NGOs, supervisory bodies and independent experts.

¹³ For instance, on June, 1st 2016, the European Commission launched a new stage of supporting the 'Reanimation Package of Reform', a platform that brings together 59 key reform-oriented NGOs in Ukraine. The amount of support constitutes 965 thousand euro that are to be spent over the period of the next two years.

In multilateral terms, Ukrainian small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) can benefit from the EaP SME Flagship Initiative and DCFTA Facility for SMEs. As opposed to the latter, the former does not only provide funding for SMEs, but promotes the development of SME-friendly policies and support of external institutions and intermediaries (e.g., local banks). While acting at the level of SMEs, both initiatives aim to improve businesses' access to finance and markets, as well as enable them to comply with the EU technical regulations.

In bilateral terms, the EU supports Ukraine's private sector through the programme EU Support to Ukraine to Relaunch the Economy that was started in terms of 2015 Special Measure for Private Sector Development and Approximation. Acting in synergy with the above instruments, EU SURE aims to support a range of stakeholders to elaborate effective economic development policies, including the promotion of SMEs. Special emphasis is put on building regional capacity and developing citizens' entrepreneurial skills.

Finally, by supporting the work of the BRDO, the EU promotes the following innovative methodologies:

- Systemic analysis¹⁴ of existing acts (via the creation of the 'regulatory trees') and prioritization of acts for their further assessment;
- Systemic assessment of legal acts ('rolling review'), based on specific criteria, including a potential to generate corruption; comfort for business; costs of the application; effectiveness and the compliance with the requirements of the EU-Ukraine DCFTA;
- Creating the packages for change in different sectors;
- Modernized indexes to assess the regulatory effects of newly adopted regulations (with a special account on the needs of SMEs), as well as the work of state regulatory agencies (Better Regulation Delivery Office, 2016).

The above analysis testifies to the fact that the EU's application of various legal and implementing instruments to support the implementation of the EU-Ukraine AA conditions important features of the current deregulation reform. These instruments and their features are summarized below.

¹⁴ It is important to underline that the current wave of deregulation is the first one that includes the systemic analysis and assessment of all the body of legislation, providing for the design of the regulatory environment. While previous waves of deregulation (1994, 2004, 2010) provided for the selective reconsideration of existing legislation (ISPR, 2015), the mission of the BRDO provides for analyzing existing regulatory environment as a whole. Both BRDO and 'Easy Business' focus not only on the general economic aspects of deregulation, but specific sectors (e.g., transport, construction, energy and agriculture).

Table 1 - EU's influence on the reform of deregulation in Ukraine

EU instruments	Effects and reforms' features
Including the reform of deregulation as Ukraine's obligation into the EU-Ukraine Association Agenda	– External incentives (e.g., aid) and external monitoring as triggers for quality and timely implementation of the reform
Including highly specific approximation clauses into the scope of the DCFTA	The reform's strong link to the approximation process, leading to a more 'technocratic' design of the reform ¹⁵
Enhanced conditionality, directly linked to the implementation of reforms and approximation process, supported by strengthened monitoring procedures	Promotion of timely and quality fulfillment of Ukraine's obligations under the AA Orientation on specific results, 'technocratization' of the reform
Civil society support and welcoming the cooperation of different groups by diplomatic means	– The reform as a forum for the empowerment of reform-oriented NGOs – Inclusion of civil society, business representatives and independent coordinating bodies into the design and implementation of the reform – Critical view, the use of innovative methodologies and progress measurement strategies – Comprehensiveness of the reform – Extensive media and social media coverage
Support for SMEs' development	– Simultaneous promotion of favourable conditions for SMEs and SMEs' empowerment

Source: Author's representation

c) Impact

The joint efforts of a range of state institutions, civil society organizations and business community activists led to the improvements in several domains of the general economic aspects of deregulation, notwithstanding the successes in specific sectors (e.g., the deregulation of the pharmaceutical market). The major dimensions of change concern:

- Public services;
- Reduction of the number of permits, authorizations and checks;
- Protection of business' interests.

Public services June 2015 marked that the launch of a new unified web-portal of public services igov.org.ua started to work. By the end of 2015 citizens were able to obtain 72 public services online in areas related to the functioning of the Ministry for Interior, construction, immovable assets, land and taxes. 47 services were made available for business (related to construction, immovable assets,

¹⁵ For the discussion of the EU 'technocratic' governance in the EaP states, see: Korosteleva, E. (2015), The EU and Belarus: democracy promotion by technocratic means? *Democratization*, pp.1-23.

land, protection of the environment, trade and outer economic activities, as well as culture, art and religion). It is planned that by the end of 2016 five hundred public services will be delivered via the portal that will constitute one fifth of the general number of public services in a state (Ministerial Office of the Secretary of the Cabinet of Ministers, 2015, p.44).

A number of e-services also became available from the official website of the Ministry for Justice. They concern state registration of business, the registration of ownership and related rights, the activities of insolvency officers and conducting online sales of arrested ownership.

Reduction of the number of permits, authorizations and checks

Transferring to the next point, it is worth mentioning significant progress related to the implementation of the Agenda on deregulating business activities in Ukraine. According to the information, provided by the State Regulatory Service of Ukraine, 91 out of 131 planned changes have been executed by the 18th March 2016 (State Regulatory Service of Ukraine, 2015).

First of all, the procedures were simplified and the timelines of obtaining special licenses and certificates were shortened in three key areas, such as agriculture, food and drinks and energy. It is expected that the novelties will prevent delays of grains' supplies and, subsequently, promote the simplification and cheapening of the grains' supply chains in Ukraine.

Second, special attention was paid to amending the Law of Ukraine 'On licensing different types of business activities' no 222-VIII. The most important changes include:

- Reducing the number of licensed types of business activities from 57 to 30;
- Including an option of obtaining a license distantly, also in an electronic form;
- Providing for termless licenses;
- Creating a unified electronic database to include the data regarding licensing;
- Transferring the function of licensing specific types of business to the local level (Ministerial Office of the Secretary of the Cabinet of Ministers, 2015, pp.46-47).

Third, the deregulation efforts resulted in the adoption of the Law 'On amending some legal acts of Ukraine as regards simplifying the conditions of running a business (deregulation)' no 191-VIII. This Law provided for the abolition of sixteen permits and certificates, as well as significantly shortened the procedure of registering a new business (from five days to two).

Fourth, the number of state institutions, authorized to issue licenses and certificates was considerably shortened.

Furthermore, the government reformed the existing system of quarantine and phytosanitary control to reduce the terms of control and make the issuance of permits more transparent.

Reduced terms were also introduced by the Ministry for Justice to register the ownership and related rights.

Considerable changes and amendments also concerned the banking system of Ukraine, whereby the international export of services was significantly simplified, and international systems of Internet payments (e.g., PayPal, ApplePay) received a chance to get officially registered in Ukraine.

As a result of the above changes Ukraine improved its position in the annual 'Doing Business' rating, moving from the 96th position in 2014 to the 83rd in 2015 (The World Bank, 2016). Overall, it is planned that Ukraine will join thirty countries with best conditions for doing business by 2020 (The Ministry for Economic Development and Trade of Ukraine, 2015).

The protection of business' interests

Apart from improving the availability of public services for the different categories of stakeholders, the government also made several steps to grant additional protection to the interests of business. Thus, since May 2015 the Council of Business Ombudsman started its functioning in Ukraine. Any physical person, who conducts business activities, as well as a legal entity, can file a claim at the website of the Council if his/her/its rights were infringed by the actions of a state institution or its executives. The Council is authorized to launch its own investigation if it gains information about the infringements indirectly, even from media sources.

Having signed formal Memoranda on Partnership and Cooperation with the Ministry for Justice and the State Regulatory Office, the Council shall issue recommendations regarding the improvement of conditions for business activities and reducing corruption risks as a result of its investigations. In 2015 the Council received 585 complaints from the representatives of the business, successfully completed the consideration of 151 cases and issued 123 recommendations for various government agencies (Business Ombudsman Council, 2015, p.19). Over sixty percent of the Council's recommendations have already been practically implemented (Business Ombudsman Council, 2015). A position of the Commissioner for Entrepreneurship was also launched at the State Fiscal Agency of Ukraine to facilitate the dialogue between business and the Agency. Now individual complaints, systemic issues regarding tax administration and business' legislative proposals can be forwarded to the Commissioner.

Another long expected novelty is the adoption of the Law, improving the system of protecting investors in Ukraine. The Law provides for supplementary means of redress by minority investors,

introduces the institute of independent directors (independent members of Supervisory Board), and diversifying the methods of paying dividends.

Challenges

Despite a number of evident successes of the ongoing deregulation reform, there are still a lot of tasks to be accomplished to conduct a systemic transformation of Ukrainian business environment.

While the tax reform was planned to be conducted before June 2016, there is no active expert discussion of the planned changes. A single concept of the proposed tax reform is currently available from the website of the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine. The major envisaged transformation deals with reducing the number of taxes by unifying some of them (e.g., ecological tax and a duty for the special use of forest resources) and abolishing others (e.g, a duty for conducting specific types of entrepreneurship activities). At least three approaches are suggested by the concept to optimize the structure of increase the revenue from land taxes salary taxes and a unified social tax. In 2015 the government conducted the first stage of the fiscal decentralization reform, and continuing to adjust tax system to the new budget authorities of local councils remains a priority for 2016 (Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine, 2015b).

According to the opinion of experts of the NGO ‘Easy Business’ and Bendukidze Free Market Centre, another key challenge for the development of Ukraine’s economy is the moratorium on the sale of agricultural land that has been functioning in Ukraine since 2002 (Erashov, 2016; Fedorin, 2016). Given the controversial nature of the law ‘On the market of land’, whose adoption is a key condition for lifting the above moratorium, it is expected that the ban will preserve, preventing citizens from fully exercising their land ownership rights.

One of the key components of the ‘Doing Business’ assessment is the enforcement of contracts. That is why several teams of experts currently work on the draft legislation that will improve the system of court decisions’ enforcement. Apart from the introduction of private law enforcement agencies, debated changes include optimization of enforcement timelines, strengthening of the debtor’s responsibility in enforcement proceedings, as well as the formation of an open registry of debtors.

Improving the efficiency of bankruptcy procedures represents another segment of the deregulation reform, essential to enhance Ukraine’s position in the ‘Doing Business’ rating. For the time being, suggested changes include broadening the scope of creditors’ rights, providing a debtor with an access to external funding, as well as ensuring the independence of the arbitration manager.

Trading across borders also remains a challenging aspect of attracting foreign investments to Ukraine due to the foreign exchange restrictions¹⁶. Unresolved issues remain in the domains of ensuring the accessibility of construction permits and electricity. While the above section provided an only limited overview of the major directions for change, required to make Ukraine more attractive for investors and ensure the fruitful functioning of the EU-Ukraine DCFTA, diversity of existing issues testifies to the amount of work to be accomplished.

Conclusion

The aim of the above analysis was to consider the ongoing deregulation reform in Ukraine from the standpoint of the DCFTA between the EU and Ukraine and its transformative power. The major units of analysis included the parties' intent, the process of the reform's implementation, its impact and associated challenges.

The intent for the EU support of the deregulation reform is determined by the need to ensure an effective application of the EU-Ukraine DCFTA that is beneficial for both the Union and Ukraine. Given the importance of Ukraine for the EU in both security and economic stability terms, the Union pays significant attention to countering current economic crisis in this country.

The implementation of the reform is found to be significantly influenced by the European aspirations of Ukraine, in particular the EU-Ukraine DCFTA. First, the fact that conducting deregulation reform represents an international obligation of Ukraine in terms of the AA and the EU-Ukraine Association Agenda represents an important external incentive for the reform's implementation. Second, the link between the approximation of Ukraine's legislation to *acquis communautaire* and ongoing reforms (including the reform of deregulation) provides for the orientation on results and a technocratisation of the reform. The above effects are strengthened by the Union's application of enhanced conditionality and elaborate monitoring procedures in terms of the AA.

The EU's strong support for the reform-oriented NGOs led to multiple advantages for the reform's implementation, such as the inclusiveness of this process, critical perspectives and the application of innovative methodologies. Moreover, the work of specific bodies, solely dedicated to

¹⁶ The foreign exchange restrictions for legal persons include compulsory selling of seventy five percent of revenue, generated in foreign currency, no later than 90 days following the generation of the revenue; a ban to buy foreign currency in case an enterprise has deposits in foreign currency of not less than 10 thousand U.S. dollars; a ban to buy foreign currency for the purposes of paying dividends to foreign investors or buying corporate rights from them (in case they do not take the form of shares). Specific restrictions concern the amount of foreign currency that can be withdrawn from an account and bought in cash.

the deregulation ensured the reform's comprehensiveness and its extensive media and social media coverage. Last, but not least, the EU assistance and the opportunities for cooperation between the government, NGOs and business community in terms of the reform served as crucial means of empowering the reform-oriented NGOs.

Another critical feature of the deregulation reform that became possible due to the EU DCFTA-related support is simultaneous creation of the favourable conditions for business and the empowerment of SMEs.

A year of the reform's implementation resulted in a range of achievements in three basic spheres, such as the mode of public services' delivery, reduction of the number of required permits, authorizations and checks, as well as the protection of business' interests. However, there are still a number of systemic challenges, preventing Ukraine from successful transformation of its regulatory environment (varying from lengthy enforcement of court decisions to extensive foreign exchange restrictions).

Despite challenges, the formation of a progressive deregulation reform team, comprehensive nature of the reform, application of modern progress and compliance measurement tools and the orientation on international business ratings represent the trends, testifying to significant transformative power of the Ukraine's European aspirations in general and the EU-Ukraine DCFTA in particular.

The directions for future research include the impact of the EU's SME support programs on SME policy in Ukraine, the influence on the launching of the EU-Ukraine DCFTA on Ukraine's attractiveness for investment, as well as the EU normative power at the current stage of its relations with Ukraine.

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FINANCING THE EU NEIGHBOURHOOD – KEY FACTS AND FIGURES FOR THE EASTERN PARTNERSHIP

Ioana SANDU*
Gabriela DRAGAN**

Abstract: *The EU is permanently trying to secure its proximity by creating a “ring of friends” in the neighbourhood. Thus, stabilization through economic integration and modernization have been the purpose of the European Neighbourhood Policy (the ENP) since its creation, in 2004. Successive reviews of the ENP in the past decade have aimed to customize support to different needs of the partners. Funding has been allocated according to the level of commitment to reform of the EU neighbours. The six small states of the Eastern Partnership (EaP) have benefitted not only from common ENP provisions, but also from specific instruments dedicated to their particular situation. Bilateral and multi-country programmes included in the European Neighbourhood Instrument (ENI), but also instruments from other EU policies and support from the International Financial Institutions (IFI) have helped the EaP members to achieve progress in EU approximation.*

Keywords: funding; financial instruments; Eastern neighbourhood; “more for more”; reform

JEL Classification: F55; G23; O19; P33

Introduction

The European Neighbourhood has been a troubled area and is now, more than ever, on the front page of the EU agenda, as both its Southern and its Eastern partners have recently faced serious security challenges, affecting not only the countries themselves, but also their respective neighbours, namely the EU members.

Through available means within the EU architecture, the ENP members have received constant financial support to help them overcome their internal economic drawbacks and, at the same time, to stimulate conflict resolution and the rule of law.

We aim to analyse how the allocation of funds for the ENP members has changed over time and what the triggers of different reviews of the ENP have been and respectively, their consequences.

Our focus is represented by the Eastern dimension of the ENP and the paper is divided into two sections: the first one comprises an overview of the latest ENP review in terms of funding, whereas the second one goes further into the funding distribution and evolutions within the previous financial framework, 2007-2013 and available data from the current one, 2014-2020.

* PhD Student, Bucharest University of Economic Studies, Romania; ioanamarina18@yahoo.com

** Professor, Bucharest University of Economic Studies, gabriela.dragan@ier.ro

A deep insight into the indicative allocation and committed funds, based on official EU data, is expected to show how the issues related to the Eastern neighbours have been addressed in recent years.

1. The latest ENP review: several changes to the funding mechanism

The latest review of the ENP shows that the EU is trying to create not only an economic area with its Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Agreement (DCFTA) partners, but also more flexible agreements for those who choose not to sign a DCFTA.

Concerning the financial assistance available through ENI, the same document (European Commission, 2015a) emphasizes the need for a more intense cooperation with the main IFI and, at the same time, a better use of the Neighbourhood Investment Facility (NIF) for *increasing funds dedicated to the neighbourhood* and maximizing their regional impact.

In order to render the technical financial instruments (TAIEX - Technical Assistance and Information Exchange, and Twinning) more flexible, these will be modernised and tailor-made to offer personalized support. Under this review, the EU is also considering the creation of a new instrument to address the financial needs of partner countries to continue reforms and to adapt to the rapid evolution of some political circumstances (such as the trust funds being used to support people involved in the Ukrainian and Syrian conflicts).

Moreover, the next ENP evaluation in 2017 might bring the addition of a “*flexibility cushion*” to the ENI for unpredicted situations, amount that can be reported to the next year when not used. At the same time, the new ENP aims to better correlate donors with other financing mechanisms of the EU and with the main IFI, the African Union, the Arab States League, the Gulf Cooperation Council, the Union for the Mediterranean (UfM) and the EaP.

2. EU funding of the Eastern Neighbourhood: a crossroad of instruments from different policies

The economic and political offer provided by the Eastern Partnership (EaP) has not proven attractive enough for the Eastern Neighbourhood (Dragan, 2015).

Bilateral cooperation was, in 2014, the main funding source for the EaP (according to Table 1). The six Eastern partners received in 2014 a total amount of 578 million euro in committed funds within the ENI 2014-2020 and also 501.2 million eur disbursed in 2014, previously committed under

the 2007-2013 financial framework for the neighbourhood (the European Neighbourhood and Partnership Instrument - ENPI).

More than half of the total funding dedicated by the EU to its Eastern neighbors in 2014 was directed to Ukraine (556.1 million euro), followed by Moldova (224.7 million euro) and Georgia (172.1 million euro). This is considered a consequence of the “more for more” principle, included in the EaP review 2010-2011, as the three states mentioned are also the most committed to reform in approximation towards the EU and economic integration through AA/DCFTA signed in 2014.

Regional programmes and multilateral cooperation programmes within the EaP totaled around 200 million euro in 2014, while the ENI contribution to cross-border cooperation programmes and Erasmus + (for the EaP and the UfM) was of 156.4 million euro.

Table 1 - Committed and disbursed funds in 2014 through ENI/ENPI in the EaP countries (million euro)

Country / Programme	Committed funds through ENI in 2014	Disbursed funds in 2014 for ongoing projects committed through ENPI
Armenia	34	23.2
Azerbaijan	21	6.8
Belarus	19	22.3
Georgia	131	41.1
Moldova	131	93.7
Ukraine	242	314.1
Subtotal bilateral programmes	578	501.2
Regional programmes and other multilateral cooperation programmes	152.4	47
Total EaP	730.4	548.2
CBC (EaP + UfM)		
ENI contribution	6.9	45
Erasmus+ (EaP + UfM)		
ENI contribution to Erasmus+	102.9	1.6
Completion of Erasmus Mundus / Tempus Actions funded from ENPI		98.3

Source: Author's representation, based on European Commission (2015b, p. 32-33)

At the same time, for the time sequence 2014-2017, the maximum available amounts for the EaP countries reflect the same distribution tendency, with *higher values to the states that prove the highest commitment to reform* (Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine). Thus, Georgia and Moldova can receive, for this period, up to 410 million euro each, followed by Ukraine, with 200 million euro

allocated for 2014 only. At the bottom of the ranking, Armenia receives a maximum of 170 million euro, Azerbaijan 94 million euro and Belarus 89 million euro (Figure 1).

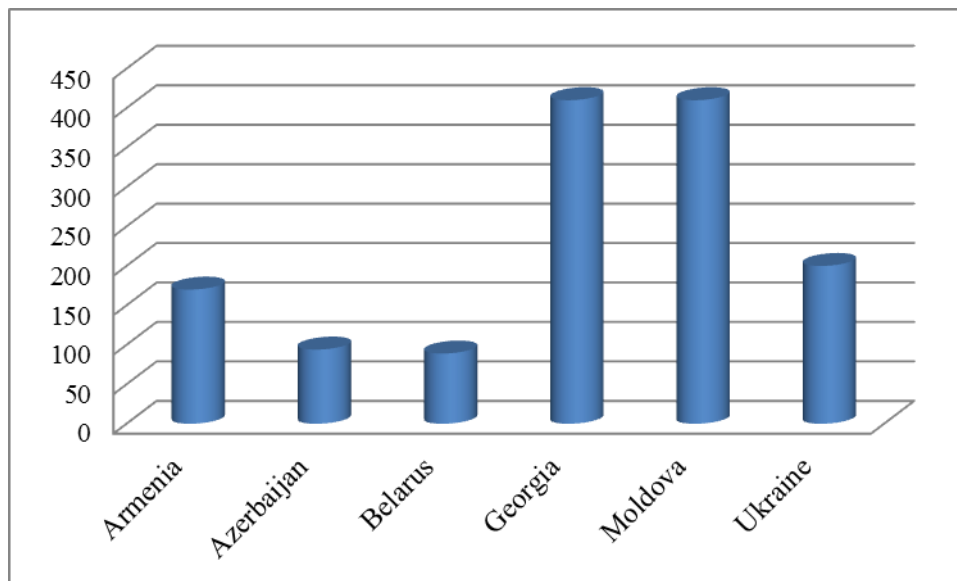
Table 2 - Indicative multiannual allocation (million euro) and allocation of funds for 2014-2017 in the EaP countries

Country	Indicative ENI allocation for 2014-2017		Allocation of funds
	Minimum amount	Maximum amount	
Armenia	140	170	Private sector development 35% Public administration reform 25% Justice reform 20% Complementary support for capacity development and civil society 20%
Azerbaijan	77	94	Regional and rural development 40% Justice reform 20% Education and skills development 20% Complementary support for capacity development and civil society 20%
Belarus	71	89	Social inclusion 30% Environment 30% Local and regional economic development 30% Complementary support for civil society 10%
Georgia	335	410	Agriculture and rural development 30% Public administration reform 25% Justice reform 25% Complementary support for capacity development and civil society 20%
Moldova	335	410	Agriculture and rural development 30% Public administration reform 30% Policy reform and border management 20% Complementary support for capacity development and civil society 20%
Ukraine	140	200	Private sector development 40% Energy sector 40% Complementary support for capacity development and civil society 20%

Source: Secretariat of the Committee on Foreign Affairs

Agriculture, regional and rural development are the main destination of allocations to the EaP countries (Azerbaijan 40%, Belarus 30%, Georgia 30%, Moldova 30%), followed by private sector development (Ukraine 40%, Armenia 35%), whereas the complementary support for capacity development and civil society represents a priority for all the Eastern partners (according to Table 2).

Figure 1 - Multiannual indicative allocation (maximum amounts, million euro) for 2014-2017 in the EaP countries



Source: Author's representation, based on data in Table 2

In the previous financial framework, the ENPI 2007-2013, the EaP benefitted from 2.5 billion euro in commitments for bilateral cooperation (according to Table 3), which represent in average 357 million euro/year, less than the allocation for the first year of the 2014-2020 framework (578 million euro).

Increases in the financing of the Eastern neighbourhood were not only quantitative, but they also represented *targeted adjustments to the political context* and different allocation priorities. Before the ENPI, the TACIS and the MEDA programmes were mainly geographically divided (according to the Eastern and Southern neighbourhood respectively), while the new instruments are more related to progress achieved in reforms. In addition, ENPI and ENI were also directed to fund regional, interregional and cross-border programmes, involving both partner countries and EU members.

The “umbrella” programmes SPRING and EaPIC within the ENPI – for improvements in profound democracy – are an example of the incentive approach the EU has to funding. 692 million euro were directed between 2011 and 2013 to democratic transition and economic recovery in countries affected by “The Arab Spring” - Algeria, Egypt, Jordan, Lebanon, Libya, Morocco and Tunisia - but also in the Eastern Neighbourhood for partners engaged on the road of institutional building and economic reform - Moldova, Georgia, Armenia (European Commission, 2014). This mechanism is now included in the ENI and represents an additional funding, not included in programming documents.

Partner countries can get additional funding – included in the multiannual programming – for implementing the main agreements with the EU and for supporting the civil society based on previous initiatives: the CIB (Comprehensive Institution Building), the NCSF (Neighbourhood Civil Society Facility) and the ENPI (European Commission, 2015b). Cross border cooperation (CBC) is financed both through ENPI/ENI and through ERDF (European Regional Development Fund) and involves the EU member states and the EU neighbours.

The Regional East Programme is also covering: education and youth programmes (Tempus, Erasmus Mundus and Erasmus +), administration (TAIEX and SIGMA - Support for Improvement in Governance and Management) and investment (NIF), with allocated funding.

Twinning programmes, TAIEX and SIGMA are different from the classic support instruments, as they provide expertise from the public sector, involving employees from the public administrations of the Member States that interact with their homologues in partner states (EU Neighbourhood Info Centre, 2013).

TAIEX programmes are meant to offer specialized assistance in implementing the EU legislation in partner countries (EU Neighbourhood Info Centre, 2013). SIGMA programmes, on the other hand, are co-financed by the OECD (Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development) and are addressed to all public governance institutions (civil service, administrative law, expenditure management, financial control, external audit, procurement, regulatory capacities, and property rights' management). SIGMA is active in all EaP member states, except for Belarus.

Table 3 - Committed funds for the EaP countries through ENPI 2007-2013 (million euro)

Country	Committed amount
Armenia	281.5
Azerbaijan	143.5
Belarus	94.2
Georgia	452.1
Moldova	560.9
Ukraine	1005.6
Total ENPI for bilateral programmes in the EaP	2537.8
Russia (2007-2011)	66.5
Regional and interregional programmes	1280.3
Total EaP and Russia	3884.6

ENPI for bilateral programmes in the UfM	7523.3
Regional and interregional programmes	1518.9
Total UfM	9042.2

CBC (cross-border cooperation)	955.3
ENPI contribution	463.1
ERDF contribution	492.2
TOTAL ENPI	13389.9

Source: Author's representation, based on European Commission (2014) data

There are some other instruments financing the European Neighbourhood apart from the ENPI/ENI (according to the EU Neighbourhood Info Centre), such as:

- ✓ Instrument for Pre-accession Assistance (IPA)
- ✓ Development Cooperation Instrument (DCI)
- ✓ Partnership Instrument (PI)
- ✓ Instrument contributing to Stability and Peace (IfSP)
- ✓ European Instrument for Democracy & Human Rights (EIDHR)

DG Home Affairs also allocates funding for the Neighbourhood through the Asylum, Migration, Integration Fund and the Internal Security Fund.

Complementary financing is made through private sources (co-financing for the Flagship Initiatives), but also with IFI support, namely the European Investment Bank (EIB) and the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD). The EIB supports the EaP with financing projects¹⁸ related to European transportation, energy, telecommunications and environment infrastructure, and, starting with 2009, through lending to SMEs (Small and Medium-sized Enterprises). The Eastern Partnership Facility (EPF) – including Russia – is also created in 2009, with a supplementary allocation of 1.5 billion euro (without EU budgetary guarantee). Its purpose is to support the Foreign Direct Investments (FDI) in the EaP countries.

The EBRD is co-financing projects related to building democratic market economies and concentrates FDI in the operating countries, on a permanent dialogue with governments, authorities and representatives of the civil society. Its activity is correlated to the OECD, the IMF (International Monetary Fund), the WB (World Bank) and specialized UN agencies. Its relations with the EaP date back to 1991.

¹⁸ For financing operations outside the EU (including the neighbourhood), the EIB receives an EU budgetary guarantee.

Conclusions

The ENP has been a framework of support for the EU neighbours since its creation. It provided a platform of expertise in profound democracy, public administration and the rule of law for the EU partners, which further led to higher economic integration and more intense trading relations.

However, as part of the global benefits incorporated in the ENP, financial assistance has always had a huge impact on the funding recipients. Although extended to regional and multi-country programmes, the main part of the cooperation with the ENP members is still on a bilateral track, as the ENPI and ENI allocation has shown.

The EaP members that recorded the best performances in reform implementation have received proportional financial assistance. Georgia and Moldova are considered the top apprentices and were allocated a maximum amount of 410 million euro each for 2014-2017, whereas the conflict in Ukraine has also generated a higher aid to this country for 2014: 210 million euro. Even the less obedient partners can receive from 89 million euro (Belarus) to 94 million euro (Azerbaijan) and 170 million euro (Armenia), in the time sequence 2014-2017. The total ENI amount is also globally higher than the ENPI (2007-2013) amount.

EaP members also benefitted from complementary support through the ERDF and DG Home Affairs. Projects can also be financed by the EBRD and the EIB, or co-financed by the OECD.

The indicative ENI allocation for 2014-2017 reveals that agriculture, regional and rural development is the main priority for the majority of the EaP countries. Private sector development and complementary support for capacity development and civil society are also key destinations for EU funding.

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THE PROSPECTS OF THE EUROPEAN UNION MEDIATION AND PEACEKEEPING IN THE EASTERN PARTNERSHIP

Hanna SHELEST*

Abstract: *While many of the European Union (EU) member states have been actively involved in conflict resolution around the world as single states, the EU itself does not have a sufficient experience in this sphere, among others due to the concentration on confidence-building as the main instrument of involvement and also due to the absence of a consensus in foreign and security policy, especially in the conflict settlement sphere. The situation started changing in 2008, because of the Russian-Georgian conflict, whereas the Ukrainian crisis of 2014 brought a serious challenge for the EU. Against this backdrop, this article seeks to answer the following questions: Is the EU a reliable partner in peacekeeping and mediation activities in the European conflicts and what are its strengths and weaknesses? This paper argues that despite years of involvement, it is still difficult to name the European Union a reliable mediator and a possible peacekeeper in the Eastern Partnership region. The article also insists against calling the EU a mediator in the Ukrainian crisis, since its involvement in peacekeeping is low.*

Keywords: European Union; Common Security and Defence Policy; conflict resolution; Eastern Partnership

1. Mediation and Peacekeeping in the EU Common Policies

Many of the European Union (EU) member-states had a long history of conflict resolution and mediation, however the Union as a whole has been rarely seen in this capacity in the past, mostly due to its limited approach, based mainly on confidence-building and post-conflict reconstruction instruments, and also to the inability to find internal consensus for a common position on a specific conflict. The EU's peacekeeping activities have been usually triggered by the necessity to support the UN activities. The EU Global Strategy presented in 2016 just confirmed this thesis of the UN priority, while considering own operation just as a complimentary action: "Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP) could assist further and complement UN peacekeeping through bridging, stabilisation or other operations" (European Union, 2016, p. 40).

Given its often violent history, Europe's own integration process has long been regarded as the EU's main contribution to conflict prevention. Furthermore, according to Gross (2013, p.18), in the EU's immediate neighbourhood exporting a set of values through enlargement and conditionality has been salient in conflict prevention – an approach that was later adapted and applied to the wider neighbourhood through the European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP).

* PhD. Editor-in-Chief, UA: Ukraine Analytica and Member of the Board, Foreign Policy Council "Ukrainian Prism", e-mail: ukraine_analytica@ukr.net

Despite the principle of “acceptance”, whether conflicting sides are ready to accept the EU as a mediator, it is even more important to start from whether the EU sees itself as a possible mediator and peacekeeper. For this purpose, it is necessary to evaluate whether CSDP considers the joint mediation and peacekeeping missions as its main mechanisms. In Lisbon Treaty adopted in 2009 it was stated that “the CSDP shall be an integral part of the common foreign and security policy. It shall provide the Union with an operational capacity drawing on civilian and military assets. The Union may use them on missions outside the Union for peace-keeping, conflict prevention and strengthening international security in accordance with the principles of the United Nations Charter” (Art. 28 – point 49 of Treaty) (EUR-LEX, 2007). Before the Treaty of Lisbon entered into force, the tasks, which could be carried out under the framework of the CSDP, were: humanitarian and rescue missions; conflict prevention and peace-keeping; combat forces in crisis management. The Treaty of Lisbon added three new tasks to this list: joint disarmament operations; military advice and assistance; post-conflict stabilisation (EUR-LEX, 2010).

However, there is not a single word on mediation as an instrument of the foreign policy and conflict resolution either in the Treaty on European Union or in the Lisbon Treaty. Yet, the mediation efforts were present in the EU activities, and received special attention after 2008 involvement in the Russian-Georgian conflict.

Already in 2009, the concept on Strengthening EU Mediation and Dialogue Capacities was adopted, stating that “in practice mediation is already an integral part of EU external action, [since] the EU has so far used this tool in a rather ad-hoc fashion” (Council of the European Union, 2009). The creation of the Division for Conflict Prevention, Peacebuilding and Mediation Instruments – within the Security Policy and Conflict Prevention Directorate was an important step for institutionalization and separation of this work from the general foreign policy activities.

The 2016 Global Strategy for the European Union’s Foreign and Security Policy (European Union, 2016) *de-facto* put the mediation in the same line as preventive diplomacy, seeing it as an instrument for pre-emptive peace and early action – “Early warning is of little use unless it is followed by early action. This implies regular reporting and proposals to the Council, engaging in preventive diplomacy and mediation by mobilising EU Delegations and Special Representatives”. Concurrently, Conflict Settlement section is mostly dedicated to the questions of work with local authorities and municipalities for confidence building and development, engagement with civil society, inclusive governance, cultural, inter-faith, scientific and economic diplomacy.

In fact, after the involvement in conflicts in the Balkans states, the EU concentrated on a *soft security approach*, not paying much attention to the conflicts in the Black Sea area, where three out

of six Eastern Partnership (EaP) states are located. The so-called “frozen conflicts” in Moldova (Transnistria), Georgia (South Ossetia and Abkhazia) and Azerbaijan (Nagorno-Karabakh) have been much more in line with the post-conflict reconciliation and confidence building measures activities rather than mediation and conflict management. The OSCE has remained the main responsible actor, while the EU has spent most of its time and money on democratisation and association issues, seen as the best leverage for achieving compromise between the conflicting parties.

In the European Security Strategy adopted in 2003, where serious attention is paid to the problem of conflict resolution, a bigger consideration is given not to the conflicts as they are, but to issues such as terrorism, weapons of mass destruction, failed states and organized crime, which were perceived as consequences of regional conflicts that could ultimately influence the security of the European Union. A choice of cases presented in the Strategy attracts attention, since a special focus is paid to the Middle East, in particularly Arab-Israeli conflict; the Balkans were mentioned as an example of the European success in conflict management; Democratic Republic of Congo, East Timor, Afghanistan as examples of military presence; Kashmir, the Great Lakes Region and the Korean Peninsula with their direct and indirect impact on European interests; and the Mediterranean area, which undergoes serious problems of economic stagnation, social unrest and unresolved conflicts (European Council, 2003). However, the Caucasian region and neighbouring Transnistria have not been sufficiently under the loop. This vision was correlated in terms of mechanisms used in the Concept of Strengthening EU Mediation and Dialogue Capacities (2009), but the global approach remained: “The EU is a global actor and its political, developmental and security interests go well beyond its neighbourhood. It will therefore continue to offer its mediation (support) services whenever relevant and as part of its comprehensive approach to conflict prevention and resolution” (Council of the European Union, 2009).

In early 2000s, many experts raised quite a sceptical question as whether an economic organization – as the EU was perceived – should be involved in conflict resolution, or this field should be left in the responsibility of the regional security organizations. Despite launching CSDP, the EU faced a dilemma of whether it should be involved in military security issues by making use of NATO capabilities. In addition, the Western European Union still existed until 2011 (before being closed as a result of the Treaty of Lisbon) (Western European Union, 2011), but had never before been considered as a capable peace-making mechanism. The EU has become a part of an implicit international division of labour in which regional organisations play an increasingly important role (Engberg, 2013). Member states politically favoured intervention through their membership in NATO as a transatlantic framework (Afghanistan, Libya), a coalition of the willing (Iraq 2003) or decided to

wait for a UN or regional response (Lebanon 2006-09, Sri Lanka 2009, Kyrgyzstan 2010, Syria 2012). Thus, since many EU deployments were not in response to crises but were more of a capacity-building nature, the term ‘crisis management’ does not fully correspond to the reality on the ground (Hazelzet, 2013). CSDP operations have become important tools of the EU’s external action, but they have also shown the limits of what the EU and its member states are able and willing to offer for enhancing global security (Tardy, 2015).

Most of the EU involvement in the crisis management was inspired by the UN missions on the ground. For instance, in the EaP region, only a small UN mission in Georgia acted, sharing responsibilities with the OSCE. The cooperation between the EU and the United Nations was a logical continuation of the Boutros Ghali “Agenda for Peace” concept (Boutros Ghali, 1992) based on the greater involvement of the regional organizations in conflict resolution. While going further than a natural region of responsibility, the EU usually involved in conflicts in the states, where it had strong interests in the past, or in regions experiencing security vacuums, and lack of international involvement. In such cooperation, the UN received additional human and material resources due to the EU involvement, while the EU, instead, received moral authorization and legalization of its participation. In all four conflicts (South Ossetia, Abkhazia, Nagorno-Karabakh and Transnistria) existing in the EaP region before the Ukrainian crisis, the UN played a minor role, so the European Union did not have its traditional “entrance” which meant that it needed to coordinate its presence with the OSCE missions active on the ground. Moreover, during its pioneering decade as a military crisis manager, the EU has chosen to intervene in conflicts that have looked more like opportunities than challenges. They have situated themselves in the low-to-middle bandwidth in terms of values, interests and risks at stake (Engberg, 2013).

With the adoption of the EU Global Strategy, which envisaged a greater international involvement for the EU, the attitude towards peacekeeping has not changed, still presenting to the UN a leading role. Thus, discussing the investing in peace possibilities, the European Commission upholds: “Believing in the UN means, investing in it, notably in its peacekeeping, mediation, peacebuilding and humanitarian functions. The EU and its Member States, as already the first contributor to UN humanitarian agencies, will invest even further in their work. CSDP could assist further and complement UN peacekeeping through bridging, stabilisation or other operations” (European Union, 2016). In reality, it can be read as limiting its own initiatives in peacekeeping activities. Not withdrawing such efforts from the European Union security agenda, but not acting without the UN. Even more, such statement does not limit the geographical implication, but seems applying such a vision to all conflicts in the world.

De facto, the first autonomous military operation of the EU was in 2003 in DR Congo. The long-time involvement in the Balkans has been concentrated on the peacebuilding efforts, rather than peace-making or peace-keeping. According to Engberg, by 2013 the EU's six military operations could be considered a quiet success as they had contributed to the stabilisation of war-torn countries in the Balkans, stopped the escalation of conflict in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, shielded vulnerable refugees in Chad, and helped stem piracy off the coast of Somalia (Engberg, 2013).

The EU does not have a significant experience in conducting peacekeeping operations. Even this term is seldom used in the official documents. The EU usually concentrates on the peacebuilding activities, confidence-building measures and post-conflict reconstruction, first of all, institutional, and conflict prevention. Separately one can name civilian crisis management operations.

Still, the EU involvement is difficult to separate from the NATO and multi-national operations, as many of the states involved are the same. So having operations in Afghanistan, Iraq, Libya, etc. led to an "intervention fatigue" of the European Union states and increased popularity of the "no boots on the ground" concept by 2014.

2. EU involvement in conflict resolution in the Eastern Partnership area

It is necessary to mention that until 2005, the European Union had not taken any position regarding the settlement of the conflicts in the post-Soviet space, except for the general statements concerning peace methods of their resolution. In the Eastern Partnership (EaP) states, the EU's involvement started in 2005 with the inclusion to the "5+2" format over Transnistrian negotiations and later acting as a mediator in the Russian-Georgian conflict in 2008. However, these efforts had their time and scope limitations.

The EU's first involvement was connected with Moldova's Transnistrian conflict. In 2005 in Chisinau, GUAM states under a Ukrainian initiative invited the European Union to help manage the Transnistrian conflict, an invitation that was accepted. Thus, it has been more satisfied with the activities of the European Union Border Assistance Mission to Ukraine and Moldova (EUBAM), which in addition to the border management and anti-corruption activities, exercise some minor mediation efforts. This first attempt "inspired" further EU involvement in the Transnistrian conflict settlement. However, even having general position vis-a-vis Moldova's territorial integrity, one could notice the "threeplicity", when simultaneously the EU, Germany and Romania pretended to mediate. It resulted in certain difficulties to the general peace process, since all three had different level and quality of relations with the Russian Federation. Moreover, Romania tried to be a provider of

information for Brussels in this way seeking to enhance its position within the EU. The EU has also increased its rhetoric insisting on withdrawal of the Russian troops from Transnistria as a fulfilment of the respected obligations taken in 1999 at the OSCE meeting in Istanbul. Moreover, it has promoted the possibility of the peacekeeping operation format change, which should be more international. However, the EU has not been ready to take it under its own mandate, even if the mission would be changed from military one to police one.

De facto, the EU was not considering seriously the Black Sea region or a post-Soviet space as a region, which needs increased engagement. Only in 2007, the first comprehensive document was adopted for the Black Sea - the Communication on the Black Sea Synergy, which mostly concentrated on economic development and stimulation of the democratic reforms. Only one paragraph paid attention to the problem of the “frozen conflicts” where the Commission advocated a more active EU role through increased political involvement in ongoing efforts to address the conflicts (Transnistria, Abkhazia, South Ossetia and Nagorno-Karabakh) and has proposed that the EU should also look at ways of enhancing its participation ... “addressing the overall climate by tackling the underlying issues of governance and lack of economic development, lack of social cohesion, of security and of stability. Special attention must be paid to promoting confidence-building measures in the regions affected, including cooperation programmes specifically designed to bring the otherwise divided parties together” (European Commission, 2007).

Here, we can raise a reasonable question whether a promoter of peace is a synonym to a mediator. Confidence-building measures, support of the ground initiatives, disarmament and democratization, post-conflict reconstruction and conflict prevention, including dialogue, are effective means for peace promotion; however, their aim is not always to stop the conflict, to intervene impartially between the conflicting states and use political will for this purpose, but to manage the conflict and its consequences. Mediation requires greater political involvement in the resolution process itself. Also, in the EU Global Strategy, the authors propose that “our peace policy must also ensure a smoother transition from short-term crisis management to long-term peacebuilding to avoid gaps along the conflict cycle” (European Union, 2016). While such strategy in general is worth of consideration and can be strategically more effective, however, we should mention that mediation and peacekeeping activities are usually aimed for short-term crisis management (even if peacekeeping mission is stationed for a long time). None of them, mediation or peacekeeping, are aimed for a long-term peacebuilding propose.

The appointment of Peter Semneby as the European Union Special Representative for the South Caucasus in 2006 has represented a watershed in the EU policy towards the region. His hands-on

engagement in Georgia aimed chiefly at ‘preventing conflicts in the region’ and a ‘contributing to the peaceful settlement of conflicts’ (European Council, 2006). However, he has been given few means to achieve these objectives. He has not been authorized to act as a mediator between the conflicting parties, nor has he been given any strong material leverage (e.g. to promise anything about future EU integration) to exert influence on them. His main role has been to act as the local relay of the EU messages designed to moderate the conflictual behaviour between the parties (Georgia, Russia, South Ossetia and Abkhazia) and to persuade them to reinvigorate their search for a negotiated settlement. He has held political dialogue with the parties to the conflict and other interested actors such as the UN, the OSCE and the UN Group of Friends (Merlingen and Ostrauskaite, 2009).

The situation started changing in 2008, when the EU for the first time attempted to act as a single mediator in the Russian-Georgian conflict, intervening in the hot stage of its development. The disputes still going on whether this mediation can be considered successful, since fighting stopped but the peace has not been reached and separatists regions of Abkhazia and South Ossetia announced their independence, supported and recognized by Russia, so the question remained whether the latter undermined the cease-fire success. The issue of the mediator success is often one of the most disputable among both academicians and diplomats. If to evaluate the mediation by the full conflict settlement only, almost none of the mediation efforts can be regarded as so. However, if to evaluate by identifying what is a goal of the mediation efforts or what has been reached as temporary or intermediary goals – the mediation can be assessed in a more objective way. With this regard, the EU does not have a goal of managing the long lasting conflicts at the territory of Georgia, but just to reach a cease-fire between Russia and Georgia, to prevent further development of the military actions, and to return back to the negotiation table of the protracted conflicts in South Ossetia and Abkhazia.

The Russian-Georgian conflict of 2008 showed the limited possibilities of the international organizations, which have already been presented as mediators and peacekeepers in the region (the United Nations, Commonwealth of the Independent States and the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe), but also evolved the European Union activity as a mediator. Prior to 2008, the European Union played a secondary role in a conflict resolution and peace building in Caucasus. It has evolved in response to the changes in the international system, the EU’s own internal political dynamics, and the EU’s capacity and willingness to play a major role in regional and international conflicts (Bardakç1, 2010). *De facto*, until 2008, the European Union was providing mostly confidence-building measures in the region, as it is generally more comfortable with a post-conflict rehabilitation and a peace-building role, and has been wary of becoming directly involved in conflict resolution (International Crisis Group, 2006, p.2). However, Brussels neither had an operational role

with regard to peacekeeping forces in the two breakaway republics nor was it a member of the principal multilateral negotiation formats dealing with the management and resolution of the conflicts – the JCC and the Geneva process (Merlingen, 2009, p.9).

In 2008, the EU unexpectedly was able to impose itself as peacemaker, due to the French Presidency and President Sarkozy successful mediation attempt, when the EU played the key role in ending the short war and in leading the international talks that were convened to deal with the fall-out from the conflict (Merlingen, 2009, p.10). With this agreement, the EU for the first time started to act as an official mediator, however, still in the preparatory phase, it decided to limit its meditation to issues related to conflict management, as opposed to conflict resolution. According to Merlingen (2009), this was the result of a realistic assessment on the part of the EU of the dim prospects of a genuine peace conference along the lines of the Dayton negotiations on Bosnia.

One of the main concerns was that Europe usually had not been ready to speak with one voice in issues of peace and conflict resolution. The ability to act as a single actor in the Russian-Georgian conflict management had a significant effect on perception of the European Union as a reliable and possible mediator in the region. Soft issues of democratization, fighting corruption, visa liberalization demonstrated greater solidarity, the hard security concerns remained salient. However, the situation has changed, and it came not only from the external conditions in which the EU had appeared after the latest round of enlargement, but also from the internal understanding of the changing role of the EU, necessity to take bigger responsibility in the world affairs and certain accommodation of the different national policies towards the crisis regions.

In the EaP area, the EU has faced diversification of the member-states opinions, influenced by their different perception of the relations with Russia, which saw this region as a sphere of its national interests, ready to use any means for its protection. The EaP aimed from the beginning at strengthening relations in the spheres of trade, economics, travel, social issues, without sufficiently tackling security concerns. Security under the first Communication (European Commission, 2008) was limited to border management, man-made disasters response, visas and law-enforcement reform. Conflict areas were addressed only in a context of supporting civil society efforts in confidence building and possible cooperation in early-warning systems. It was only with the revision of the ENP in November 2015 that the European Council pledged to “enhance cooperation with partners, including through, where appropriate, CSDP activities or the EU's Special Representatives, to support the management and resolution of conflicts in the neighbourhood including through agreed frameworks” (European Council, 2015).

The main feature of the EU involvement in the conflict resolution in the Eastern Partnership states is that it has been positively perceived by all parties to the conflicts, and considered a more or less neutral mediator. Most countries in the region saw the EU as a more acceptable peacekeeper than the USA, because it could encounter less opposition from the Russian Federation. Nagorno-Karabakh conflict still remains almost out of the EU concern, leaving France as a main involved actor within the OSCE Minsk Group format.

3. The Ukrainian crisis involvement challenges

The Ukrainian crisis of 2014 brought a new challenge for the EU. As integration with it was seen as one of the reasons for the crisis, so the European Union could not stay apart, however, due to the dissonance in the positions and approaches of the member-states, the EU was not able to become a real mediator. Both Euromaidan clashes (2013/2014) and the conflict started in the East of Ukraine in 2014 made it impossible for the EU to avoid involvement, though there are still doubts whether the EU or rather separate member states are real mediators there. The launch of the Normandy format with Germany and France as mediators became an evidence of this.

During Euromaidan (November 2013-February 2014), the European Union was seen as a more consolidated actor. It was not only up to the European Commission to be involved, but the European Parliament as well. Later, the single position has been elaborated (after tough negotiations and bargaining) on sanctions against the Russian Federation due to the involvement in the Ukrainian crisis. The EU used to be seen as an “honest broker” so welcomed to the negotiation table of conflict resolutions, even in the post-Soviet space. The Ukrainian situation was different, as one cannot ignore a detail that Ukrainian crisis was the first one triggered by the desire of active European integration of the state. Therefore, in these circumstances, the basic prerequisite of the good mediation – impartiality – was more difficult to guarantee. The leverage of the possible European integration played, for example, a significant role in the Kosovo-Serbia rapprochement in 2013, mediated by the EU. While this argument did not have the same effect for the Moldova-Transnistria situation, and had even less effect in Ukraine.

What drives the EU involvement in the conflict resolution is one of the important questions. As Argyro Kartsonaki and Stefan Wolff ask in their article, is it driven by human or European security imperatives? In a meaning of a norms-driven policy informed by the human security approach and a utility-driven policy that seeks greater European security in the sense of greater security for the EU and its citizens and member states (Kartsonaki and Wolff, 2015). In some way, it sets the question of

motivation of the European Union member-states to be involved in conflict resolution. On the one hand, the normative approach of the EU and a core idea of the unity – no war in Europe anymore – presents a pacifistic tactic of resolving conflicts in other states that violate democracy, human security, development and cooperation in Europe. On the other hand, the motivation can be perceived as that one protecting its own security, preventing spill over effect, fortifying national interests and minimizing negative effect of transnational threats. At the same time, it should be pointed out that the motivation of the EU to be involved can differ depending of the proximity of the conflict to its borders. The EU applies a human security approach, albeit predominantly in an instrumental way, in particular in those areas where it also has the strongest security interests of its own (Kartsonaki and Wolff, 2015). Therefore, the EU motivation in Europe usually has double reason – protecting its security and implying peace approach and normative values to others.

This theoretical explanation is perfectly proved by the Ukrainian case. Different level of interest of the EU member-states and their perception of the Crimean annexation and military actions in Eastern Ukraine depended on their geographical proximity to the threat source. While Baltic states were extrapolated this situation to their own security, Poland traditionally supported Ukraine, and Romania was cautious about possible spread of the Russian hybrid warfare to Moldova, so Spain worried much more about challenges coming from the North Africa, and Greece played a game of bargaining between the EU and Russian support for its weak economy. The direct bordering of Ukraine with the EU member states has also influenced the case, why the conflict in Eastern Ukraine gained much more attention than latest fighting in Nagorno-Karabakh in spring 2016, as Caucasus is still perceived by many member-states as something far from its security interests that cannot directly threaten their own security.

While in 2003 the EU Security Strategy proposed preventive engagement, which can avoid more serious problems in the future (European Council, 2003), it has not been implemented in real practise. Back in May 2014 Steven Blockmans and Daniel Gros insisted that “an EU Police Mission (EUPM) should be sent in to stabilize the aforementioned critical areas... The force would have to be large enough to dissuade or control the demonstrations, which in most cases have amounted to fewer than a thousand. It should be possible to prevent a repetition of the events of Odessa (and of Donetsk) if the EU could send a couple of hundred officers to each of the oblasts that are still relatively trouble-free to beef up the local police force. The dispatch of this EUPM Ukraine should give the civilian population the feeling that everybody will be protected and there is no need for arms” (Blockmans and Gros, 2014). As an example was taken mission in Macedonia in 1995, which facilitated stabilization process not allowing the conflict to develop and violence to continue. The authors of

CEPS commentary proposed a civilian mission, not to confront Russia, as military actions at that time were not happening in Donbas. However, the political process was chosen instead of the prevention operation.

Originally, there were two attempts to mediate the Ukrainian crisis: Geneva format and Normandy format. Geneva format, initiated in April 2014, involved Ukraine, Russia, the US and the European Union, where European Union were presented as an organization. The parties to the negotiations agreed about measures of conflict de-escalation in the East of Ukraine. Unfortunately, very soon the conflict has erupted with even more violence. A certain unwillingness of the US to be actively involved as a mediator has ruined this format, while a new one - Normandy has evolved. However, this time, the EU was not present there, represented by Germany and France, both as single players and as a voice of the EU. This format, later also known as Minsk format, due to the negotiations in Minsk in February 2015, raised many questions among the experts, and even the EU member states itself. For example, Poland for many times stated, that it would eager to be involved in these negotiations, as Ukraine need a stronger support (Новое время [The New Times], 2015).

None of the new initiatives on the peace formats for the Ukrainian crisis expressed an idea of the greater EU involvement, as for example, for the last five years is actively discussed about the OSCE Minsk Format for Nagorno-Karabakh conflict (currently OSCE Minsk group, the main mediation mechanism involved co-chairs from Russia, the US and France, and ideas presented to replace France by the EU for more impartial position). At the same time, journalists have raised a question on why, among all the EU states, Germany and France have participated. While Germany is seen as one of the EU leaders with a strong position against Russian one, with leverages and political will, so the French involvement remains inscrutable. It is still a question, why the EU as an institution has not been able to take an initiative instead of France-Germany duet. Partiality due to the sanctions introduction cannot be considered as an argument, as both member-states joined the sanctions almost without hesitation.

The call of the Ukrainian side to send the EU peacekeeping mission became an additional question of concern, as neither Ukraine realized the format it needed nor did the EU have sufficient capacity to deploy. On February 18, 2015, the National Security and Defence Council of Ukraine adopted a decision to call upon the UN and EU to deploy in Ukraine a peacekeeping operation. In numerous official statements and comments there were ideas to ask for the UN peace operation or the EU police operation, as an alternative to a possible Russian veto to the UN Security Council resolution, needed to deploy its peacekeepers. The original estimation of the Ukrainian side was that

such operation could be deployed in one and a half months, what sounded impossible from the very beginning.

One of the existing problem was that Ukrainian leadership did not present a clear vision about what type of the operation it needed, what kind of functions it expected. Peace-making activities as measures to address conflicts in progress, which usually involves diplomatic action to bring hostile parties to a negotiated agreement (United Nations 2015), had been already exercised within the Normandy format and Trilateral contact group with the OSCE participation. Peace-enforcement – as application of a range of coercive measures, including the use of military force, which requires the explicit authorization of the Security Council and used to restore international peace and security in situations where the Security Council has decided to act in the face of a threat to the peace, breach of the peace or act of aggression (United Nations, 2015) – was seen impossible, as in case of the UN, these functions were usually delegated to other organizations, and in case of the EU – it could be perceived both internally and externally as full involvement in the conflict on one side, losing possibilities for mediation.

Therefore, the expected format for managing conflict in Ukraine could be peacekeeping operation, which according to the UN definition, in principle, is deployed to support the implementation of a ceasefire or peace agreement, often required to play an active role in peace-making efforts and may also be involved in early peacebuilding activities (United Nations, 2015). Usually such kind of operations are deployed after cease-fire agreement reached, what in case of Ukraine were confirmed by signing Minsk agreements however not implemented in full on practise.

This question of unclear expectations also covers the choice between military, police and monitoring mission. All three options present different functions, responsibilities and personnel needed. Actually, monitoring function has been already covered by the OSCE Special Monitoring Mission to Ukraine since March 2014, which has around 500 unarmed civilian monitors in 10 cities around Ukraine (OSCE, 2015), still experiencing difficulties with having access to the separatists-controlled territories or even being threatened by them.

Moreover, the confusion between the UN and EU police missions' models can be traced in the Ukrainian official statements. While the UN police missions are considered as military missions but with specific tasks, so the European Union clearly separates military missions and police civilian missions. Traditionally in the EU police missions, currently deployed in Afghanistan and Palestine (in the past in DR Congo, Bosnia and Herzegovina and FYR Macedonia), the main tasks are the following: police and judicial reform, assistance in fighting organized crime, security sector reform, trainings and advisors support. Thus, most of these functions are already covered by the existing EU

Advisory Mission for Civilian Security Sector Reform Ukraine (EUAM Ukraine) (EEAS 2015a). Moreover, the tasks of the police missions are not adequate to those conditions currently being in Donbass region of Ukraine.

From the UN point of view, today's multidimensional peacekeeping operations facilitate the political process, protect civilians, assist in the disarmament, demobilization and reintegration of former combatants; support the organization of elections, protect and promote human rights and assist in restoring the rule of law (United Nations, 2015). Hence, if facilitation of the political process, organization of elections, human rights and rule of law are exactly within the EU priorities, so disarmament or demobilizations, monitoring cease-fire and civilian protection has not been experienced largely.

Insisting on the EU mission under the explanation to overcome the Russian veto in the UN was a potential risk. First, the EU does not have sufficient experience in this type of missions; second, perception of the EU as an interested party can lead to the blocking of this initiative from the side of the so-called Lugansk and Donetsk peoples republics. As the European Union integration of Ukraine is presented as one of the core reasons for the separatists' intentions, it would be difficult to imagine an agreement of the "DPR" and "LPR" representatives for the EU mission deployment. Moreover, such a mission can be blocked by those EU member-states whose leadership have close contacts with the Russian Federation.

As of 2015, the EU have had five military and 13 civilian operations in different countries around the world. Both missions, which work in Ukraine, are civilian - EU Advisory Mission for Civilian Security Sector Reform Ukraine (EUAM Ukraine, since March 2014) and The EU Border Assistance Mission to the Republic of Moldova and Ukraine (EUBAM, since 2005). Most of the EU military missions' mandates are not relevant for the Ukrainian situation. And only EUFOR RCA (Central African Republic), finished in March 2015, deployed combat units in an executive operation to provide temporary support in achieving a safe and secure environment, creating the conditions for providing humanitarian aid (EEAS, 2015b). Moreover, the EU military missions are usually short term and auxiliary to the activities of other international organizations.

The five military missions currently operating in Somalia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Mali and the Central African Republic (EEAS, 2015c) have differences in their functions, but among similarities are: provide capacity building and training to the Armed Forces, neutralize organized crime and terrorist threats, preparing a reform of the security sector. None of this expected on the East of Ukraine currently.

The positive moment in the Ukrainian case, is that the decision of the EU itself is enough to start an operation, which can skip the issue of the possible Russian veto in the UN Security Council. At the same time, the European Union mostly deployed its operations, where the UN mission had already been in place, or another international organization present and the EU mission played an assistance role. In Hazelzet's view the EU mainly brought a decisive contribution in three types of situations: the EU was willing and capable to act (i) where other organisations were not; (ii) when there was a specific demand for it to intervene; and (iii) in low- to medium-intensity conflict environments (Hazelzet, 2013). We would emphasize that the combination of the first and third reasons was the most important. While in Kosovo and Georgia the European Union appeared the only available mediator, due to the Russian blocking of the OSCE and the UN missions' prolongations, the intensity of the conflict were already low. The same can be said about Kosovo, as the EU mission replaced the UN mission on the ground. In case of Ukraine, all three conditions are weakly presented. OSCE is already on the ground – so other international organizations present. The specific demand to intervene existed, but recently mostly raised in association with the political rather than peacekeeping involvement. The question of conflict intensity is more difficult to answer, as despite the cease-fire agreement, it is not fully implemented and it can be difficult to predict its development in case of the EU military presence, even if in a role of mediators.

Conclusions

After 10 years of involvement in different capacities in the conflict management in the Eastern Partnership states, it is still difficult to name the European Union a reliable mediator and a possible peacekeeper. The Ukrainian crisis has articulated strength and weaknesses of the EU possible involvement in the conflict settlement at its immediate borders. While the new strategic documents envisaged a more active role in peace and conflict resolution, including mediation and peacekeeping operations, in reality it is still difficult for the EU to be involved in those countries right on its borders. Moreover, the EU not always acts as a single player, but represents the separate states, demonstrating the diversification of interests and concerns among the member-states.

The EU cannot be named as a mediator in the Ukrainian crisis, as has been excluded from the negotiating format. The delegation of these functions to Germany and France still provokes propositions of the Normandy format enlargement. Inability to act as a classical mediator - impartial if not neutral, - was determined by the triggers of the conflict (signing the Association Agreement between the EU and Ukraine). In such situation the EU both lost its traditional leverages and was not

perceived positively by the Eastern Ukrainian separatists regions. The economic sanctions imposed have the deterrent effect, but do not facilitate the mediation activities. In terms of the peacekeeping operation, the EU CSDP operation could be successful if deployed quickly just after the Crimean annexation in spring 2014, so to prevent a further escalation on the ground. Though, inability to foresee the violent development of the situation in Eastern Ukraine, in addition to a wrong estimation of the Russian Federation intentions, led to a wasted chance.

In terms of other Eastern Partnership countries, the only real chance to get greater EU involvement has been the Transnistrian conflict, since both sides to the conflict maintain a permanent political dialogue with the EU. The current relations between the European Union and Azerbaijan and Armenia do not foresee possible greater EU participation. In case of Georgia, considering limitations of the already existed EU mission and a strong Russian position, enlargement of its functions to a full-fledged mediation or wider zone of responsibility for peacekeeping cannot be envisaged as well.

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THE EU'S VOICE BEYOND ITS BORDERS: THE EUROPEAN UNION'S EXTERNAL COMMUNICATION

Luminita SOPRONI*
Ioan HORGA**

Abstract: *The EU's developing global role demands a new approach to communications outside the Union. Besides communicating its policies to its citizens in order to enhance their trust in the idea of the United Europe, it is also extremely important to provide information regarding its policies and actions beyond its borders, to non-member countries and also to various international entities and organizations. This approach is necessary because the strength of an organization' (in our case the European Union's) external reputation depends not only on the core values embedded in its domestic culture, but also on the way how it communicates them to various target publics. The paper analyses the external communication of the European Union (lines of action, actors involved, and communication realized through different policies) and how it affects the external image of the region, demonstrating the need for a coherent communication strategy that combines the interests of Member States with those of the European institutions and the needs of internal public with those of external public.*

Keywords: European Union; global communication; visibility; image; strategy

JEL Classification: R1; R58; H77; M31

1. The global communication approach

In the globalized world nowadays, the relations between states, regions and international entities are very complex, characterized by an increased level of interdependence. In this context, the international communication has become a top priority not only for governments or companies, but also for the European policymakers. Societies and communities must take part in this new global communication as they have no other choices; although their way of participation depends on their specific social, cultural, economic and political environment.

Global communication implies a complex and continuous approach of communication process so that each organization to be able to formulate, express and transmit the fundamental values that has built its identity and which guide the internal and external actions. In order to realise the total communication, which implies having the continuity between internal communication and external communication, every organization has to observe three principles:

1. *Internal communication before external communication.* The external communication must

* Senior Lecturer Ph.D., Department of International Relations and European Studies, University of Oradea, Romania; lsoproni@uoradea.ro

** Professor Ph.D., Department of International Relations and European Studies, University of Oradea, Romania; ihorga@uoradea.ro

be developed around a good and sustainable strategy of internal communication.

2. *Compatibility*. The compatibility must be realized between the messages delivered in internal communication and those sent in external communication and also between the messages sent and the actions undertaken by the organization. The sporadic communication actions, which are not included in the general strategy of the organisation won't have any effect, or, even worse, will produce negative effects.

Regarding this principle, the most delicate element to be managed is the compatibility between the message sent outside and the actions realized inside. The message in external communication must be compatible with the decision taken internally. If this compatibility lacks, the crisis may occur.

3. *Coherence*. The coherence must be realized in two directions:

- between the internal communication strategy and the external communication strategy;
- on the level of internal/external strategy, among the different resources and instruments used.

In terms of content, the coherence involves the pertinence of the delivered information and its connection to the everyday reality and to the objectives of the organization. In terms of processes, the coherence means choosing the appropriate communication tools and targets. Besides, communication should offer the possibility of feed-back and not to be one-way.

Finding some resemblance between the European Union's and a multinational corporation's communication policy, we consider that the *corporate communication theory* can be implemented successfully in unfolding the EU's external communication practices with third countries. In Joep Cornelissen's guide, corporate communication is described as "an instrument of management by means of which all consciously used forms of internal and external communication are harmonized as effectively and as efficient as possible" (Cornelissen, 2011, p.5). In order to be efficient, the external communication must be characterized by high levels of *visibility*, *distinctiveness*, *authenticity* and *consistency*. The first signifies the degree to which corporate themes are visible in all internal and external communication; the second one means the degree to which the corporate identity or positioning of the organization is distinctive; the third one refers to the degree to which an organization communicates values that are ingrained in its culture; while the last one indicates the degree to which organizations communicate consistent messages through all internal and external communication channels (Cornelissen, 2011, p.65). In other words, the strength of an organization' (in our case the European Union's) external reputation depends not only on the core values embedded in its corporate culture, but also on the way how it communicates them to various target groups and stakeholders.

According to this corporate communication theory, organizations should target at integrating their communicative actions to speak in “one voice” and present a coherent and unambiguous image of what the organization is and stands for, within and outside their sphere of influence (Valentini *et al.*, 2010, p.29; Christensen *et al.*, 2008, p.3). However it must be acknowledged that integration of internal and external communications requires the applying of different communication plans, strategies and practices.

Like all organizations, the European Union must take the following steps in developing its communication strategy: setting the goals, choosing the target public, choosing the necessary means and actions, the allocated budget and time. The communication strategy should determine EU communication objectives which can be: raising awareness among the member or non-member countries of EU of the roles of the EU in delivering aid in a particular context; raising awareness of how the EU works to support education, health, environment; ensuring that the beneficiary population of different projects is aware of the roles of the EU in the activities or actions realized (European Commission, 2010, p.8).

The setting of these goals is always linked with the target public which the communication actions are addressing to. The target public is formed by the population of the countries where actions and projects of the EU are implemented, the population of third countries as well as regional and international entities and organizations. In order to achieve an effective communication for actions or projects where EU is implied as partner, the target public must be very clearly identified. Therefore, audiences in the targeted countries or regions could include „opinion formers and influential figures, as well as those beyond government and media who have a stake in the action, or are affected by it” (European Commission, 2010, p.7). This is important because these categories of audiences are the ones for whom the impact of the action will be most apparent and most immediately relevant.

The quality of the relationship established between EU and the target public largely depends on the information and communication actions that have been initiated and accomplished, and that must always take into account the specific needs of each type of public, in addition to budget and time constraints. In establishing these actions, international partners and organizations must work together with the Press and Information Officer at the EU Delegation accredited to their country, who is responsible for co-ordinating the overall EU communication strategy in that country or countries.

The means of communication which can be used within the strategy are: press releases; press conferences; press visits (group visits by journalists to project sites which may offer additional visibility opportunities); leaflets, brochures and newsletters (useful in communicating the results of an action to specific audiences); web sites; banners; promotional items (that can be produced by

implementing partners, contractors or international organizations as supporting material for their information and communication activities in the framework of their action); photographs; audiovisual productions; public events and visits (conferences, workshops, seminars, fairs, and exhibitions which may offer good opportunities for generating interest in an action's achievements); and information campaigns (which can raise the visibility the EU by promoting discussion of the issues around its actions) (European Commission, 2010, pp.17-22).

2. EU's external image

Besides communicating to the European citizens in order to enhance their trust in the idea of the United Europe, it is also important to provide some information regarding the EU policies and actions beyond its borders, to non-member countries and also to various international entities and organizations. The opinions and perceptions of the people and nations outside the EU have implications for the Union's ability to promote its interests abroad and to function as a key-actor in the global economic and political landscape.

The communication strategy is a key element of the processes of creation and diffusion of an image of a region. Today, communication answers to new trends imposed by technology, and it becomes a total communication in many directions, different from the one-way communication from the region towards the external public. Different types of public can transmit messages to regional representatives and, even better, communicate with one another about the real or false values of the region and about the offered opportunities. This means that regional actors must communicate more intelligently, in a more diverse and nuanced manner than before, by relying on the answers and messages transmitted by the external audience, which has become more demanding and critical.

The European Union communicates permanently whether it wants to or not and regardless of whether the regional actors are aware of it or not. It communicates in an almost infinite number of ways, from the televised speech of a national or European leader or the blue flash of an EU sticker, to the handshake of a European business executive or the reassuring voice of the newsreader on the BBC World Service (Fiske de Gouveia *et al.*, 2005, p.2). EU sends thousands of messages every day through its actions, programs and policies or lack of social, economic, cultural or political actions or policies. All these messages taken together offer an idea of what the EU means and does, what it feels, what it desires, and what it can offer. Because of this, they are a part of public diplomacy. Given these arguments, the European decision makers must find the right voice and message in order to

build a credible, coherent and realistic image. Consequently, they must realize a good external communication strategy addressed to the third-country target publics.

The road towards having a proactive communication with the audiences outside the Community was very rugged, as initially the European institutions were somehow reluctant to employ a strong public diplomacy with third countries. In the communities' early years the European Commission was charged to provide some information to the people from outside, channelling the Communities' external communication strategy.

The EU's image in the world is still a major source of debate. Because the EU is not an ordinary state, but rather a complex, multidimensional organization, its structure, policies, actions and strategies might create confusion in the minds of third country nationals. It is enough if we look at the EU institutions, many having difficulties in distinguishing them. This confusion shouldn't be a surprise for anyone, because even the EU citizens have a common misunderstanding of the EU and the EU's institutions.

In her analysis of the extent to which the EU is perceived as a leader in world politics, Sonia Lucarelli (2014) presents the pros and the cons regarding the EU global leadership, considering as positive the perceptions of EU as being a major economic power, a model of regional integration and a promoter of human rights, development and multilateralism (due to its own values), while the negative ones are related to the inconsistency and incoherence between EU politics and its attitude in the diplomatic negotiations (being perceived as having a subordinate position towards USA). EU's negotiation style is appreciated as "soft", but at the same time criticized for being too weak or too patronizing. According to Lucarelli, there is a gap between the recognition of the great potential for EU's leadership (from the point of view of the economy and the values) and its actual leadership, because EU is perceived as being unable to transform its potential into real leadership.

Other studies (Didelon Loiseau *et al.*, 2014) demonstrate that there is a gap between the inside and outside perceptions of the European Union. If from inside Europe is painted in mostly positive terms (being described as a space characterised by identity, diversity, democracy, history, tradition, power, culture), the outside perceptions are very diverse, from "a beautiful developed place" (Indians) or "a pleasant tourist museum" (Chinese) to a space marked by "racism and xenophobia" (Sub-Saharan people). The two authors consider necessary the improvement of the EU's image in the world, and for realising that improvement they propose a new dialogue between Europe/the EU and the world, close to and far away from the EU's borders.

According to Fiske de Gouveia *et al.* (2005, p.4) "misunderstanding in Europe and beyond is almost certainly magnified by factors such as ongoing enlargement (Where does the EU begin and

end?), and rebranding of the political entity itself (Is the European Union the same as the old Common Market or European Economic Community?)”.

Many authors consider the perceptions of EU as being fundamental for understanding and shaping the Union effectiveness in implementing its policies. The external perceptions of EU as a global player must be shaped by the instruments that Europe can use (persuasion and communication) for promoting its institution and policies (Stumbaum, 2014; Fiske de Gouveia *et al.*, 2005).

3. Actors involved in EU's external communication

The EU institutions are key actors for Europe's external communication, having the opportunity to communicate to the world its values, programs and policies. An effective external communication implies the coordination of the EU institutions' actions with the member states' actions and their embeddedness into EU values and interests.

The Lisbon Treaty offered an institutional framework of foreign affairs and the external representation of the EU. As a first development, the Lisbon Treaty invested the Union with international legal personality, an essential factor for the coordination of its own external actions. The EU therefore is able to speak and take external actions as a single entity. Appointed by the Council, the High Representative chairs the Foreign Affairs Council configuration, a position that before Lisbon was exercised by the rotating presidency of the Union. Mandated by the Council, the High Representative also becomes the vice president of the Commission, assuming responsibility to coordinate all aspects of foreign and security policy (Guide to the European Security and Defence Policy, 2008, p.75-76).

The entity which was set up to ensure greater coherence and impact of the European Union's foreign policy is the **European External Action Service (EEAS)**, representing its diplomatic service. It helps the EU's foreign affairs chief – the High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy – to carry out the Union's Common Foreign and Security Policy. The creation of the EEAS held the promise of linking together strategic communication, public diplomacy and stakeholder engagements, with the intention of creating an overall communication culture extending across the EU institutions involved in external actions (Duke, 2013, p.10).

Following the Treaty of Lisbon, the European External Action Service is responsible for running 139 EU Delegations and Offices operating around the world, which have the status of diplomatic missions, representing the European Union and its citizens officially in the partner countries.

EU Delegations operate on a day-to-day basis to increase awareness of the EU and to ensure that the European initiatives, messages and policies are well comprehended by the political elites and citizens of third countries. They play a key role in designing, programming and implementing EU development cooperation programmes and assistance, increasing the visibility of the EU (CONCORD, 2015, p. 14). The results will be much more evident if the EU delegations improve their dialogue with the representatives of the third countries' civil society, who allow the development of cooperation at this level and ensure greater impact of EU actions on the target public.

They play a crucial role in the promotion of the EU image, interests and values abroad and they are in the forefront in delivering the EU external relations' policy and actions, from the common foreign and security policy through trade and development cooperation to scientific and technical relations.

The Directorate-General for International Cooperation and Development (DG DEVCO) is responsible for designing European international cooperation and development policy and delivering aid throughout the world. DG DEVCO strategy follows three key messages on cooperation and development (European Union External Action Service, 2012, p.5):

- EU development aid works and is transparent;
- EU aid helps to bring about long-term change;
- European cooperation is a win-win solution.

In December 2012, the EEAS and DG DEVCO jointly released a document entitled *Information and Communication: Handbook for EU Delegations*, which focuses on the need to promote the visibility of the EU across the EU's external actions. In this document, the delegations are encouraged to concentrate their actions around five priority fields, "inspired by the promotion of EU values and based on the delivery of peace, security and prosperity" (Information and Communication: Handbook for EU Delegations in Third Countries and to International Organisations, 2012, p.4):

- promoting the EU as a major partner in democratic transition (in particular in its wider neighbourhood);
- promoting the EU as the world's biggest cooperation and development donor;
- promoting the EU as a global economic power responding to the crisis and using trade as an engine for change;
- promoting human rights through high-level political dialogue with our partners and strategic cooperation programmes;
- promoting the EU as a security provider responding to global security threats.

Other actors which are promoting the EU activities around the world are:

- **Special Representatives (EUSRs)** – appointed by EU in different countries and regions of the world. They promote the EU's policies and interests in troubled regions and countries and play an active role in efforts to consolidate peace, stability and the rule of law (EU Special Representatives, 2016).

The European Union (EU) currently has nine Special Representatives (EUSRs) in different countries and regions of the world. Their role consists in representing the EU in the “crisis areas” in which the EU is willing to play a role as an international actor. They do this by obtaining and analyzing information on the various conflicts, in order to contribute to developing a common EU policy towards the mandate area, and to better contribute to international mediation efforts in conflict areas. This often requires close coordination with other diplomats, including special representatives of international organizations from the UN, OSCE, NATO and other regional organizations (Tolksdorf, 2012, p.3).

Specialists consider that, because of the unclear position of the special representatives in the EU system of foreign policy, there may be administrative conflicts between them and other institutions, such as the departments of the EEAS dealing with the same issues, fact that may have negative effects of the crisis management actions organized by the EU in different regions. In order to avoid these problems, they proposed several solutions (Tolksdorf, 2012, pp. 3-4; Fouéré, 2013):

- establishing informal procedures to coordinate the activities of EUSR and EEAS teams dealing with similar problems and hold regular meetings between the EUSR teams and EU delegations working in the same region;
- sustainable efforts of the member states for the EEAS strengthening, by training the special representatives to cooperate closely with the diplomatic service;
- strengthening the cooperation between the EUSR teams and relevant departments of the European Commission and establishing good relations with the European Parliament, providing transparent information about their activities, which would provide support for these institutions for the EUSR actions;
- annual review and renewal of the special representatives' mandates, in order to allow some adjustment of their actions in the targeted countries or regions;
- EU institutions should provide relevant information before the appointment of representatives, so that the elect should know very well the EU's activities in this area.

- **EU Centres** – 37 units in Universities throughout the world.

The objectives of the EU Centres are threefold:

- to promote greater understanding of the EU, its institutions and its policies by establishing a network of EU centres in universities providing information and education activities about the EU;
- to disseminate information and EU views on issues of interest within regional communities;
- to increase awareness about the political, economic and cultural importance of the relationship between the EU and the specific country.

The EU Centres are involved in a broad range of activities to fulfil their objectives, ranging from curricular activities (teaching programmes) to research on EU-related topics, as well as outreach activities related to EU and its policies.

• **Service for Foreign Policy Instruments (FPI)** – is a service of the European Commission which works alongside the European External Action Service (EEAS) and other EC departments and is responsible for implementing EU external assistance relating to common foreign and security policy, electoral observations and conflict prevention.

One of its most important general objectives is to „advance and promote Union and mutual interests with third countries by supporting measures that respond in an effective and flexible manner to objectives arising from the Union's bilateral, regional or multilateral relationships with third countries, address challenges of global concern and ensure an adequate follow-up to decisions taken at a multilateral level” (European Commission, 2015, p.12).

The main policy challenge of FPI is to identify and prioritize those areas where support is most needed to influence the partner countries/regions’ agenda positively, to make political dialogue progress, to align positions where divergence of views or interests prevails or to simply help produce some tangible changes. In order to address this challenge, it is essential to be established close cooperation with the EEAS geographic and thematic departments, Commission DGs and EU Delegations (European Commission, 2015, p.9).

4. Communicating the EU Policies¹⁹

When analysing the *EU Communication Policy on Enlargement and Good Neighbourhood*, we can see that the European Union has shown its ability to positively influence its environment, through applying the well-known „*carrot and stick*” approach, by offering incentives to candidate countries. The EU has managed to procure considerable political and economic reforms in the candidate

¹⁹ A more detailed analysis regarding the communication of the EU Policies was realised by Ioan Horga and Ariane Landuyt (2013) in the paper „Communicating the EU Policies beyond the/its borders”, in: Ioan Horga and Ariane Landuyt (eds.), *Communicating the EU Policies Beyond the Borders*, Oradea University Press, Oradea, pp.5-22

countries, in the same time enhancing economic growth, stabilizing new democracies and solving regional quarrels.

The accession of countries from Central and Eastern Europe (2004, 2007) is widely perceived as the EU's most successful foreign policy achievements. The enlargement was preceded by an intense communication strategy deployed by the European Commission from May 2000, explaining the process of enlargement and its implications both to the EU citizens and to those from the candidate countries. This communication strategy aimed to bring closer the EU to the citizens by informing them of something that will have huge repercussions on their lives, altering their comfort zone.

Although the era of big enlargements has passed, there are still several countries waiting in line for accession, so the communication need to continue and to be strengthened. The main values that need to be communicated (both internal and external) are: stability, prosperity, democracy, shared values, and the rule of law along EU borders.

Under the auspices of the European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP) the EU works with its Southern and Eastern neighbours to achieve the closest possible political association and the greatest possible degree of economic integration, without an accession perspective (European Union External Action Service, 2015). The Commission's Communication from 2003, *Wider Europe - Neighbourhood: A New Framework for Relations with our Eastern and Southern Neighbours* (Commission of the European Communities, 2003, p.5), also implements the carrot and stick approach stating that the EU's neighbourhood can benefit from the prospects of closer economic integration with the EU if it makes concrete progress demonstrating shared values and if effectively implements political, economic and institutional reforms (Commission of the European Communities, 2003, p.4).

In May 2011 the High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, together with the European Commission, launched a new policy response to a changing EU neighbourhood based on a „*more for more*” approach. This approach is based on a positive conditionality, namely if partner countries introduce more reforms they will receive more benefits. In this communication the EU responded to the Arab Spring and sent a clear message of solidarity and support to the people of the Southern Mediterranean. It also responded to EU Eastern Neighbours' efforts towards closer political association and deeper economic integration (European Commission and the European External Action Service, 2011, p.13).

Analysing the *EU communication concerning migration and border security* in the past years, we consider that despite the echoed win-win situation the Union's migration and border security policy rather favours an exclusionary than an inclusionary approach, the entire phenomenon of

migration (both regular and irregular), being seen as a security threat of which the EU has to defend itself.

Halting illegal migration for security reasons appears as a top priority in the European Security Strategy from 2003. The Arab Spring and the migratory waves pushed by it towards the EU's Southern borders highlighted the need not only to introduce reforms to the European Neighbourhood Policy's Southern dimension, but also to better coordinate the migration policies as well, leading to the reform of the EU's Global Approach to Migration. The reduction of illegal migration, the encouragement of legal migration, and better protection for the victims of human trafficking appear on the list of the addressed priorities. The approach is centred on four pillars, namely: legal migration and mobility, irregular migration and trafficking in human beings, international protection and asylum policy, and maximizing the development impact of migration and mobility. This new immigration policy was echoed as a win-win policy, bringing benefits for both parties.

Within the framework of the Global Approach to Migration and Mobility's first major policy, *A dialogue for migration, mobility and security with the Southern Mediterranean countries*, the Commission proposed both short and long term measures for a stronger cooperation with the Southern Mediterranean countries. In terms of border security, the European Commission recently made proposals for the implementation of two new technologies, the Eurosur (European External Border Surveillance System – having the aim to enhance the “situational awareness” and reaction capability of the member states and Frontex, to tackle the phenomenon of irregular migration and cross-border crime at the EU's external land and maritime borders) (European Commission, 2008, p.68) and the Smart Borders Package (formed of two components: the Entry and Exit System (EES) and the Registered Traveller Programme), both of them targeting the reduction of irregular migration.

The European Union, in its external communication documents concerning immigration and border security deploys a double discursive strategy, sending an ambiguous message beyond its borders. In reality the EU combines restrictive measures with selective permeability: it bans the access of those who are considered as threats or worthless elements (by raising fences and returns immigrants who are seeking asylum at its border), but facilitates the entrance for those who bring benefits to the European Union (opening its borders to the fresh workforce, because it faces the ageing of its population).

Conclusions

Considering the unicity and complexity of the EU, it is difficult to create one common message to be transmitted beyond its borders, in part due to the existence of many diverging views on the nature of the EU and how it should conduct its external policies, and in part due to the lack of communicative coherence and cohesion in the EU. The institutional actors in charge of the Union's external communication often work separately or redundantly and send to the foreign audiences different and sometimes even contradictory signals and messages.

This deficiency identified in the EU's communication process led to the formation and dissemination of an image of the EU which doesn't express clearly its core values and does not send the right messages that should be pursued through communication: a key-actor in the global economic and political landscape, a credible regional partner, supporter of human rights, promoter of ethnic and cultural diversity and of sustainable development.

The Union has to improve its external visibility solving once and for all the overlapping responsibilities concerning its external representation and must learn to listen more carefully to its foreign counterparts familiarising with their expectations and preferences, creating new channels which further enhance communication.

Which are the ways to solve these communication problems?

Firstly, the external communication of EU needs a strategy of global communication (formulated by a team of communication experts), which clearly and unequivocally formulates the general and specific objectives of the region, that identifies the target publics, establishes common messages, the channels and the means for their delivery and achieve periodic evaluation of results.

Secondly, the compatibility between the internal and external communication is also necessary, as the absence of it often leads to misinterpretation of the EU's messages and actions and affects its image both internally (at the level of member states and European citizens) and beyond its borders. In this regard, it is necessary to create a specialized institution of the EU (recognized and supported by the Member States), having the aim of formulating a real strategy for external communication that takes into account primarily the needs and specificities of the internal public, achieving the compatibility with the needs and interests of foreign publics. All communications (messages, symbols, and behaviours) must be conceived, coordinated, and handled by this unique entity.

In our opinion, public diplomacy is a fundamental instrument that can greatly help in formulating and implementing a global communication strategy which would be coherent and effective.

Thirdly, EU can achieve the role of global actor in the contemporary international system only if there is a high collaboration between the Member States and Community bodies as well as between the European institutions that aim to promote the image of the EU. It is the only way to achieve a strategy of integrated communication, which in addition to enhancing internal cohesion will facilitate the communication to the third countries of uniform and coherent messages related to the actions and policies of EU.

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THE INFLUENCE OF ENERGY RESOURCES IN DEVELOPING “PRAGMATIC” RELATIONS BETWEEN AZERBAIJAN AND THE WEST

Sabina STRIMBOVSCHI*

Abstract: *The aim of the paper is to research the way energy resources shaped Azerbaijan’s foreign policy and contributed to developing its strategic relations with western actors trying, at the same time, to bring arguments whether or not the democratic deficit in Azerbaijan is related to the “resource nationalism”. The author makes a retrospective analysis of the most important events that have influenced Azerbaijan’s foreign policy since the collapse of USSR. In this regard, it is assessed the impact of the “Contract of the Century” on the evolution of the country, forasmuch the signing of the document is considered the first strategic move made by Azerbaijan since 1991. Because Nagorno-Karabakh is a crucial priority for the country’s territorial integrity, it is examined the manner in which Azerbaijani authorities are trying to make use of the energy resources projects in order to speed up the settlement of the protracted conflict, but without success so far. Last but not least, are analysed the EU-Azerbaijan relations, both on the energy and political level, highlighting on the one hand, the reluctance of Azerbaijan towards the democratic reforms promoted within the Eastern Partnership, but on the other hand, the interest of Baku to negotiate the unwanted agreements with Brussels, counting on its advantage as a supplier of energy resources on the European market. Consequently, some key questions have emerged: Is the EU’s strategic objective to ensure its energy security more important than promoting and encouraging its partners to adopt the fundamental values of the EU? What impact may have the Strategic modernization partnership on the EU-Azerbaijan relations? Is European Union’s credibility in danger, by having so diverse approaches towards the Eastern Partnership countries?*

Keywords: Democracy; energy; European Union; Azerbaijan; Nagorno-Karabakh

Introduction

Azerbaijan is one of the former Soviet republics that succeeded to become an actor of vital importance today, due to its crucial location at the crossroads of Europe and Asia, but also thanks to its energy wealth. Even though, Azerbaijani people are linked to the Turkic world by their languages, to Iran by their Shi’a religion, and to the Caucasus by geography, they are considering themselves to be Europeans by their way of thinking. Following the disintegration of USSR, this last perception has become a defining element for Azerbaijan’s domestic and foreign policy.

Starting from these basic facts and the current geopolitical metamorphosis, the author analyses the way Azerbaijan managed to follow an independent and pragmatic policy, comparing to other former soviet republics, highlighting the interdependent relation between the energy resources and Azerbaijan’s foreign policy. In this equation, it has great influence Western powers, which through

* PhD Candidate in Political Sciences at the National University of Political Studies and Public Administration, Bucharest, Romania, e-mail: sabina.strimbovschi@gmail.com

the United States of America and the European Union have contributed to the development of Azerbaijan, which has now become a key energy player in Europe. But on the other hand, the strategic importance of Azerbaijan as an energy supplier hasn't an overall positive impact on the country's domestic situation. The fact that Azerbaijan's energy resources are controlled and managed by the president and its influential partners, has led to the situation in which power is held by a small number of people, and the discrepancy between the level of democracy in Azerbaijan's political institutions and the theoretical ideal of a democratic government has increased. In this equation is analysed the government's interest for energy issues than for democratic ones, while the EU-Azerbaijan relations are assessed through the lens of conditionality approach. To answer the main research questions, the author has resorted to the qualitative research method, using semi-structured interviews. The target group is composed of Azerbaijani experts in energy and political field.

1. "Contract of the Century" and its impact on drawing up Azerbaijan's foreign policy

After the independence, at the helm of the Republic of Azerbaijan have been three presidents, in a period of just three years. The following chairmen: Ayaz Mutalibov (1991-1992), Abulfaz Elchibey (1992-1993) and finally Heydar Aliyev (1993-2003) have tried to pull the country out of the deadlock, facing at that time with significant challenges both internally and externally. Heydar Aliyev remained in the history of the country not only for the implementation of the so-called *balanced foreign policy* concept, but also because he is the leader who used the hydrocarbon resources of the country for the restoration of Azerbaijan's foreign policy and economy.

In 1994 was created the Oil strategy, *a long-term national development program aimed at drawing the country's energy resources to the economic turnover by cooperation with big foreign companies on the principle of mutual benefit* (Strimbovschi, 2015a). In the same year, in September president Aliyev signed the "Contract of the Century", an event that marked the beginning of the real balanced foreign policy. The document was signed not only for economic reasons, but rather political ones. In this respect, the foremost goal of the government was to contribute to the economic growth of the country by attracting foreign investors and companies. *By developing a competitive economy, Azerbaijan has more opportunities to become an independent country in decisions concerning its resource management*, asserted Mr. (Strimbovschi, 2015a).

Due to the fragile regional circumstances, Azeri experts argue that while shaping its foreign policy, Azerbaijan had to take into account the interests and concerns of its neighbours, in order to prevent undesirable situations, which ultimately may be translated into a genuine balanced and pragmatic foreign policy (Strimbovschi, 2015b). Apparently, a significant objective of Azeri

authorities consisted in developing close relationships with its neighbours, apart of Armenia with which will continue to be in conflict, until a favourable solution regarding Nagorno-Karabakh will be found. On account of this, Azerbaijan sought to strengthen its ties especially with Georgia and Turkey, which have been seen as the main transit countries for Baku's energy, commercial and transport projects. Furthermore, Azerbaijan considered Georgia's stability as part of its own security interests. Due to these reasons, Baku went a long way toward ensuring the economic stability of Tbilisi, by selling natural gas at a relatively low price or by investing in the transport or communication sector of Georgia (Shaffer, 2013, p. 238), and consequently becoming the biggest foreign direct investor to Georgia, followed by Turkey, Russia, and the Netherlands. At the same time, the partnership with Ankara is highly important for Baku from two obvious reasons: (1) Turkey was seen from the beginning as a model for Azerbaijan, which has transformed into a modern, democratic country with a market economy that shares European values (Strimbovski, 2015b) but also (2) is Azerbaijan's most safe gate to the European markets. Furthermore, Turkey is the only country in the vicinity of Azerbaijan that can have the power to deal with Russia, especially in the South Caucasus region. Thus, the partnership with Ankara is literally essential for the security and prosperity of Azerbaijan, since it proved to be the main supporter of Baku when it came to energy and economic initiatives. Beyond Baku's intentions to create a stable, secure and favourable environment for the country's development was to attract foreign investments and simultaneously strengthen its partnerships with actors like the EU and the U.S. in the economic and energy field, and foster cooperation with NATO in security and defence sector reforms.

In spite of huge endeavour to build harmonious and beneficial relationships for country's economic progress, Azerbaijan continue to design a proper environment for itself, by trying to maintain a considerable degree of independence from any international actor in terms of politics and security. This cautious approach would allow it to rely on its own capabilities, and in case of need enable it to cope independently with unexpected challenges in the region. At the same time, in order to gain respect from its partners and achieve an effective balanced foreign policy, Azerbaijan is trying to respect some of the key principles of international law, such as the respect for sovereignty, territorial integrity and non-interference in the internal affairs, working hard to become a stable and predictable actor in bilateral and multilateral relations.

2. The prospects of the East-West energy corridor

During the Soviet period, Azerbaijan's economy was based in large part on agriculture, oil production, and oil refining, from which mostly benefited Kremlin, as the core power of USSR. Three

years before and three years after getting independence, between 1988-1994, Azerbaijan's economy experienced severe contractions because of the outbreak of the Karabakh conflict, but also on grounds of economic stagnation of the Soviet Union. The partial recovery of economy was due to the oil and gas reserves, and the significant foreign investments in these sectors.

As mentioned above, the "Contract of the Century" represented the starting point in the economic improvement and simultaneously balancing the state's foreign policy. Azeri experts argue that the successful measures taken by Heydar Aliyev in this field led to the prevention of destroying the oil and gas industry of the state (Strimbovschi, 2015c). On the contrary, succeeded to transform it into an attractive one through the notable "Contract of the Century", the first Production Sharing Agreement, which regulated the operation of the Azeri, Chirag and Guneshli oil fields, with estimated reserves of 900 milion tons. As with regard the gas fields, in 1996 was signed an agreement about the operation of Shah Deniz, and in 1999 British Petroleum ranked it as the second largest field, after Prudhoe Bay in Alaska, which was discovered in 1970 (Ibrahimov, 2013, p. 121). So far, Azerbaijan has signed over 30 Production Sharing Agreements for the development of its energy fields, which turned out to be highly profitable for the country's economic progress. Even though, Baku received the first revenues only in 1999, two years after the first operations in oil and gas sector started, the government was content with the evolution of procedures, and the long-term benefits represented the main goals of Heydar Alyiev's strategy. Due to these measures and regulations, Azerbaijan became the second country from the former Soviet Union by capital investment. At the same time, it managed to become a reliable, trustful and attractive partner for the foreign companies in the energy sector, which eventually brought significant changes in the republic, but also crucial opportunities on external plan. Because foreign investors were looking to develop projects that would bypass the territory of Russia, and since Azerbaijan was interested to reduce the economic and political dependence on Moscow, the western proposals in this respect have been positively embraced. Thus, Azerbaijan became the first former Soviet country that found tactical options to export its own energy resources to European markets, as an alternative to the Russian route.

With respect to Baku-Novorossiysk oil pipeline, Azeri authorities, backed by western companies, proposed the construction of a Western Route Export Pipeline, known as Baku-Supsa pipeline, which runs from the Sangachal Terminal to the Supsa terminal in Georgia. The main disadvantage of this pipeline is its limited capacity to only 5.5-6 million tons of oil per year. From this consideration was recommended to build a new pipeline with a capacity of up to 50 million tons per year from Azeri-Chirag-Guneshli fields under the Contract of Century that would pass through Georgia and Turkey (Ibrahimov, 2013, p. 128). In this regard, Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan was seen as the first serious alternative oil pipeline, which carries oil from the Azeri-Chirag-Deepwater Gunashli

(ACG) field and condensate from Shah Deniz across Azerbaijan, Georgia and Turkey. The pipeline became operational in June 2006, and was built by the Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan pipeline company (BTC Co) operated by British Petroleum. The project remains an attractive transportation route for the Central Asian states as well, which take into account the opportunity to deliver their oil to European markets. Thus, crude oil from Turkmenistan continues to be transported via the pipeline, and starting in October 2013, have been resumed the transportation of some volumes of Tengiz crude oil from Kazakhstan through the BTC pipeline (BP Caspian website, *n.a.*). Concerning the European version to Baku-Mozdok gas pipeline is the Baku-Tbilisi-Erzurum gas pipeline, which is of significant importance for the European Union, from the energy security point of view. The gas project, also known as South Caucasus Pipeline was completed in 2006, and in March 2007, the first export gas was pumped from Shah Deniz field and shipped to Georgia, and then Turkey. South Caucasus Pipeline Company, the consortium that is led by BP and SOCAR (State Oil Company of Azerbaijan Republic), owns Baku-Tbilisi-Erzurum gas pipeline.

The implementation of these two energy projects has been possible with the support of Western actors, and especially of foreign companies like BP, AzBTC, Chevron, Statoil TP, ENI, TPAO (Turkish Petroleum) and SOCAR, which are the main shareholders of the pipelines.

From economic and political point of view, the realization of East-West energy corridor became a great historical event for Azerbaijan, Georgia and Turkey. Through these two energy projects, Azerbaijan gained more independence from Russia in the energy sector, and ultimately in other significant fields. When Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan and Baku-Tbilisi-Erzurum have been completed, everybody became confident that the future of Azerbaijan is linked to the West through Turkey (Strimbovschi, 2015d).

3. The evolution of the EU - Azerbaijan relations. Current trends and future perspectives

In South Caucasus region, Azerbaijan has tried to develop cordial relations with every neighbour but less with Armenia. Due to the sensitive context of the region, created as a consequence of the tumultuous history among the neighbouring countries, Azerbaijan decided to extend its cooperative relations beyond the Caucasus zone. As it was mentioned above, after independence, the United States of America became a strategic partner of Azerbaijan due to the common interest in developing energy projects, while the European Union's reputation as the biggest player on the global trading scene, determined Azerbaijan to get involved in different projects of cultural, social, economic or energy nature. However, when it comes to issues like democracy, rule of law or respect for human rights, we will see that Azerbaijani authorities are getting reluctant.

The EU-Azerbaijan cooperation started in the early 1990's via the TACIS program, a technical assistance program meant to help members of the Commonwealth of Independent States in their transition to democratic market-oriented economies. The key TACIS multi-country network projects related to Azerbaijan is TRACECA and INOGATE. TRACECA (Transport Corridor Europe – Caucasus – Asia) was initiated in 1993 with the purpose of developing the regional transport corridor from Europe, crossing the Black Sea, Caucasus, the Caspian Sea and reaching the Central Asian countries. The ultimate goal was to enhance the regional economy (TRACECA Official website). The development of transport system, in the framework of TRACECA is of great importance for Azerbaijan, since it created opportunities for strengthening the economic relations between Azerbaijan and Europe, which, eventually, contributed to the process of integration into the world economics. One of Azerbaijan's priorities is to restore and develop the Great Silk Road that would connect China to the European Union, through Kazakhstan, Azerbaijan, Georgia and Turkey. For an oil-based economy, as is the case of Azerbaijan, transport and logistics represent a sustainable alternative.

INOGATE (Interstate oil and gas transportation to Europe) laid the foundation for development of energy cooperation between Azerbaijan and the EU. It was initiated in 1997, as an international energy cooperation program between the European Union, Eastern Europe, the Caucasus and Central Asia. The program aims *to ensure the convergence of energy markets on the basis of the EU principles; to enhance energy security; support sustainable energy development and attract investments towards energy projects of common and regional interests* (INOGATE 15th Anniversary Edition, February 2012, p.3). In addition, INOGATE supports the Energy Security Platform within the framework of the Eastern Partnership. Through it, gave a further impulse to the energy dialogue between the EU and the countries of Eastern Europe and the Caucasus (INOGATE 15th Anniversary Edition, February 2012, p.3). The goals of this program coincide with the EU's target of improving the security of supply by creating alternative transport corridors (Ibrahimov, 2013, p. 94), aiming to provide sustainable and secure transportation of hydrocarbons from the Caspian region to its markets. However, some Azerbaijani representatives consider that EU played a minor role through TACIS and INOGATE programs, while Russia succeeded to monopolize the transit route to consumer countries (Ibrahimov, 2013, pp. 94-95). Accordingly, Europe as a consumer ended up in a position of double dependence on Russia, being dependent on its resources, but also on Russia as a transit country for the Caspian and Central Asia oil and gas (Umbach, 2011, p. 28). Rovshan Ibrahimov argues that the implementation of projects under INOGATE initiative, like Northern Gas Pipeline, Nabucco, Odessa - Boryd oil pipeline or Constanta – Omisalj - Trieste pipeline, has been largely unsuccessful because the EU has shown insufficient political will to achieve them (Ibrahimov, 2013, pp. 94-95). On the

other hand, the EU is offering its financial assistance and to some extent its political support, but in order to implement projects has to receive, as well, positive signals from the stakeholders. Despite criticism, since 1996 Azerbaijan has benefited from 33 of INOGATE's 69 projects, and through this program the EU continues to provide sustenance for Azerbaijan in various areas of the energy sector (The INOGATE Programme and the Republic of Azerbaijan, p. 2).

In 2004, the EU suggested to Azerbaijan to join the European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP) together with other 15 countries from the southern and eastern vicinity of the EU, in order to enhance their cooperation on political, economic and social level. In 2006, the EU and Azerbaijan signed a Memorandum of Understanding in the field of energy, which represented the basis for strengthening the energy relations between both actors. Later on, in 2009 was proposed the Eastern Partnership initiative for South Caucasus countries, Moldova, Ukraine and Belarus, due to the Russia's revanchist attitude in its near neighbourhood, in particular as a result of the August 2008 war between Russia and Georgia. Within the new initiative, the European Neighbourhood and Partnership Instrument complemented TACIS program.

Beyond the EU's goal to develop strategic partnerships with Central Asia and Caspian Region, especially in the energy field is to democratize these states, according to the European standards, by carrying out political and structural reforms that would enable governments to work efficiently and improve the standard of living. Azerbaijan is part of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe since 1995 and member of the Council of Europe since 2001. It follows that the values of human rights, democracy and rule of law should be fully respected, underpinning the relation between Azerbaijan and Europe. However Baku often ignores its obligations in the field of political reforms and human rights undertaken when joining these organizations (Abbasov, 2014, p. 50). In promoting its values and policies, the European Union applies the principle of Conditionality as one of the main instruments for advancing democracy. Conditionality is a mechanism whose aim is to disseminate the governing rules of the European Union, which are set as conditions that external actors must fulfil in order to get rewards on the one hand, and to prevent sanctions from the EU, on the other hand (Schimmelfennig, 2010, p. 8). The most relevant rewards offered by the EU consist of benefits involving the signing of various agreements, such as trade agreements, association agreements and financial aid. While the EU sanctions consist of discontinuation of such agreements (Schimmelfennig, 2010, p. 9). In the case of Azerbaijan – a partner with strategic assets for the EU - the principle of conditionality was influenced for the mutual benefits of both actors. Thus, the status of energy supplier for European countries has offered a high degree of confidence for Azerbaijani leadership, while the EU, from the need to diversify its energy sources and reduce the dependence on Russia, tends to remain silent about the democratic deficits in the Caspian nation (Goncharenko, October

2013). Although western actors have been vocal about democracy in Azerbaijan, individual member states and the EU institutions have in reality co-operated with the regime in Baku without imposing conditionality (Kobzova and Alieva, 2012, p. 2).

At the same time, the outcomes of the Country Progress Report of 2014 in the framework of the EU-Azerbaijan European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP) Action Plan are by no means positive: *no legislation was adopted to protect human rights and fundamental freedoms. Only limited progress was reached in the fight against corruption and there was a lack of coherence in initiatives and continuing actions. There was no progress regarding actual judicial independence* (Implementation of the European Neighbourhood Policy in Azerbaijan, 2015, p. 2) On the contrary, Azerbaijan's presidency of the Council of Europe from April to November 2014 coincided with a new wave of arrests of representatives of civil society and human rights defenders like Intigam Aliyev, Rasul Cafarov, Leyla and Arif Yunus (Zasztowt, 2015, p. 1). Fearing the outbreak of a "colourful revolution", Azerbaijani authorities have been determined to take the "proper" measures, in order to prevent it, typical for a "managed democracy", as Russia has proved to be so many times. But this conditionality - free approach has brought Europe few benefits and continues to discredit the EU in the eyes of Azerbaijani society (Kobzova and Alieva, 2012, p. 2).

On the other hand, the European attempts to democratize Azerbaijan are seen as an infringement of sovereignty. For these reasons, European Union enjoys of a limited influence on these states compared to Russia, China, India or Iran with whom Azerbaijan and the countries from Central Asia share similar values. While the EU is focused on the need for comprehensive reforms across a range of sectors, especially those related to human rights and democracy, Azerbaijan is looking for a strategic relationship based on mutual interests and objectives, while implementing a part of the economic reforms (Mammadov, 2015, p. 10). As Maja Kocijancic, Spokesperson of the European Commission for neighbourhood policy and enlargement negotiations, has described this approach: *Azerbaijan has expressed its interest in a strategic relationship with the EU without the high degree of political association and economic integration sought by some of the other Eastern Partners* (Dadashova, 2015). Thus, in contrast to neighbouring Georgia, where integration with the EU is a political goal, Baku's leaders seek to create its own economic and political model with the European Union.

3.1. From Association Agreement to Strategic Modernization Partnership

In 2010, the EU had discussions with all three countries of the South Caucasus about the perspectives of signing association agreements, which include a free trade area, but a precondition

for signing such an agreement is the country's prior accession to the World Trade Organization (Zasztowt, 2015, p. 2). Since Azerbaijan is reluctant in implementing this process because of the potential implications on the monopolized economy, results that such an agreement is not that welcomed by Baku. But instead of the Association Agreement, Baku prefers a Strategic Modernization Partnership (SMP), similar to that signed by Russia with the EU in 2010, which is not legally binding but offers opportunities to develop cooperative partnerships in those areas that are of concern to Azerbaijan. The draft document dated 4 April 2013 stipulates softer political reforms than those set out in Azerbaijan – EU Action Plan of 2006. Notwithstanding, the new document prioritizes the security cooperation, trade and business environment, energy, environment and transport, and people-to-people contacts (Rettman, 2013). Azerbaijan planned to sign the SMP in November 2013, at the Eastern Partnership Summit in Vilnius. Nevertheless the former Commissioner for Enlargement and European Neighbourhood Policy, Štefan Füle, proposed to continue the negotiations on the Association Agreement and the draft of the Strategic Modernisation Partnership in parallel, pointing out the character of complementarity of the two documents (Fineko Informational & Analytic Agency, 2013). In 2013, during a meeting between the former Commissioner, Štefan Füle, and Minister for Economic Development of Azerbaijan, Shahin Mustafayev, where have been discussed ways to widen the EU – Azerbaijan cooperation, Füle expressed its hopes in *a future relationship built around shared values, good governance, human rights and democracy, stressing that the ultimate beneficiaries should be citizens (EU-Azerbaijan: Commitment to widen cooperation and support modernization, Brussels, 29 August 2013)*. Thus, from the European perspective, modernization is closely linked to a democratic society.

At the same time, the EU is encouraging Azerbaijan to intensify its work towards the WTO accession, ultimately aiming to establish a Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Area (EU Reporter Correspondent, 2013). From Baku's perspective, a free trade agreement with the EU would bring little economic gain, since Azerbaijan does not have competitive industrial or agricultural products for export to EU markets (Socor, 2013). On the contrary, it considers that will expose itself to the risk of importing from the EU, a phenomenon that would hinder the development of Azerbaijani industry (Socor, 2013). However, we can see that the main obstacle against the diversification of the economy is the corruption and the domination of the political and economic system by Aliyev family (European Forum for Democracy and Solidarity).

Through modernization, Azerbaijan understands the development of various sectors of its economy, other than oil and gas (Socor, 2013), since the national oil production is in decline while the oil prices have experienced a continuous drop, beginning with June 2014. Baku's priority is to get new technologies, to develop industry, agriculture and to continue the development of energy sector.

In sum, Azerbaijan is trying to translate the income from oil exports to sustainable development and diversification of the economy (Zasztowt, 2015, p. 3). But in this equation, the EU plays a crucial role, while the Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Agreement would be the most important instrument for achieving these goals.

3.2. The thorn in the relationship between the European Union and Azerbaijan

According to Azerbaijan, the ideal relationship with the European Union should be based on ‘mutual respect and equality of rights of the parties’ (Socor, 2013), yet some sensitive issues are making it difficult.

For years Baku has been involved in a diplomatic struggle for the West to recognize Nagorno-Karabakh illegal occupation by Armenia. However, the international community has started to pay greater importance once it has proved that Azerbaijan could become a significant energy partner. But a favourable solution has not been found so far. The fruitless mediation efforts of the OSCE Minsk Group and the EU’s failure to recognize Azerbaijan’s territorial integrity in the same way it did with other EaP countries that have territorial disputes (Moldova, Georgia and Ukraine) (Mammadov, May 2015 p. 33) has increased over time the discontent of Azerbaijani authorities. Due to the ambiguous approach of the EU, which is trying to maintain a neutral position between Azerbaijan and Armenia, Baku is accusing the EU of playing by double standards. But the EU is not very inclined to take part in a dispute settlement because it understands that if demonstrates a preference for one side over another that would have negative consequences for its reputation (Abbasov, 2015, p. 61). This issue became the most significant thorn in the relationship of the two actors, because of which Azerbaijan decided to abandon the Association Agreement. In the context of negotiating the Strategic Modernisation Partnership, Azerbaijan’s EU ambassador, Fuad Iskandarov, pointed out that one of Azerbaijan’s priorities for the EU is to show respect for the country’s territorial integrity (Rettman, 2013). The elite, being disappointed in the U.S. and the EU is counting on Russia’s favour. But the 2014 illegal annexation of Crimea and the war in the eastern Ukraine *convinced officials in Baku that Moscow is setting the rules in the post-Soviet area and may intervene even without an international mandate, explaining its actions as a peacekeeping operation* (Ismayilov, Zasztowt, 2015, p. 4). Meanwhile, Azerbaijan was looking to upgrade its military capabilities by buying weapons from Turkey, Israel and Russia. The economic development of the country, highly dependent on the export of energy resources, allowed it to increase the defence budget from \$175 million in 2004 to \$3.7 billion in 2015, which is twice as large as Armenia’s overall state budget (Altstadt and Menon, 2016). By contrast, Armenia’s military budget amounted to \$448 million. Thus, Azerbaijani authorities are

getting prepared to take the risk, when the diplomacy will fail, thereupon the military option to recover the occupied territory, remains on the table.

Although, the EU is accused by lack of involvement in solving this conflict, the EU is present in the region since 2003 through the EU Special Representative for the Southern Caucasus, which is closely working with the Co-Chairs of the OSCE (EUEA, *n.a.*). In this respect, the EU had a peripheral role, however has endeavoured to promote economic integration, consolidate democratic structures, and improve respect for human rights in Azerbaijan. Nevertheless, Azerbaijan has treated superficially most of the EU recommendations related to the rule of law and fundamental values of democracy. Despite this, European Union continues to call Azerbaijan a strategic partner due to its vast hydrocarbon resources and crucial geographical position between Central Asia and Europe. But the pragmatic nature of the EU-Azerbaijan relations will contribute to the deterioration of democracy in the concerned country if the EU will not adopt a firmer stance regarding the protection of its values and principles. Baku is trying to negotiate, by playing its card as an energy security supplier for the EU and develop relations based on ‘mutual respect and equality of rights of the parties’. Although, Azerbaijan has shown its interest in enhancing cooperation with Euro-Atlantic institutions, so far it did not declare any will to join the EU or NATO (Ismayilov and Zasztowt, 2015, p. 2). The reluctance of Azerbaijani leaders can be explained both from political and security considerations. The Georgian and Ukrainian precedent determined Baku to act with caution in foreign policy, as not to disturb the ‘Eastern bear’. On the other hand, the required reforms for a complete European integration could represent a real danger for the political power and elite’s monopoly on oil resources, while non-integration enables state leaders *to balance the interest of regional and extra-regional players, using full control over its energy resources both for commercial and political purposes* (Alieva, 2015). Unless the EU will condition future partnerships with Azerbaijan by the need to carry out certain reforms or show respect for key democratic values, the EU’s credibility will suffer, while the democratic deficit in Azerbaijan will increase.

However, the current situation of instability, caused by the decline of oil prices may have a positive impact on the EU-Azerbaijan economic cooperation (Alieva, 2015). In order to avoid the collapse of the country’s economy, Azerbaijan could be more determined to perform the required economic reforms to accede to WTO and later to enhance the economic integration with the EU, by signing the Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Agreement.

3.3. Energy - a sphere of common interest

Within the European initiatives, the only progress registered by the EU with Azerbaijan is in the energy sphere. Azerbaijan is looking to connect its pipelines to Europe, which is one of the most attractive consumers, while the EU is seeking to diversify its suppliers, aiming to develop energy projects with predictable actors from the Caspian Sea, Central Asia and North Africa.

In 2006 after the first Ukrainian gas crisis, energy security became a top matter on the EU agenda. The major challenge for Europe is that none of the countries of South and Eastern Europe hold significant hydrocarbon resources and inevitable are obliged to import. Likewise, the fact that Gazprom is the leading provider for these countries, and because are geographically placed at the crossroads between Eurasia and Middle East, the transfer of fuel resources on the European market is perceived as critical and volatile (Cehulic *et al.*, 2013, p. 118). The security of the EU's energy supplies has become particularly complicated due to the 2004 enlargement wave, when 10 countries from the Central and Eastern Europe joined the EU. Accordingly, the EU's strategic objective to ensure its energy security became more difficult to achieve. Thus, the diversification of suppliers became a prerequisite in order to ensure the energy security of the whole EU. On that account, between 2003 and 2013 new partner countries emerged. Even though their export volumes are relatively small, they became an alternative for the EU. The other options for crude oil imports would be from Nigeria, Kazakhstan, Azerbaijan and Iraq, and for natural gas imports - Qatar, Libya, Azerbaijan and maybe Turkmenistan or Iran. In this context, would be useful to consider the 2004 International Energy Agency report, where has been forecasted that until 2030 the diversification of European suppliers will be as the following: Russia (79 bcm of natural gas), Central Asia and Caspian (51 bcm of natural gas), Middle East (40 bcm of natural gas and 117 bcm of LNG), Africa (70 bcm of natural gas, 61 bcm of LNG) and Latin America (18 bcm of LNG). Total projected consumption in Europe in 2030 is put at 667 bcm/y. Of this, a projected 27 bcm/y will be supplied in the form of LNG (4 percent of the total consumption); 200 bcm/y produced domestically, and a large proportion, over 400 bcm/y will be imported from Russia, the Caspian, and from North Africa through pipeline gas (Bilgin, 2013, p. 314).

3.3.1. Azerbaijan – a potential supplier of energy security for the EU

Considering the above-mentioned data, Caspian Sea and North Africa are among the top regions outside the Europe, which will contribute to the diversification of the EU's hydrocarbon sources. The energy reserves of Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan and Azerbaijan that are located in the

Caspian Basin represent a solution for the EU’s highly dependence on one provider. Kazakhstan and Azerbaijan leads in the production of oil and together hold 92 percent of total oil reserves in the region, while Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan are the largest producers of natural gas in Central Asia, with 27 percent and 40 percent respectively (Umbach, 2011, p. 27).

Following the Russo-Ukrainian gas dispute of January 2009, Azerbaijan has expressed its interest to export gas to Europe through different projects, either through Nabucco, ITGI (Interconnector Turkey-Greece-Italy), TAP (Trans-Adriatic Pipeline) or even to ship liquefied natural gas on the Black Sea to Romania. Despite a long potential list of projects, in January 2011, the president of Azerbaijan, Ilham Aliev and the president of European Commission, Jose Manuel Barroso signed a formal declaration in Baku, where Azerbaijan assumed the responsibility to provide gas to EU through Southern Gas Corridor (Roberts, 2011, p. 185). One year later, in October 2012, Azerbaijan took the responsibility to build Trans-Anatolian Pipeline (TANAP) from the Turkish – Georgian border through the whole territory of Turkey up to its western border, through which Azerbaijani gas will be delivered to the markets of Greece, Albania, Italy and Bulgaria. With a similar purpose, was planned the Trans Adriatic Pipeline (TAP) through which gas will be transported from Turkey to European markets (Ibrahimov, 2013, p. 130).

At the moment, Azerbaijan is considered the only Caspian riparian state that can safely supply gas to European markets through Southern Gas Corridor, and eventually improve the European energy security, without creating additional geopolitical tension. *Azerbaijan’s current gas reserves stand at almost three trillion cubic meters (tcm) following a large discovery in Shah Deniz field a decade ago (some 1.3 tcm) and recent discoveries in the Absheron and Umid fields, each containing 400 bcm* (Bilgin, 2013, p.320). Starting with 2018-2020 Azerbaijan will be able to channel 15-20 bcm of gas to European markets, but plans to increase its production to 30-50 bcm/y from 2025 onward following successful field developments in Umid, Absheron, and Shafag-Asiman offshore fields, which would represent an effective solution to guarantee the EU energy security. At the same time, the EU is negotiating with Turkmenistan in order to join SGC through the Trans-Caspian Pipeline, which could possibly supply some additional 30 billion cubic meters to the Azerbaijani volume delivered to Europe (Ismayilov and Zasztowt, 2015, p. 2).

The illegal annexation of Crimea and Russia’s interference in Eastern Ukraine, have affected the relationship between Moscow and Brussels, representing the official moment when Russia stepped into a geopolitical competition with the European Union. The new context, determined the European Commission to provide more support for the Southern Gas Corridor since TANAP and TAP may cover 20 percent of European gas needs in the long term (Kusznir, 2015, p.6) and would represent the fourth big axis for diversification of gas supplies in Europe after Northern Corridor from

Norway, the Eastern corridor from Russia and the Mediterranean Corridor from Africa. In these circumstances, Baku was seen as an indispensable partner in the EU's energy security plans and eventually took advantage of this, managing to temper those voices in the EU that were more critical of the regime and instead focused on the sectors that are most beneficial for the current elite (Kobzova, Alieva, 2012, p. 3) If the European Union will continue to accept this situation and remain silent on democratic deficit in Azerbaijan, should take into consideration that its goals of Europeanizing / democratizing eastern vicinity will fail and consequently its credibility as a normative and soft power will be considerably affected.

Final remarks

In the early years of independence, the strategy proposed by the president Heydar Aliyev represented the decisive formula for Azerbaijan's political sovereignty and economic prosperity. But, as the country has progressed in economic terms due to the oil and gas reserves, it has regressed in terms of rule of law, democracy and human rights. Baku is not willing to advance its relations with Brussels in the political sector, the reason for which the Association Agreement with the EU will not be signed in the near future, instead it seems that the Strategic Modernization Partnership represents a better option for Azerbaijani leadership since it does not put political obligations. At the same time, it seems that the principle of conditionality - a mechanism for promoting EU's values and principles - has failed in Azerbaijan, having priority the EU's strategic interest in energy security. Beyond the intentions of developing these projects of strategic nature, the EU has to continue the negotiation on the Association Agreement with Azerbaijan and ensure the effective implementation of the commitments undertaken in their bilateral agreements, pressing for issues of democracy and human rights to occupy the same crucial place as the energy does in the current European agenda in the dialogue with Baku.

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THE EAP: A FAILURE OF THE EUROPEAN NEIGHBOURHOOD POLICY OR SHARING A POWER BALANCE IN THE NEIGHBOURHOOD?

Nona TATIASHVILI*

Abstract: *The present paper analyses achievements and challenges of the EaP in the prism of EU-Russia asymmetric energy interdependence, as the major factor affecting the successful implementation of the Eastern partnership. To identify whether energy interdependence is the main sphere of interest in the EaP neighbourhood, where EU-Russia common interests intersect in one point or is it a sharing a power balance in “common neighbourhood”?. The research paper reviews major policy documents of the ENP/EaP, in order to analyze to what extent is policy coherent/incoherent towards partner countries. Moreover, the paper evaluates the European neighbourhood external policy instruments (the ENP/EaP) from the perspective of three prioritised countries of the Eastern partnership: Moldova, Georgia and Ukraine, including the analysis of the effectiveness of proposed incentives under the ENP/EaP, as sufficient instruments for successful implementation of the Eastern partnership, in the presence of unpredictable external veto player.*

Keywords: ENP/EaP; Energy interdependence; Russian Influence; the EaP countries’ attitude

Introduction

The present paper analyses achievements and challenges of the EaP in the prism of EU-Russia asymmetric energy interdependence (Keohane and Nye, 2001, pp.13-16), as the major factor affecting the implementation of the Eastern partnership (Proedru, 2007; Casier 2011). Since 2004, initiating of the ENP, in the purpose of creating a stable neighbourhood closer to its borders, and European policy makers’ ambitious goal to combine “a ring of neighbours” became reason of instability. Moreover, despite of conditionality based attractive policy incentives proposed to partner countries within the framework of the ENP-EaP, introduction of the policy transformed region into “economic and diplomatic battlefield”(Lo`wenhardt, 2005). In particular, policy became subject of acute discourse in two confusing dimension. Firstly, due to coherence/incoherence of the policy itself, including conditionality based external incentives offered to partner countries, which was neither sufficient nor attractive for some of the EaP members. Second, the EU-Russia strategic partnership raised vague questions about the Eastern partnership, whether this is a real failure of the European neighbourhood policy or sharing a power balance in the neighbourhood? To answer these questions paper identifies whether energy interdependence is the main sphere of interest in the EaP neighbourhood where EU-

* PhD Candidate TSU, TTU, School of Law, e-mail: nonachka.17@hotmail.com

Russia common interests intersect in one point or is it a sharing a power balance in “common neighbourhood”? In this respect, study reviews major policy documents the ENP/EaP, analysing to what extent is policy coherent/incoherent (Korosteleva, 2011) towards partner countries, in particular, three most prioritised countries of the Eastern partnership from the EU perspective, namely, Moldova, Georgia and Ukraine. On the contrary, it is worth to evaluate from the perspective of those countries’ whether the incentives offered by the ENP/EaP can be concluded effective (Schimmelfenning and Sedelmeier, 2005, pp.10-17) for successful implementation of the Eastern partnership in the presence of unpredictable external veto player Russia (Schimmelfenning and Sedelmeier, 2005, pp.10-17).

On the long path since implementation the ENP/EaP, the development of ambitious external policy of the European Union, especially, after Russia’s self-exclusion from the ENP, transformed EU-Russia relations into constant conflict in the common neighbourhood (Delcours and Kostanyan, 2014; Bechev, 2015). In particular, EU-Russia relationship, which is based on four common spaces (European Commission, PCA, 1997) points to Russia’s impressive role, as it’s the third great trade partner of the EU, and provides with energy supply. Thus, the EU’s trade partnership for Russia is significantly profitable as it makes considerable contributions in Russia’s economy.

Apart from economic interdependence, external security policy area can be distinguished out of common spaces, which outlines EU strategy in the frame of enforced common cooperation of Russia’s engagement in the adjacent, aiming at stabilizing existing regional conflicts in Moldova (Transnistria) and the South Caucasus (Abkhazia, South Ossetia and Nagorno-Karabakh). Aforementioned arguments about EU-Russia cooperation raise considerable confusion on this style of cooperation. Moreover, despite of Russia’s self-exclusion from the ENP, this particular relationship equips Russia with the same profitable presence, and from external security perspective legally justifies its engagement in the adjacent. Therefore, this specific partnership arise question about sharing a power balance in the region. Prominent scholar Waltz assumes that “states act on the basis of self-help: They operate with the aim of survival and their interactions with other states reflect their desire to survive” (Waltz, 2010, pp. 103-128), but Great powers often struggle to gain power and strive for hegemony (Mearsheimer, 2014, pp. 29-54). Though, distinct from these assumptions, Keohane and Nye suggest that asymmetric interdependence can be concluded as a source of power. Indeed, no one can assure whether this type of interdependence lead countries to reliable cooperation or confrontation (Keohane and Nye, 2001, pp.14-16). Economic relations shall be also determined as the major cause of asymmetric interdependence. However, the issue of the ENP-EaP implementation arise contradictory statements that justify Russia’s aggressive activities in the “shared neighbourhood”. Mearsheimer argues that “*the West had been moving into Russia’s backyard and threatening its core strategic interests*” (Mearsheimer, 2014).

On the basis of given arguments, it should be concluded that from the EU initiated EaP as the “intervention” in post –soviet space was perceived by Russia as provocative action addressed to the violation of power balance which forced it urgently take appropriate measures for “restoring balance of power” in the neighbourhood.

1. From the ENP to the EaP-Challenges and perspectives

The European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP) launched in 2003-2004, as a consequence of successful “big-bang” enlargement, transformed into new institutional design into its substitute the EaP, launched in 2009, which explicitly constitute its ambitious goal “to prevent the emergence of a new dividing line between the enlarged EU and its neighbours” (European Commission, 2003).

Through the ENP the European Union proposed its southern and eastern neighbouring countries a joint cooperation that would promote further economic integration and political association, grounded on democracy, the rule of law, respect for human rights, and social cohesion, as well as market economy access. In order to achieve this ambitious goal the European Union supported countries in four basic platform, which envisaged financial assistance, economic integration and access to EU markets, easier travel to the EU – 3.2 m Schengen visas were issued to citizens, and in particular to students from ENP countries in 2012 and technical and policy support.

Notwithstanding to its great effort, the policy is characterized to be incoherent (Korosteleva, 2014) based on the principle of conditionality that unlike from Baltic countries envisaged to offer partner countries "sharing everything with the Union but institutions" (Prodi, 2002; Christou, 2010). The ENP, which was grounded on “common interests and on values — democracy, the rule of law, respect for human rights, and social cohesion”, actually, the main objective laid beneath the ENP was “politically stable neighbourhood” closer to its borders. However, instead of stability in the adjacent, implementation of the ENP became reason of great political insurgence in the contested neighbourhood. In this respect, the value for the European aspiration was assessed to be very expensive for member countries, which was further reflected in secessionist, conflict regions, for instance, Transnistria still remains an obstacle for Moldovan republic which prevents now the EaP Association agreement signatory state transformation to western orbit, and instead helps to return it Russian sphere of influence. Ukraine’s crisis (Bechev, 2015; Radchuk, 2011) and creeping occupation in Georgian territories is the great dilemma for successful implementation of the EaP, despite the EU’s ambitious decision to prevent Russia as main “scenario-setter” of the EaP. Thus, prioritized states of Eastern Partnership countries pay a great tribute for their choice of European integration. Moreover, ENP-EaP became a subject of sharp criticism amidst prominent scholars, as a failure of

EU's external policy, whose concomitant always was Russian factor as a sole constant impeding actor.

It became clear that this joint initiative obviously failed to accomplish its overarching goal towards building more stable and democratic neighbourhood (Delcour and Wolzhuk, 2015). Russia-Georgia war in 2008 had decisive impact for rethinking the future of ENP as main progressive external policy of the EU in the wider neighbourhood. Unless, Russia was considered as a key strategic partner (Delcours and Kostanyan, 2014) of the EU in successful implementation of the ENP in the region, 2008 August war revealed that "enlarged European union" proposal about common neighbourhood was neither acceptable nor desirable for "Sovereign player". The latter became the key factor of implementation of the new institutional/policy redesign in the European external policy agenda.

In 2009, the EaP, a more comprehensive, a new partnership instrument has been proposed to its eastern and South Caucasian neighbours to provide stability, good governance, and economic development near its neighbourhood. Distinct from the ENP, EaP was proposed to six member countries Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, the Republic of Moldova, and Ukraine.

The main objective of the joint Swedish-Polish ambitious proposal initiated in 2009, Prague, was "to create the necessary conditions to accelerate political association and further economic integration between the European Union and interested partner countries" (Council of the European Union, 2009). As commissioner Štefan Füle commented: "The Eastern Partnership, a key policy initiative in the Neighbourhood, aims to bring our eastern neighbours closer to the European Union. Drawing on the EU's unique range of instruments, we are seeking to achieve a new, innovative style of partnership. We want to engage further in cooperation with our neighbours to support their democratic transformation. We encourage reforms in key policy areas. We offer stronger links of political association and economic integration, adapted to our partners' wishes and capacities. EU funding channelled via budget support programmes is an important tool to achieve these goals."

To achieve the overarching goals set by the EaP, partner countries had to implement a wide range of political and economic reforms with approximation of their national legislation to the EU *acquis communautaire*. In this respect, special importance is given to four thematic platforms outlined in the Policy: democracy, good governance and stability, sustainable economic development, energy security and people-to-people contacts and six flagship initiatives to strengthen its ties in the neighbourhood (Council of the European Union, 2009).

Budget support is provided to five partner countries (except of Belarus), which is basically outlined for accomplishing political and socio-economic reforms set out in bilateral Association agreements and DCFTA, which represent the main policy instruments vis-à-vis to EaP members,

Moreover, Association agreements provide partner countries with DCFTA: 'where the positive effects of trade and investment liberalization will be strengthened by regulatory approximation leading to convergence with EU laws and standards' (Council of the European Union, 2009). In the end, the EU and partner countries said that the EaP 'will also take gradual steps towards full visa liberalization as a long-term goal for individual partner countries on a case-by-case basis' (Council of the European Union, 2009). However, in the light of attractive propositions via AAs and DCFTA, likewise the ENP, the Eastern partnership caused although quite more challenges in the shared neighbourhood, and particularly, to the EU through this neighbourhood, especially in terms of energy security, while the EU's endeavour of energy diversification through various transit routes, including the ENP /EaP partner countries. Energy security is the main priority area implemented in both EU external policy instruments, ENP (European Commission (2004) and , in particular: "The Eastern Partnership aims to strengthen energy security through cooperation with regard to long-term stable and secure energy supply and transit, including through better regulation, energy efficiency and more use of renewable energy sources" (Council of the European Union, 2009).

Summing up the given arguments, two key factors should be outlined that crucially affected on successful implementation EaP as a substitute of the ENP: firstly, EU-Russia energy interdependence, EU-Russia strategic partnership that is based on common spaces as agreed in 2003, outlines energy dialogue between EU and Russia one of the spaces out of four, and external security policy area enables legal engagement of Russia in the neighbourhood as a key partner in developing ENP-EaP, and conflict stabilization. To conclude, this type of asymmetric interdependence which has been transformed into confrontation instead of cooperation (Koehyne and Nye, 2001, pp.13-16) considering recent great power actions exerted by Russia in the EaP countries definitely makes questionable EU-Russia partnership in already contested neighbourhood and simultaneously affects the EaP successful development.

2. Great expectations vs. Unpredictable incentives

European Union European Neighbourhood policy mainly stands on the policy of conditionality vis-à-vis to non-member states (Schimmelfenning and Sedelmeier, 2005, pp.10-17), Indeed, distinction between CEEC and EaP countries apparently vivid. Here, the major problem concerns to the designing of same conditionality policy with the same external incentives and unpredictable domestic costs, international veto players, which became clear since the launch of the ENP in 2004, described as the most powerful external policy instrument. However, due to coincidence of internal and external factors this powerful European external policy caused more challenges than positive for

the partner countries and the EU itself, firstly, it became necessary to rethink the ENP, in particular, with regard to those six post-soviet countries later comprised in the EaP.

The main dilemma of policy redesign since the ENP to EaP stands in the policy developed towards each partner countries, but “does one fit for all”? Since the great enlargement a newly emerged ENP policy proposed to eastern member countries is sought to be a great success of European external policy, but unlike to Balkan countries the ambitious policy did not envisage membership objectives for partner countries, and the same policy has been designed for EaP. Moreover, by contrast, EaP countries have been classified in different categories, neither privileged nor less prioritized, hence, three countries Moldova, Ukraine, and Georgia are amongst privileged ones.

ENP/EaP external incentives model of rationalist bargaining model (Schimmelfenning and Sedelmeier, 2005, pp.10-17) puts the policy doubtful- “does one fit all?” The question can be analysed in two approaches, the first, EU conditionality did not appear acceptable for all EaP member countries, strategy of reactive reinforcement was not attractive for Azerbaijan, as its broadly known it’s a desirable and would be a crucial partner in terms of energy sector for the EU in terms of energy diversification, hence, no agreement has been achieved between them. Belarus and Armenia is absolutely far away from the EaP discussion due to its clear-cut position towards Russia, instead of signing AAs and DCFTA, it joined Eurasian Union in September 2013 before Vilnius Summit.

However, a “golden” Carrot-stick model quite impressively has been implemented in those privileged countries of Georgia, Moldova, and Ukraine. “Three Ms” –s Money, Market, and Mobility (Cadier, 2010) successfully was introduced in these countries domestic and foreign policy without “upsetting domestic equilibrium” (Schimmelfenning and Sedelmeier, 2005, pp.10-17). Thus, conditionality based reinforcement rewards encompassed for EaP countries that comprise to accept the EU rules and conditions, reforms in political, economic, and democracy, including energy field which envisages joining in Energy Community, and harmonization of domestic legislation in all aforementioned fields to *acquis communautaire*, actually means unconditional approve of EU set rules.

Accordingly, proposed external incentives model, which is considered as the most significant rewards for non-member countries and comprise assistance and institutional ties differs from trade and cooperative agreements via association agreements to full membership. Moreover, institutional ties also consider market access to the EU which finally means increased gain from trade, investments, and participation in EU decision making. In the light of external incentive model, research paper, alongside to other issues, identifies how the EU proposed incentives are adopted in those privileged EaP partner countries, or whether this incentives are sufficient for both the EU and

partner countries to avoid institutional redesign, as it occurred in 2009 with the need of establishing new policy instrument, since 2004 of the launch of ENP.

Institutional ties, which is represented via AAs and DCFTA provides partner countries with wide range of financial aid for the implementation of particular reforms through European investment Bank and European Bank of Reconstruction and Development (EBRD); The most significant value of signing DCFTA, which in turn requires immense work for the implementation of appropriate legislative package and technical harmonization with the EU *acquis communautaire*); Finally, the last incentive ensured by the EaP, visa liberalization is considered the most crucial incentive in the process of integration (Cadier, 2010).

Moldova's progress towards its way of Europeanization can be considered as achieved mission, it ranks first place among privileged countries, which already signed AAs and DCFTA and received the best reinforcement reward, a visa free regime (Schimmelfenning and Sedelmeier, 2005, pp.10-17), and already a member of Energy Community, The rate of democracy according to the EU official appraisal is at normal rate, but deep analysis clarifies country's resent attitude towards the rapprochement of the EU, firstly, Russian factor, to be a second great trade partner for Moldova, conditions Moldova's energy dependence on Russia. Moreover, with energy import and due to its geographical location, when Moldova also is a transit country that provides supplying of Russian gas to Romania and Ukraine makes country absolutely depended on its neighbour. Second, on the Contrary to its positive democratic benchmark which was appraised by the EU after its elections, National democratic Institute survey of 2015 reveals that only 40% of Moldovan citizens support European integration, while 44% are in favor of Eurasian integration (NDI, 2015; Kostanyan, 2016) and other discrepancies, namely, reflected in prolonged "frozen" conflicts in Transnistria and Gagauzia, like Georgia and Ukraine, hampers the country's real integration with the EU.

Georgia's is amidst of privileged partners which signed AAs and DCFTA in 2014, legal acts and regulations enshrined into the treaties is the clear-cut political choice of Georgia on the way ahead of transformation to west. According to most scholars and experts it successfully managed to harmonize a full package of domestic legislation with EU *acquis*, indeed, there is a wide range of legal acts, including energy security regulations, as Georgia is not a member of Energy Community yet, which is obligatory for further cooperation under the AAs and DCFTA multi and bi-lateral agreements. VLAP is discussed for the nearest future. Indeed, it should be noted that country was more pro-western oriented during Mikheil Saakashvili's office. In 2012 a newly elected government Georgian Dream firmly confirmed following of its European choice. Indeed, despite of well-established will about integration with EU, situation really changed, in particular, billionaire B. Ivanishvili's government has been criticized for his ambivalent, double approach foreign policy, stalk

between western sounded ideas and second eye glared to Russia. Moreover, from this outlook government is sharply criticized for its inconsistent, irrelevant attitude and work in harmonization of appropriate legal acts required under AAs and DCFTA. In particular, constant internal political confrontation between governmental parties in parliament, coming elections, and thinking constantly on retaining their titles, seats in future parliament, than adopting proper legal acts, really makes the integration process questionable, alongside to increasing Russian factor. However, unlike to Moldova, the resent NDI survey confirms that 79 % is aware, while 69 % positively approves signing the AAs and DCFTA with the EU in the aim of improvement Georgia's economic condition, when benefits from joining to NATO at the same time is approved by 38 %. Accordingly, it should be noted that out of this partner countries Georgia contributes greatly with its arm forces in the international Afghanistan under the aegis of NATO. This survey explicitly shows that country is more pro-western despite of external obstacles and unpredictable interventions, and ceaseless conflicts in its breakaway regions of Abkhazia and South Ossetia.

Case of Ukraine is more complicated comparing to rest of the two partner countries discussed in the research paper. Country is particularly desirable partner, both in terms of trade and energy security, for both the EU and Russia. Ukraine defined its political choice in early 1998s, since then despite of numerous obstacles (Stegniy, 2011) it firmly continued overcoming challenges to the European integration. Unlike, the "success story" of the EaP, the republic of Moldova, negotiations between EU-Ukraine Association agreement and DCFTA, in 2013 during the ex-president office, under Russian hard pressure over the country led Ukraine to Maidan, which alongside to European integration, brought more challenges than positive to the country, namely, annexation of Crimea, and ongoing unrest in Donbas. In addition to political instability, internal destabilization inside the country deters its transformation to Europe. In 2013 at Vilnius summit Yanukovich's proposal on trilateral signing of the EU-Ukraine association agreement has been harshly criticized and rejected. However, Russian pressure is harder than it seems. Association agreement in economic part, DCFTA part have been signed in two part within the framework of tripartite EU-Ukraine-Russia negotiations on signing DCFTA, as a result of Russia-EU-Ukraine complicated negotiations. Consequently, In 2014, political part of AAs was signed and the economic part of DCFTA, in particular, signing of trade related provisions have been postponed until 31 December of 2015. Furthermore, current war, in addition to lack of professional staff, like Georgia, and instability impedes to implement proper reforms in this direction of Europeanization. Moreover, Russia's hard power, including "soft power elements" obviously remains a great rival against EU's normative power. From this outlook it's unpredictable to make positive comments about Ukraine's successful integration.

Summing up the brief analysis of the EaP partner countries, it's vivid that since the launch of its implementation, in line with the achievements that was ensured with the ratification of three remained partner countries, which indicates that the policy explicitly can be considered incoherent, whereas, in 2009 its ambitious goal addressed to a new initiative "a more for more". Apparently, the conditionality policy did not appear suitable for all, because the external incentives were less attractive for other three countries. Furthermore, this can be acknowledged not only less coherent as most of the scholars argue (Korosteleva, 2014) but the Given arguments clarify that the "Carrot-stick" based conditionality policy can be considered as incoherent due to less favourable "sticks", and indifferent attitude from Azerbaijan, Belarus and Armenia who apparently defined their attitude towards the way of European integration. Moreover, two latter countries joined Eurasian economic Union under Russian hard pressure, this assumptions enables us to conclude that more attractive external incentives should be offered while intergovernmental bargaining process, in consideration of domestic costs alongside to external veto players. A new ambitious partnership designed for gathering "a wide range of countries" from closer neighbourhood, points to failure, even in case of "privileged" partners, due to united trilateral and interdependent trade relations amid EU-Russia and Ukraine, and constant international pressure, reflected in instability and conflicts. In addition, to the fact that unlike CEE countries membership is entirely exempted from this policy, EU gradually implements new policy instruments, revised "A new ENP 2015" addressed to these countries, new phases of negotiations began with Armenia, gives a clear explanation of the failure of the EaP.

Finally, it can be concluded that as Schimmelfenning (Schimmelfenning and Sedelmeier, 2005, pp.10-17) argues effectiveness of political conditionality consists of three major interdependent conditions: favourable external incentives, size and speed of domestic adoption costs, and credibility of political conditions. Based on this argument, the EaP should be defined that in overall, condition of favourability of external incentives, alongside to its speed finally negatively affected on the successful implementation of the EaP.

3. Russian influence-struggle for gaining the lost influence

Ongoing political processes in the Eastern partnership countries, namely, crisis in Ukraine, ceaseless creeping occupation in Georgia's breakaway region "South Ossetia" that lasts for years, explicitly indicates that EU-Russian relationship from strategic partnership changed into confrontation in contested neighbourhood (Haukkala, 2015). In 2004, launch the ENP as an EU's aspiration to bring its eastern neighbouring countries "closer to the Union". Russia was exempted from this ambitious proposal, but instead as aforementioned discussion crystallizes, Russia's role in

successful development of ENP in common neighbourhood from EU side that sought to be more ambitious, actually raised a question: how did Russia itself perceive this ambitious proposal from the EU to cooperate in common neighbourhood and contribute in developing of common interests? As Schimelfenning (Schimmelfenning and Sedelmeier, 2005, pp.10-17) argues the “EU’s acquis conditionality in the neighborhood also is characterized with lack of weakness because of credibility of the market access incentives...this argument is also true for energy exporting countries of the region... with this decision EU competes with other powerful providers of external governance, namely Russia.” (Schimmelfenning and Sedelmeier, 2005, pp.10-17). This approach is enshrined in the replicated policy of the ENP, in the EaP.

The launch of the ENP elucidated that EU-Russian relationship have been transformed into rivalry over shared neighbourhood. Furthermore, Russia perceived the launch of the ENP as an invasion in his “former ownership”. Russia’s shadowy presence became a concomitant invincible obstacle that constantly impeded economic and political development set by the ENP in the region. The ENP policy partner countries’ ambitious wish about transformation to western orbit, was a political alarm for Russia (MacFarlane and Menon, 2014), that later become reason of great political insurgence in the contested neighbourhood, especially in Ukraine and Georgia, which still lasts.

Two divergent model of EU-Russia action can be distinguished while discussing their approach towards Eastern Partnership countries. EU and Russia drastically differ in their action as policy makers, especially their perception about sovereignty differs greatly, as one of the most important can be distinguished: “coercive and punitive measures of control and surveillance (“power over lives and deaths”) (Makarychev, 2014); this assumption crystallizes that Russia does not acknowledge “common interests” in common neighbourhood” proposed by the European Union. Moreover, this offer was considered by Russian empire as the “political slap in the eyes”. The appropriate reaction perceived by its hegemonic nature was to oppose EU’s normative power in the EaP neighbourhood in two dimensions, in addition to “soft power”, its divergent expressions of hard power, sheds the light of attitude towards the EaP countries, namely, in order to gain the lost influence in post –soviet countries, its coercive and punitive actions diverse from country to country, in particular, trade sanctions –embargos from various products, restriction over exported energy resources, and the major factor –Eurasian Union as an attempt of regeneration of old dissolved USSR, to return its ex-members to old soviet orbit under the protectorate of “Sovereign Russian Empire”. The second major reason under this attitude is trade relationship. In the process of Europeanization economic development is one of the main priority areas of the EU- EaP cooperation which means that transformation of these countries to the western orbit will unconditionally cause the loss of trade partners for Russia, in particular, especially, it refers to Belarus, Ukraine and Moldova (Radchuk,

2011). Russia –Georgia war in 2008, is another confirmation against the EU launch external policy instrument of the ENP, in the aim of proposing “common interest” in “common neighbourhood” which gained to this ambitious plan an ambiguity in successful development. Consequently, in Georgian breakaway regions of Abkhazia and South Ossetia, in addition to conflict escalation, Russia every day violates territorial integrity and sovereignty of the republic of Georgia with creeping occupation, continues “delivering presents” to Georgian citizens with Russian passports. Russia-Georgia war was followed by the Ukraine gas crisis in 2009 caused over price dispute, in fact, it can be characterized as the next political message from Russia sent to the European Union, as the Ukraine is the main transit country for Russian gas through Europe.

Vilnius eastern partnership summit that was held in November 2013, hoping to welcome four EaP member countries Georgia, Armenia, Moldova and Ukraine, to sign the Association Agreements and Deep and Comprehensive Trade Agreements, surprisingly the *finalité* of the summit have been decided in “Russian set scenario”. Consequently, a new partnership that aimed “*a new perspective to citizens in Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine; ...Ultimately Europe and the Eastern partners can only flourish as an integrated continent without dividing lines*” got the most negative impact on Russian government, already bored with the European “normative power”, and enduringly intervening in its sphere of influence and stimulating eastern partner countries to go ahead in the partnership building process. Accordingly, Only the EU-Republic of Moldova and EU-Georgia Association Agreements has been initialled, including the DCFTAs. Russia managed to prevent Armenia from signing the Association Agreement, which in early September joined the Eurasian union instead. Pressure on Moldova was more strictly outlined in two approaches, firstly, Russia put an embargo on Moldovan wine (T.J., 2013) and second, simultaneously sent a clear-cut message to its government that Moldova would wait freezing in winter (Haukkala, 2015), as it greatly depended on Russian gas. These economic sanctions can be supposed a joke comparing to Ukrainian president proposal made on the Vilnius 2013 Summit (Delcoure and Wolczuk, 2013), on tripartite trade relationship agreement between EU-Russia and Ukraine.

In conclusion, based on aforementioned arguments, and prominent scholars’ assumptions, it can be concluded that Russian influence in the aim of discourage the EaP implementation is of high prominence, and no one can predict when the Russia shall exert its great power to constitute its influence in the wider world.

4. Energy security: key point of EU-Russia interests' intersection in EaP countries

Robert Keohane and Joseph Nye state “asymmetric interdependence can be a source of power” where “there is no guarantee that military means will be more effective than economic one to achieve a given purpose” (Keohane and Nye, 2001, pp.13-16). Russia is the major supplier for the European Union as well as its EaP partner countries, namely, Ukraine, Moldova, and Armenia. Consequently, its military and economic pressure through energy security relations severely affects the EU and its partner countries. EU-Russia strategic partnership could not deter Russia to violate asymmetric interdependence and bargain with its power resource, energy. Energy in 2014 (Ukraine –Russia gas crisis, 2009), made the EU vulnerable twofold strategically and economically, solely Russia’s share for 2013 of energy export in the EU about 34 % of total imports of crude oil and about 49 % of total imports of natural gas in gaseous state (EUROSTAT, 2014), dependence rate varies from country to country according to their energy assumption. On the contrary, analysing the statistics of the Russian export of petroleum oils in overall is 70.5%, while the share of the EU in the total estimated exports of Russia for natural gas in gaseous state is 70.9 %. Through the statistical analysis it is vivid that over one third of Russia’s exports of coal and peat are also bound for the EU which is great revenue share of Russia’s economy (EUROSTAT, 2014).

Energy consumption substitutes that the EU is the largest market for Russian energy, that finally identifies the interdependence of both actors, as Russia’s high sensitivity makes it to use its resources for gaining power, in terms of controlling his dependant (Casier, 2011). On the other hand, the European Union set the main objective to mitigate Russian energy dependence via diversification of energy sources on imports alongside to rest four issues, basically concentrated in new energy document that highlights the EU energy strategy, which combines diversifying sources of imports, increasing domestic production, facilitating an integrated energy market, improving energy efficiency, and promoting renewable (European Commission, 2014, p.17).

According to assessment of the international Energy Agency the European union’s energy consumption will increase by 2030 by 81%, that’s why third countries’ integration into European energy market is on the EU’s agenda, including signing of different agreements, to reduce its energy dependence bypassing Russia via diverse pipelines (Kohen, 2009, pp.91-109).

Energy security is singled out as the issue of great significance implemented in different legal documents of the ENP-EaP, in particular, after Russia-Ukraine Gas crisis it was high time for the EU to reduce Russia’s high prominence as Energy supplier for the EU. Energy security was defined as the main priority area of the EaP, which provides that: ‘the Eastern Partnership aims to strengthen energy security through cooperation with regard to long-term stable and secure energy supply and

transit, including through better regulation, energy efficiency and more use of renewable energy sources.” In this respect, energy flagship initiative occupies significant place which envisages accomplishing of three main objectives: to facilitate the trade of gas and electricity between the EU and the six Eastern European partner countries (Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, Republic of Moldova, and Ukraine), to improve energy efficiency and to expand the use of renewable energy sources. The EaP which was perceived as “empty project” from Russia, energy security defined the cleavage amid EU-Russia more sharply evident.

Nevertheless, Eastern partnership arose different statements, EU leaders admitted energy security as “indispensable”, Mirek Topolánek, made a hopeful statement in 2009: “I believe that it is indispensable to fill this framework with concrete projects, e.g. in the fields of energy or economy, as soon as possible” (Topolánek, 2009).

The Eastern partnership summit, which was followed by crucial Southern Corridor Summit, particularly emphasized significance of “diversifying EU’s energy sources and energy routes...” “The context of this Summit is very clear. Our strategic priority in the EU is to enhance energy security in particular by diversifying EU’s energy sources and energy routes... The Eastern Partnership is indeed a historic; I use the word historic, summit” (European Commission, Barroso, 2009). In the light of EU-Russia energy interdependence this was final step that irritated bear, Lavrov declared “The Eastern Partnership is an EU attempt to expand its "sphere of influence" in the quest for hydrocarbons, Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov has said, in Moscow's first major broadside against the new policy” (Pop, 2009).

Indeed, while discussing energy security issue as the key factor of contradiction of EU –Russia interest, and “sphere of influence”, it should be noted that from the EaP perspective “diversifying EU’s energy sources and energy routes” comprise more crucial factors for this issue, like transit countries of the EaP, such as Moldova, Ukraine, in the south, Georgia, and Azerbaijan, the later can be concluded as an alternative major energy supplier in the context of the EaP. However, in every second hopeful point in successful implementation of the EaP, Russia’ shadowy presence hampers this process, while discussing the diverse energy projects that should prospectively alter EU’s greater dependence on Russia, it always manages to disrupt plans, the very example is Russia-Georgian war, during this war, Russia seized Baku–Supsa pipeline in 2008, the line that from Azerbaijan delivers oil to western market through Georgia’s Black sea port of Supsa. It is a message to both EaP countries of Georgia and Azerbaijan, which on the other hand has Nagorno-Karaback conflict, and finally, Russia implicates serious leverages not only through these countries, affecting their economy, seizing territories of Georgia, but also cutting the gas to Ukraine , secessionist conflicts in Moldova, frightening also with cutting off energy supply, obviously indicates the EU on its political tool,

energy security, that has led EU-Russia interdependence from mutual dependence to acute confrontation.

To conclude, disrupting the construction of alternative pipeline routes that would reduce EU dependence on Russia, for whom it's the most profitable huge market, alternative routes: Caspian, Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan, and Baku-Supsa pipelines, as well as the rest, Russia impedes the EU's endeavour to diversify energy security via diverse energy routes.

Conclusions

In spite of great endeavours of the European Union, the ENP could not be acknowledged as comprehensive policy instrument, regardless the commitments ensured, and contributions proposed to the ENP countries. Indeed, it worth to note that European Union paid a great tribute in economic integration of partner countries via financial assistance, indeed, less attention has paid to the security issue, as "stable neighbourhood" became the field of battle, the establishment of the ENP has become the root of political instability in many partner countries due to external actors, discouraging countries' transformation to the European Union.

While analysing Path from ENP to EaP, the latter can be concluded as the enhanced replica of its predecessor. Association agreements and DCFTA propose more concrete steps towards the economic integration and political stability, outlining significant four platforms, based on democracy, human rights, and rule of law. DCFTA, on the other hand, it proposes access to internal market that will gradually allow the partner countries rapprochement to the European community market. From this argument the EU with closer cooperation and active involvement of partner countries should finalize this overarching goal to avoid full disappointment from the EaP. Aforementioned discussion elucidates a wide range of discrepancies, laid down beneath the policy initiative, external incentives are not sufficient to promote successful implementation of the EaP, namely, conditionality did not satisfied credibility (Schimelfenning and Sedelmeier, 2005 pp.10-17), as half of the countries remained out of the partnership. Paradoxically, interdependence and power of (Keohane and Nye 2001, 13-16; Haukalla, 2013) Russia still remains influential external actor over these countries, intentionally proposing its offers, offering low energy prices, and manipulating with its is unpredictable great power to constitute his influence over post-soviet space.

It should be emphasized that since ENP to EaP energy security is the great concern, one of the main priority area that as the research shows is the main point of intersection of the EU-Russia interests, from interdependence the mutual cooperation has been transformed into conflict, in particular in contested neighbourhood, which apparently excludes the idea of sharing a power balance

of those two important actors in the international arena, while discussing the divergent models of their approach, as international actors (Makarychev, 2014).

The research concludes that the EU should promote partner countries to be more politically stabilized, and ensure to enforce the existing situation, to overcome the obstacles, to reinforce security of transit routes, for further diversification of energy supply sources, that would economically reinforce the transit countries and at the same time reduce its dependence on Russian energy supply sources.

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BUSINESS INTELLIGENCE APPLICATIONS – POSSIBLE INSTRUMENTS FOR ECONOMIC INTEGRATION WITHIN THE EASTERN PARTNERSHIP

Dragos Ovidiu TOFAN*

Abstract: *Eastern Partnership includes, in addition to bilateral components (Association Agreements, Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Areas/DCFTA), also a multilateral dimension as "economic integration and convergence with EU policies". This stated purpose of the partnership involves the need for adaptability to regional conditions and a differentiated approach to economies in the region in order to establish common objectives. Partner countries have aspirations that vary by geographic location, state of relations with the European Union and Russia, foreign policy objectives in medium and long term, real prospects of joining the European Union, or internal stability in economic and social aspects. Macroeconomic indicators specific to each country must undergo a dynamic analysis aimed on current situations and also on evolution of economic life. Thus, it requires processing a huge volume of historical data, creating possible scenarios based on policies implemented or being implemented to reach comprehensive information to provide a realistic picture of the economic growth at the macro level. Successfully implemented in enterprises, Business Intelligence (BI) applications can be used to analyze large volume of data required to be processed to reach full and useful reports for the process of negotiation between the partners involved in the agreements referred and, very importantly, to establish a common language for all bodies and institutions co-opted into negotiations. Differences between the EU and other Eastern Partnership countries are obvious but economic common terms and methods or techniques of similar work can help plan positive developments in the negotiations and the desired convergence of economic policies. Business Intelligence tools simplify the presentation of needed information for discussions and provide a foundation in starting up joint analysis of economic dynamics in the area to reach complete and actual lines of future possible cooperation. This paper aims to reveal practical aspects on possible implementation of BI capabilities in the field of data analysis that is needed for the economic integration promoted by the Eastern Partnership.*

Keywords: BI; DCFTA; AA

JEL Classification: A1; A2

Introduction

Agreeing to the European Council, the declared aim of the Eastern Partnership is to strengthen the political association and economic integration with neighbors of European family namely Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine (European Council, n.d). It's enough just to have a short look over these countries and an immediate conclusion should be that this goal is ambitious and quite delicate. The reason is very simple because discuss is over cooperation with an ex-Soviet space with specific political, economic and social concepts and, most importantly, the great power from east must not be neglected: Russia. There are also smoldering conflicts in the area (the

* "Alexandru Ioan Cuza" University, Faculty of Economics and Business Administration, Doctoral School Of Economics and Business Administration, Iasi, Romania, e-mail: dragos.tofan.2014@gmail.com

Armed clashes in Nagorno-Karabakh, conflict in Georgia, the Transnistrian issue, Crimea, etc.) that may induce instability in region.

Under these circumstances, the Eastern Partnership establishes a differentiated approach to the six countries involved depending on the priorities of each (foreign policy, economic indicators, civil society, energy security, strategic geographical location etc.) and the progress on relations with the European Union. These regional peculiarities have led to the need for a single coherent policy framework within the Partnership.

This paper suggests a Partnership approach by analyzing practical details of economic integration and sets as main objective the promotion of Business Intelligence applications in implementing the strategies proposed in this framework of cooperation policies. As context, the areas covered by the 2014 – 2017 Work Programme (European External Action Service, *n.a.*) are:

- Transport
- Small and Medium Enterprises (SME)
- Environment and Climate Change
- Trade and Trade Related Regulatory Cooperation
- Agriculture and Rural Development
- Statistics
- Taxation and Public Finance
- Labor Market and Social Policies
- Macroeconomic and Financial Stability
- Information Society and Media.
- The study is focused on SMEs sector for at least two reasons:
- Proven Business Intelligence applicability in the economic entities due to recognized reporting, updating and security capabilities. Organizations implementing these platforms develop an efficient and updated information system that can provide online and detailed reports to those interested.
- The importance of this sector within the European Union, as evidenced also by "The Small Business Act for Europe" - SBA (European Commission, *n.a.*) as a framework of policies to support entrepreneurship by simplifying regulations and removing barriers to the development of SMEs.

This paper addresses subject matter on the following structure:

1. Role and importance of Business Intelligence in information processing.
2. Need for convergence of economic policies within Eastern Partnership.
3. Opportunity of a single platform for reporting, storing and processing information.

As a methodology, the study works on official documents of the European Council, reactions and opinions of various analysts in partner countries, but also Eurostat statistics and literature in the area of Business Intelligence. Considering the problems found, the particularities of member states, existing data on trade between the partner countries and the EU, institutional framework created or need to be created, Association Agreements etc. the following premise is considered: the existing opportunity of creating a unified information system to support economic integration efforts within Partnership.

1. Information – Basic Element in Development of Eastern Partnership Strategies

Regional cooperation covered by the Eastern Partnership and strengthening EU relations with its neighbors from the east is based on a complex processing of information from various sources which are generally formal and controlled at the state level. Information and best practices exchange should be implemented through technical seminars and workshops involving EU Member States and partners that must appoint representatives of parliaments, civil society, local and regional authorities , financial institutions etc. Thus, it is necessary to have uniform working procedures, formats of reports or economic indicators generally accepted and relevant to the essence of discussions and proposed objectives. There are already planned activities as mentioned in the 2014 – 2017 Work Programme, in line with the general guide and rules of procedure of the EaP multilateral platform.

Collection of relevant data, regular monitoring of progress, analyzing and comparing various indicators of development involves using common terms and instruments capable of processing large volumes of data. The successful implementation of Business Intelligence applications in major companies can create a precedent observable by analysts involved in the design of a free, sustainable and inclusive market in partner countries.

1.2. Role and Importance of Business Intelligence in Information Processing

The multitude of data or information facing an organization under the current business environment puts pressure on decision-making posts and complicates analysis systems and traditional

control that supports it. Development of Internet economy, digitization of most processes related to it, considerable cheapening of data sources and access to information and knowledge diversification presentation formats in general led to "bombing" entities with excess data / information.

Business Intelligence tools come to respond to these challenges by arguments that recommend it as a source of reliable information. As a simplistic definition, Business Intelligence tools cover a wide range of solutions to support the managerial decision-making process by analyzing large volumes of data. In essence, the final product is comprehensible information, clean, safe and accessible at the right time, which is exactly what management needs in order to operate efficiently. The applicability of these solutions is not just a static presentation of reality but offer future scenarios, projects Budgets, orients marketing policy or personnel, sets trends for various indicators or shapes profile of business partners (customers and suppliers). The financial analysis plays an important role and become reliable tools in developing specific strategies.

A defining part of a manager's job is to take decisions. Improving the quality of decision making leads, ultimately, to increase overall organizational efficiency and business intelligence tools can play a decisive role in this regard - hence the original meaning of " Decision Support ". Such facilities provide win-win solutions for end users by increasing productivity of IT departments that are in a position to solve special requests enabling decision makers to become increasingly more satisfied. Operational and analytical processes are parts of the organization and Business Intelligence proves to be a reliable partner in both situations (Schiff, 2008).

For management, the benefits of BI solutions can be summarized in:

- better decisions based on substantiated answers to business demands
- increased efficiency and productivity
- optimized strategies for income generating
- monitoring trends and anomalies discovery
- forecasting business opportunities
- improving customer relationships.

1.2. Need for Convergence of Economic Policies within the Eastern Partnership

Economic integration within EU knows its own adventure but relies on a set of clear and common rules and principles. The strategies implemented in this regard are aimed at shaping a single

market, free movement of goods and people, a single currency and recognizes small and medium business sector as a key driver in the economic development of the community.

In this respect, the Small Business Act for Europe (SBA) (European Commission, *n.a.*) sets as priorities:

- Promote entrepreneurship;
- Favorable legal framework for SME sector;
- Access to finance;
- Access to markets and internationalization.

Naturally, Platform 2 of the Eastern Partnership align its policies on small and medium businesses at SBA directives and brings together experts from the countries involved to ensure not only the implementation of the mentioned principles but also the implementation of the DCFTA on the economic side. SMEs strategies interfere with the line of agriculture, rural development, environment and climate, corruption, etc. to ensure consistency in integration. In this respect, in 2015 the Flagship Initiative regarding SMEs consisted of a set of active projects of over 100 million euros dedicated to supporting this sector (European Commission, *n.a.*). So conceived and launched projects in partner countries are oriented to certain issues and the results must be monitored, collected and processed in order to perform highly detailed analyzes. Increasing number of employees, better financial results and easy access to funding are concrete results of the agreements and reveal ultimately the competitiveness of SME sector.

Projects representatives within this panel should always come with new information that will contribute to this endeavor in forums in order to share the experience related to the implementation stage of DFCTA. At the same time, there are to be considered practical information related to the collaboration between the European Commission services and the member countries of the partnership. The Work Program for 2014 - 2017 envisages a set of objectives and planned activities that, in case of SMEs, are supervised by the Directorate General Enterprise and Industry.

To this end, the SME Panel aims meetings at least once a year at the level of experts drawn from the ministries and institutions of the countries involved, depending on the topics covered. The projects concerned are:

- The second round of SBA assessment - identifying strengths and weaknesses in partner countries' policies on small and medium enterprises as well as solutions for improving the legal framework
- Assisting partner countries in implementing reforms based on recommendations given by the SBA assessment

- East Invest II component - to promote trade and investment and strengthening SME connectivity, sustainability and encourage business associations in order to sustain long-term cooperation with organizations in EU
- Auditing and reporting (STAREP) - improve key capabilities of key financial institutions in partner countries to provide specialized support small and medium business sector
- EGP / BAS - technical assistance for organizations to adapt to the rigors of a liberal market economy
- SME financing facilities - combining loans with EU financial grants offered
- Export Marketing Training - focuses training on entering to the EU markets
- Entrepreneurial Learning - to focus on young entrepreneurs and female entrepreneurs.

Projects dedicated to supporting and promoting small and medium enterprises of the Eastern Partnership establish goals on long term and require sustained convergence efforts by individual Member States and careful monitoring of the institutions involved in this process.

1.3. Opportunity for a Single Platform for Reporting, Storing and Processing Information

The objectives announced by Platform 2 on SME (improving the business environment, alignment with the principles and spirit of the SBA, the implementation of the DCFTA with focus on SME) reflects an ongoing effort to analyze the evolution of indicators and statistics based on information collected while real. The projects implemented or under implementation aim at achieving measurable results of which interpretation enables measuring the effectiveness of actions taken and allows comparability of regions , sectors of economy, time period, etc. This is why a detailed reporting system is needed, being regularly updated with actual, secure and consistent data, system that will be generated and used on a common working platform.

It was brought into discussion the possibility of creating a **Regional Resource Centre** bringing together initiatives and best practices in SME sector within Partnership. As a first step, it is suggested to use the infrastructure created by **CIRCABC (Communication and Information Resource Centre for Administrations, Businesses and Citizens)** which is a web application dedicated to communities interested in working collaboratively. This basically creates easy access to public documents for those interested in contributing to the harmonization of e-Government (European Commission, *n.a.*, Interoperability Solutions for European Public Administrations, available at: http://ec.europa.eu/isa/about-isa/index_en.htm). Undoubtedly, this feature in programs designed ISA (Interoperability Solutions for European Public Administrations) of the European Commission can

be adapted to the requirements of reporting and data processing within the Eastern Partnership in the sense that there is already the necessary infrastructure.

It should be noted, however, that the particularities of the Eastern Partnership can create some vulnerabilities in processing information due to the fact that still it is not still possible to speak of a desired harmonization of rules and procedures for collecting and reporting in the countries involved. The solution may be given by a set of common tools for data processing to provide basic infrastructure for monitoring progress towards economic integration. **Business Intelligence applications** provide clear solutions on some issues through detailed reports and solid models in terms of predictability. Specifically, these applications can be implemented on certain specific objectives such as:

- Projects monitoring
- Dynamics of financial indicators.

Projects monitoring is a supervising process from the perspective of planned / budgeted versus actual. The main purpose of BI focused on this area is generally to provide relevant information about hours spent on various activities, referrals and phases of the project on one hand and on the other a perspective view towards compliance budgets, the number of hours etc.

Figure 1 – Example of BI analysis tool offered BIT Software projects - project analysis by time spent in one year and the degree of achievement



Source: BITSoftware, White Paper 2012, *n.a.* available at: <http://www.bitsoftware.eu/fileadmin/white-paper-ro-bitsoftware-socrate-bi.pdf>

The dynamics of financial indicators provide possible methods for measuring progress in the implementation of policies on small and medium enterprises. A complete analysis of multiple

parameters involve the collection of data from trusted and official sources, and then processing them on a common working platform to ensure accessibility, collaborative capabilities and constant updating of information. At the level of an enterprise, BI platform can manage resources to cope with the financial realities in a constantly changing and can fulfill functions such as reporting to customers (Yahav, 2014). Results - so-called "out-put" – of Business Intelligence applications are distinguished by the presentation and analytical possibilities offered. Dashboards comprise the following advantages which distinguish them from conventional reports (Business Intelligence, *n.a.*):

- Improving employee performance - BI tools provide details of all sides of the business including human resource competitiveness and productivity. Monitoring employees' work may lead to an acceleration of efforts on their part and more accurate dosing efforts in this regard.
- Monitoring progress towards achieving the objectives - the pursuit of certain projects allow management to see whether action plans or business strategies are implemented and followed to determine whether the organization is on track in achieving objectives.
- Saves time and money - using dashboards allow substantial reduction in management time that would be required to analyze the figures. Centralized and integrated nature of these out - put sites at once allows viewing data from multiple sources without the need to generate additional spreadsheets or manual data aggregation. It is also possible to view strategic information on removable media like smartphones or tablet, anywhere and at any time.
- Prevention of human error - the decisions are taken on the basis of solid arguments not only on suppositions. Moreover, the information may be disclosed to other departments and thus resulting in the streamlining information flows and a reduction in the lack of communication within a company.
- More valuable information - visual form of reports and analyzes are presented as information to be better digested. For example, negative trends can be immediately detected at an early stage and it becomes possible to take preventive measures in this regard. Basically, because the format of dashboards, information can be quantified or measure, unlike the classic reports which may have been overlooked.

Therefore, experience in organizations use of BI tools can be exploited in the reporting systems of Platform 2 of the Partnership due to the facilities offered in the management of economic information. Incidentally, one of the wishes of the 2014 – 2017 Work Program is to ensure the quality of financial reports containing reliable information about the financial position and performance of

SMEs. In this sense, the project is designed to support STAREP auditing and reporting methodology related to key institutions involved in the implementation of financial reforms.

Alignment with European and international auditing standards facilitate access to international financial resources since this can be a guarantee of sound financial information, verified and provided by modern systems of accounting and reporting.

Conclusions

Economic integration promoted by EaP involves creating a healthy business environment which translates to increased contribution to GDP, creating new jobs, extensive trade relations at European or international level, access to financing, new investments, etc. The convergence of economic policies with those of the EU partner countries is based primarily on reforms to facilitate development of small and medium enterprises to connect them with Europe. This process is comprehensive and based on a series of strategies and projects with clearly defined goals whose achievement should be closely monitored. Collecting, processing and reporting information regarding small and medium enterprises sector must be based on verified procedures and techniques to ensure a true picture of progress.

The present study suggests applying Business Intelligence facilities in the institutions in charge of the partner countries but also on the level of working platforms involved in the construction of the Eastern Partnership through a transparent and efficient information flow. Reports which can be generated are able to reveal the dynamic, current and deep aspects of the economic realities of this pact.

Moreover, the need to audit the financial statements of entities concerned by projects and harmonizing accounting rules are goals of efforts to integrate and access to funding sources. The existence of efficient information systems provides a complete picture of the development of economic relations within Partnership and can induce appropriate policies to both Eastern space and European spirit.

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THE EASTERN PARTNERSHIP AND ITS IMPACT ON SELF-GOVERNANCE REFORM IN UKRAINE

Vadym ZHELTOVSKYY*

Abstract: *Article poses a question on the effectiveness of the European policy for Eastern Partnership in Ukraine under current circumstances of political and military crisis. Particularly, the role of Poland as a key country for the success of given policy in Ukraine is taken into consideration with the emphasis on Polish-Ukrainian cooperation on the issue of self-governance reform in Ukraine. The aim of the article is threefold. First, to analyse the main trends of EU-Ukraine cooperation in terms of the EaP policy. Second, to present author's research on the role of different political and social actors from Poland and Ukraine (local authorities, non-governmental organizations, Academia) in implementation of European experience on self-governance reform and decentralization processes on Ukrainian ground. Finally, the article makes an attempt to evaluate the EU strategy in regard to Ukraine and present possible ways for further cooperation as regards the reform of self-governance in Ukraine.*

Keywords: European policy for Eastern Partnership; self-governance; decentralization

Introduction

Democracy, good governance and stability are declared to be the key elements for the success of the Eastern Partnership policies on such issues as public administration, civil service, civil protection, judiciary, etc. Moreover, reforms in given areas involve the application of appropriate experience from other members of the Partnership (European Council, 2015). That leads to an assumption that the success of strengthening democratic principles and good governance may be reflected in the success of the self-governance reform and successful decentralization processes of particular country.

As a matter of fact, the article makes an attempt to analyse the first steps of the self-governance reform in Ukraine taken by post-Maidan authorities and follow the outcomes of the cooperation on given matter between the European Union and Ukrainian officials. Particular emphasis is put on the approach toward the self-governance reform in three Ukrainian regions (Rivne, Dnipro, Zaporizzia) and engagement of European expertise on the matter. To achieve the aim stated above, the focus is put on the following aspects:

- the EU-Ukraine cooperation in terms of the EaP policy;
- role of Poland in the context of the European policy on Eastern partnership;

* lecturer, Department of Political Science, Pultusk Academy of Humanities, e-mail: vadym.zheltovskeyy@gmail.com

- differences and similarities in regional approach in western and eastern parts of Ukraine to the engagement of European luminaries in the reforming processes;
- role of different actors and their cooperation on implementation of changes at local and regional levels, etc.

The analysis of named issues aims at answering the question whether the Eastern Partnership efforts on strengthening democracy in Ukraine lead to expected results and whether the Ukrainian reform of self-governance has chances to become a success story.

1. Polish-Ukrainian Cooperation in Terms of European Policy for Eastern Partnership

As already stated before, the Eastern Partnership (EaP) initiative of the European Union intends to provide a platform for discussions of a wide range of important issues between the EU and its eastern neighbours. An important aspect is that the project was initiated by Poland and a subsequent proposal was prepared in co-operation with Sweden. It was presented by the foreign ministers of Poland and Sweden at the EU's General Affairs and External Relations Council in Brussels on 26 May 2008. Furthermore, the Eastern Partnership was inaugurated by the European Union in Prague on 7 May 2009 (Runner, 2008).

Overall, the role of Poland in the Eastern Partnership policies on self-governance reform in Ukraine may be regarded as one of the most significant for a number of reasons. First, it is the geographical position of the two states and the good partner relations between official authorities in Kyiv and Warsaw. The close distance between many Ukrainian and Polish regional counterparts make it easier to exchange their experience, organize joint events and engage different participants of the reforming processes in the meetings and discussions.

Second, it is the success of Polish self-governance reform and unanimous declaration of top Ukrainian officials on readiness to implement the self-governance transformation following the example of Polish model of the reform. That could have been easily noticed in political discourse of post-Maidan leaders at the very beginning of their being in office. During his first official visit to Poland, President Petro Poroshenko asserted that Polish experience in decentralization reform was the most relevant for Ukraine and it would be taken as a basis during works of Constitutional Committee in Ukraine (Channel 5, 2014). In his turn, former Speaker of Ukrainian Parliament and current Prime Minister of Ukraine Volodymyr Groysman requested Polish government to provide Ukraine with practical advice on self-governance reform (NBN News, *n.a.*). Similar rhetoric could have been observed in the addresses of former Prime Minister Yatseniuk (Day, 2015).

Finally, it is the position of local self-governments' officials both in Poland and Ukraine and their declared readiness to cooperate on the matter of decentralization. As a matter of fact, the meaning of cooperation between Polish local self-governments and representatives of local and regional authorities in Ukraine was clearly emphasized by the Committee of Regions in its official documentation. The example might be the Opinion of the Committee of the Regions on the role of local and regional authorities within the Eastern Partnership published on 22 April 2009. The paper considered the development of local democracy as a central element in cooperation between the European Union and countries from the Eastern Partnership project.

The significance of regions and social meaning of regional authorities' engagement in the Eastern partnership initiative is widely underlined in scientific research on the matter. Observers point that active position of local authorities may lead to growing interest among citizens who would join the process and become active participant of the reforming steps (Taczyńska, 2015). Analysts point to the value of strong and well organized potential of local and regional authorities which could improve efficiency of governance and play key role for successful democratization. In this regard, empirical experience of self-governments (local, regional, state, European and international) cooperating in a decentralized way with partners in Eastern Partnership are considered to be of primary importance.

Simultaneously, there appeared a need to establish a discussion forum in order to receive optimal results and fruitful solutions using diverse experience of a wide range of local actors. Such platform known as Conference of Regional and Local Authorities for the Eastern Partnership ("CORLEAP") was created in 2011 as the political forum of local and regional authorities from the European Union and the Eastern Partnership countries. CORLEAP is positioned by its initiators as the only EU platform that offers an opportunity to discuss the contribution by cities and regions in the development of the Eastern Partnership (CORLEAP, *n.a.*).

It should be particularly emphasized that CORLEAP is considered to be a basis of the Eastern Partnership as far as its regional dimension is concerned. Being created as a result of common efforts of the European Commission and the Committee of the Regions, CORLEAP opened doors for political cooperation between local and regional authorities in the EU and partners from the EaP. Such cooperation would result in the increase of local authorities' impact on regional political strategy development and would strengthen the citizen-official cooperation in partner states that all together would lead to stronger local government (Taczyńska, 2015).

Interestingly, it was presentation of the Vinnytsia Region of Ukraine on 15 September 2011 in the Committee of the Regions that was the first presentation of a region from the partner country in

the Committee within the framework of the “open door policy” suggested in CORLEAP action plan (CORLEAP, *n.d*). In fact, Vinnycia is a city in central part of Ukraine that is famous for its successful development under the leadership of current Ukrainian Prime Minister Volodymyr Groysman as a mayor of the city in years 2006-2014. Moreover, because of his successful stay in mayor office, Groysman became associated with prospective transformation of local self-governments across Ukraine. Being the author of new Concept of Self-Governance Reform and Territorial Authority Organization in Ukraine that was approved by the cabinet of ministers of Ukraine on 1 April 2014 (Yatseniuk, 2014), he, however, did not stay long on a position of Vice Prime Minister of Ukraine for Regional Policy and the Minister of Regional Development, Construction and Housing and Communal Services of Ukraine. Instead, after being elected to Ukrainian parliament, Groysman became as a speaker and then a prime minister.

Currently, the particular attention of Vinnycia authorities is paid to regional cooperation with Poland at the level of voivodship. As an example might serve presentation on the economic forum in Łódź or on seminar organized by the commission for territorial cohesion policy (COTER) entitled “Cooperation of European Regions: Territorial Perspectives”. According to official reports, similar events are considered as an opportunity to learn the experience of Poland concerning such issues as decentralization, strengthening of local self-governance and European integration as well as creation of positive image abroad.

Among other priorities, the 2015 Vynyccia state administration report defines the following:

- development of international cooperation between regions and territorial communities of the region with foreign partners in terms of cross-regional and cross-border cooperation in the sphere of export trade, humanitarian issues and social politics;
- implementation of measures oriented at the improvement of executive authorities activity and the activity of local self-governance as regards practical realization of programme of the European integration of Ukraine;
- promotion of regional image and search for foreign investments into regional economy;
- support for the development of business relations of regional companies with their counterparts abroad (Vinnica State Administration, *n.a.*).

It should be stressed that joint projects undertaken by the authorities of Vinnica region and Polish partners have been mainly concentrated on economic cooperation and deepening relations between the entrepreneurs from partner regions. At the same time, the issue of self-governance was discussed in the context of the project entitled “The Process of the Territorial Local Self-governance

– Importance of Changes for Poland” that is realized by the Fund of Local Democracy Support and Euroregion “Dnister”.

As far as Ukrainian scholars are concerned, they assert that learning from Polish and European experience may be productive for Ukrainian side for a number of reasons. As a matter of fact, interregional cooperation is considered to be beneficial for the regional adaptation to the European standards. New opportunities for the participation in a range of joint programs provide Ukrainian regions with possibility of developing effective institutional component and reaching fruitful results in terms of interregional and cross-border cooperation. Finally, similar cooperation encourages citizens to actively participate in life of their region and implement the European standards of governance on local scale (Buglay, 2013).

In order to present the steps undertaken by the European Commission aimed at speeding the process of transformation prior to the Eastern Partnership Initiative a number of EU efforts should be taken into consideration. The first attempt was made in 1991 when the European Union started its Tacis Programme. The main element of Tacis support was aimed at transferring know-how and expertise to organizations in the partner countries. Additionally, the participation of both governmental and non-governmental organization was welcomed. Furthermore, Tacis was replaced by the European Neighbourhood and Partnership Instrument (ENPI) which introduced such innovative features as:

- cross-border cooperation, which provided ground for joint programs, bringing together regions of Member States and partner countries sharing a common border;
- a Governance Facility which supported creative partners showing the eagerness to reform their regions using good governance strategy;
- the Twinning and the TAIEX instruments that served as a cooperation tool between a public administration in a partner country and the equivalent institution in an EU Member and were aimed at enhancing co-operative activities (European Council, 2015).

From the significant perspective of cross-border cooperation between Poland and Ukraine one should analyse the Programme of Cross-Border Cooperation Poland-Belarus-Ukraine 2007-2013 (PL-BY-UA) realized in terms of the European Neighbourhood and Partnership Instrument (ENPI). The major task of the project was to support cross-border development processes and major beneficiaries were non-government organizations, local and regional authorities, non-profit organizations, public institutions, euroregions, and other institutions which implement non-profit projects consistent with the following Programme priorities:

Priority 1. Increasing competitiveness of the border area:

- Measure 1.1. Better conditions for entrepreneurship.
- Measure 1.2. Tourism development.
- Measure 1.3. Improving access to the region.

Priority 2. Improving the quality of life:

- Measure 2.1. Natural environment protection in the borderland.
- Measure 2.2. Efficient and secure borders.

Priority 3. Networking and people-to-people cooperation:

- Measure 3.1. Regional and local cross-border cooperation capacity building.
- Measure 3.2. Local communities' initiatives.

It was of considerable importance that approved projects might have received up to 90% of eligible cost from the programme sources which budget consisted of 202,9 million EUR , including 186,2 million EUR - EU co-financing (The Center of European Projects, *n.a.*).

Another example of Polish-Ukrainian cooperation on local and regional level might be **Central Europe Cooperating for Success Programme** in 2007-2013. The programme itself covered wider range of issues relating not only to cooperation between Poland and Ukraine. In fact, the initiative encourages cooperation among regions of nine central European countries: Austria, Czech Republic, Germany, Hungary, Italy, Poland, Slovakia, Slovenia and Ukraine. The declared aim was to improve innovation, accessibility and the environment and to enhance the competitiveness and attractiveness of their cities and regions.

The programme defined four priorities for cooperation projects:

- **PRIORITY 1:** Facilitating innovation across Central Europe.
- **PRIORITY 2:** Improving accessibility to, and within, Central Europe.
- **PRIORITY 3:** Using our environment responsibly.
- **PRIORITY 4:** Enhancing competitiveness and attractiveness of cities and regions.
- As for Priority 4, it included the following areas of intervention:
 - developing polycentric settlement structures and territorial cooperation;
 - addressing the territorial effects of demographic and social change;
 - capitalising on cultural resources, to make cities and regions more attractive (The Central Europe Cooperating for Success Programme, *n.a.*).

However, it should be emphasised that Ukrainian side was not included in members' list for the 2014-2020 stage of the programme. Instead, the 2020 perspective covered regions from Croatia.

Speaking about Ukrainian-Polish cooperation on the issue of local and regional competitiveness and cooperation, it comes as obvious that given matter has been among top priorities of every single programme. Some researchers make an attempt to analyse the engagement of Polish self-government units in realization of the Eastern Partnership programme. Skorupska asserts that about 70% of local governments in Poland have had foreign partners in recent years, which was influenced by a number of factors such as size of these units or their geographical location. In favour of the importance of geographical position may serve the fact that at the gmina level international cooperation usually is not among top priorities with the exception for local governments situated in the border regions, where contact with the neighbouring country has become commonplace (Skorupska, 2015, p.12).

In her turn, Taczyńska presents the results of the 2013 Ministry of Administration and Digitalization of Poland poll taking among representatives of local and regional self-government in Poland participating in the Eastern Partnership initiative. As far as issue of the international cooperation is concerned, the scale of cooperation with the Eastern partnership states was on the second position following the cooperation with the EU member states. Interestingly, at the level of voivodship 100% of respondents declared their cooperation with partners from the EaP while cooperation with the EU member states took the second place with 93% of positive answer. As for level of powiats, the balance was practically even, however, in favor of the EaP: **56** respondents stated their cooperation with the EU member states and **58** – with states from EaP. At the same time, at the level of gminas, the cooperation in terms of the European Union was vividly more intensive: **215** respondents versus **174** respondents cooperating with partners from outside European Union (Taczyńska, 2015, pp. 47-49).

Analyzing Polish-Ukrainian interregional cooperation in terms of European Union initiatives toward eastern partners, a group of scholars address the issue of Euroregions that are regarded as an assisting tool of relationship regulations between Poland and its non-EU partners. The matter of Euroregions is topical for Ukraine for a simple reason: 19 out of 25 Ukrainian regions that constitute 77% of Ukrainian state are border regions. Majority of the regions participate or participated in a number of Euroregions with partners from such countries as Poland, Slovakia, Hungary, Romania, Moldova, Russia, and Belarus. In other words, the partners in terms of cross-border cooperation might be divided into two main categories: EU and non-EU partners.

Scholars see both positive and negative features of euroregions' functioning at present. Among positive features of euroregions' institutions the following are considered to be the most important: 1) a variety of operation areas and directions: from economy to culture; 2) possibility of cooperating with the non-governmental sector in a spontaneous way (Taczyńska, 2015, p. 45); 3) establishment

of direct links between regional and local government bodies assisting in elimination of communist era legacies when there were no relations between two states. (Wolczuk and Wolczuk, 2003, p. 82). Such characteristics made euroregion a very effective tool of activity in border areas of Central-Eastern Europe

As far as negative side of the euroregions' performance are concerned, scholars mainly stress the financial aspect. Lack of proper finance resources becomes an impediment to the concept of euroregions and to the development of Polish-Ukrainian contacts in particular (Wolczuk and Wolczuk, 2003, p. 82). Meanwhile, despite existing financial troubles, there is a considerable interest among representatives of Ukrainian and Polish border regions to participate in common projects. However, another obstacle for the Euroregions is their being outside mainstream national administrative structures that often results in their marginalized position in the project selection process by central governments (Hooper and Klamsch, 2004, p.122). If to summarise a number of problems that impede the process of the euroregions development the following are seen as the crucial ones: lack of financing, insufficient level of the development of cross-border infrastructure, imperfectness of legal framework for cross-border cooperation, uncertainty regarding legal responsibilities of local authorities, significant differences in economic development of partner regions, etc. (Dolotina, 2013, p. 196).

In order to overcome existed problematic areas, a set of recommendation has been presented by analysts of the issue who define such main tasks for further development of Euroregions as: adoption of necessary tools to gradually minimize and eliminate the administrative and legal impediments which restrain the cross-border cooperation; adjustment of Ukrainian legal basis to the international norms and development of legal acts (a strategy for each Euroregion, Custom and Tax Codex improvement, to name a few) regulating the activity of local authorities that are engaged in Euroregions cooperation; or development of complex state programmes of regional cooperation and their funding based on development of financial infrastructure (banks, funds) of Euroregions. Apart from that, the focus of authorities responsible for the creation of favourable basis for effective euroregions should be put on building transport system in accordance with the European standards, creation of cross-border information server, or establishment of monitoring and coordinating sub-councils in European regions (Hordiyenko *et al.*, 2011; Velychko, 2012, p. 134).

2. Regional Approach to Decentralization in Context of International Cooperation.

2.1. Brief Overview of Selected Regions

The May 2015 Riga Eastern Partnership Summit devoted much attention to Ukrainian case and state of Ukrainian reforms as well as provided the direction for further actions. As far as the matter of self-government reform in Ukraine in the 2015 Summit declaration is concerned, the document addresses several points. Participants underline that the Eastern Partnership will continue its commitment to long-term, comprehensive modernization reforms. Particular emphasis was put on multilateral cooperation between various regional partners and role of the Eastern Partnership in the developing closer ties among partners. Finally, the declaration stresses the significance of such cooperation and its promotion at the regional and municipal levels of government as well as citizens' involvement in the reforming processes (European Council, 2015).

In this regard, the article poses a question on political and civil interest in the reforming of particular region and makes an attempt to follow similar and different features of official-citizen cooperation on the matter of European experience implementation in selected regions. Additionally, the aspect of scientific involvement in the debate on decentralization is analysed in reference to participation of regional respected scientific centres. By doing so, one might follow the level of academic engagement in the process of project development in particular region as well as the level of trust and mutual interest in the relationship between theorists and practitioners or the level of motivation and encouragement from the state as far as the scientific-administrative cooperation is considered.

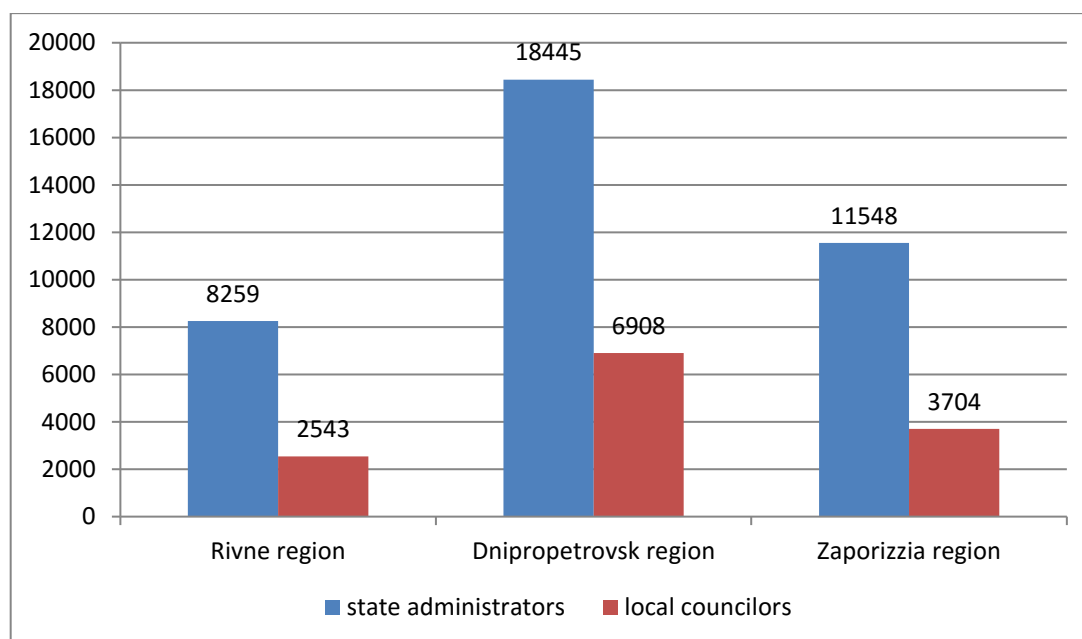
The regions taken into consideration are the following:

- Rivne region (North-west Ukraine).
- Dnipro region (South-east Ukraine).
- Zaporizzia region (South-east Ukraine).

Given selection of regions brings an opportunity to follow the main trends in international cooperation and regional interest in European assistance. As Thurston puts it in his article *Ukraine and the Lethal Hand of History*, main aspects which led to internal division of the country are language, religion, history or cultural orientation. Thurston illustrates the division of Ukrainian society over the values stating that under current situation the key question becomes “*What did your granddad do in the War?*” According to the author, a traveller across Ukraine might notice that from west to east the great heroes become villains (Thurston, 2016). The question remains whether similar division might be observed on self-government reform and decentralization process.

If to compare the amount of local councilors and state administrators in three regions taken under consideration as well as the proportion of local officials in reference to population of particular region, it comes to light that the biggest amount of both administrators and councilors act in Dnipro region while Rivne region has the smallest amount of officials. True, the amount of population in analysed regions is different as well: from 1161.2 thousand in Rivne region to 3276.6 thousand in Dnipro region that takes the first place among all Ukrainian regions. If to speak about the amount of citizens on one official, numbers vary as well. The diagram and table below present respective data in all three regions.

Figure 1 - The amount of local councilors and state administrators in Ukrainian regions



Source: Author's representation, based on data from Derzhavna sluzhba v cyfrach, [State Service in Numbers], Kyiv 2015, p. 8, available at: http://www.center.gov.ua/attachments/article/26/CSF_2015_UKR.pdf.

Table 1 - Proportion of population and local officials in Ukrainian regions

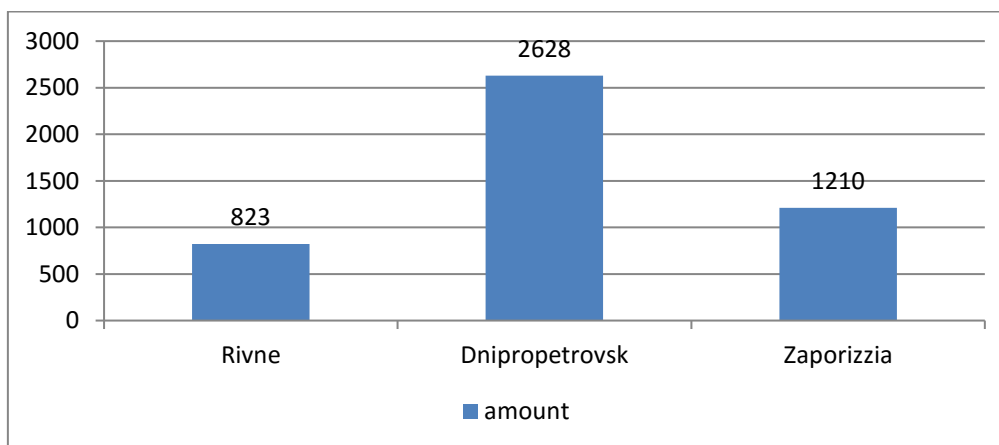
Region	Population (in thousands)	Amount of citizens per one councilor	Amount of citizens per one administrator
Ukraine	42928.9	508	145
Rivne	1161.2	457	141
Dnipro	3276.6	474	178
Zaporizzia	1765.9	477	153

Source: Author's representation, based on data from Derzhavna sluzhba v cyfrach, [State Service in Numbers], Kyiv 2015, p. 8, available at: http://www.center.gov.ua/attachments/article/26/CSF_2015_UKR.pdf

Another important feature for comparison of the regions is the amount of civil organizations registered in every area. Traditionally, the biggest amount is in Dnipro while “the smallest” amount

of organizations is registered in Rivne region. However, the numbers in diagram below lead to a question on real activity of the organizations. Among other aspects in this reference, it is of vital importance to follow the trends of cooperation between different organizations in one region as well as between organizations and representatives of local authorities; readiness of organization members to actively participate in joint projects with political and social actors of the region, etc.

Figure 2 - Amount of Civil Organizations in Selected Regions



Source: Author’s representation, based on data from *Dijalnist gromadskich objednan v Ukraini v 2014 roci. Statystychnyj biuleten*, [Activity of civil associations in Ukraine in 2014. Statistical bulletin], Kyiv 2015, p.40.

2.2. International Cooperation and Self-governance Reform

The survey below puts emphasis on international aspect of regional authorities’ performance in different parts of Ukraine and simultaneously makes an attempt to follow the peculiar features of international cooperation.

The aim of the analysis is to follow main directions and results of such cooperation and, what is most important, to see what place is given to the issue of decentralization in joint actions and projects. In addition to that, it is made an attempt to conduct comparative analysis of similarities and differences in cooperation patterns and to define major counterparts as regards the common effort to transform Ukrainian system of local governance. Another goal is to analyse the engagement of civil society activists and representatives of local universities in the international projects supervised by local authorities.

RIVNE REGION

As far as international cooperation of Rivne regional authorities is concerned, on the grounds of agreements and memorandums, the international and interregional relationships are developed with such countries as Poland, Belarus, Croatia or Azerbaijan. However, one of the most active partners is Poland. At present, Rivne regional authorities work on development of two-side interregional cooperation between Rivne regional state administration and Pomorskie voivodship as well as analyse the ways of possible projects with Mazowieckie voivodship in Poland.

Thanks to its geographical position, Rivne region has good potential for the realization of active cross-border cooperation with Polish counterparts. In fact, the administration acts as a beneficiary in the following projects:

- *Cooperation between Self-government of Rivne and Lublin as Element of Trans-border Region Development* – the project is oriented at ground preparation for the sufficient cooperation between the institutions in different spheres of Rivne and Lublin communities with total budget of 320.8 thousand euros.
- *Development of Small and Medium Businesses in Rivne and Lublin* – the aim of the project is enhancement of the competitiveness level of companies – participants. Total budget - 373.7 thousand euros.
- *Investment in Culture. Systemic Steps for the Promotion of Cultural Education* – the project promotes the potential building and the role of civil centres in the development of cultural cooperation. Total budget – 888.5 thousand euros.

As far as other projects on territorial self-government are concerned, an example of good practices might be joint project “*Territorial Self-governance – Export Hit of Poland*” of Rivne regional state administration and Marshal government of Warmia-Mazury voivodship financed by Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Poland. Particular attention should be paid to study visit “Self-government in Warmia and Mazury” that gave opportunity to local and regional authorities of Rivne region to see the peculiarities of the self-governance processes in Polish region. Another visit “Warmia and Mazury - Social Aspect” was devoted to such issues as the potential of local civic organizations, civil society building and the development of local democracy. Overall, both visits were organized in terms of the project “Support of Self-government and Civic Dimension of Polish Foreign Policy 2015”.

Particular focus is put on the realization of projects in terms of the Programme of Cross-Border Cooperation Poland-Belarus-Ukraine 2007-2013 (PL-BY-UA) realized in terms of the European

Neighbourhood and Partnership Instrument (ENPI). The projects are related to establishment of alternative forms of preschool education in rural communities. Another example is the project Shtetl Routes on objects of Jewish cultural heritage in the cross-border tourism. A number of other initiatives are concentrated on eco-tourism development in different parts of the region.

Such brief analysis of international cooperation of Rivne state administration in recent years makes it possible to conclude that there has been a strong tendency of deepening cooperation ties with international partners (Poland in particular) on a wide range of issues like education, business development or increase of civil awareness on the matter of European Union. At the same time, until recently the issue of decentralization was not among the top priorities in the agenda of the administrative officials that can be explained by the general policy course of previous central authorities in Kyiv.

The situation has changed significantly with the adoption of new course on reforming of the self-governance sector. More importantly, the European partners were eager to support Ukrainian attempts in implementation of EU experience on the matter. However, the existed projects mainly concentrate on increasing competences and skills of regional officials and do not take into account the engagement of scientific circles and public activists in the reforming process.

DNIPRO REGION

The analysis of international cooperation of Dnipro region brings to some extent similar results as in Rivne region. It is possible to notice a wide range of agreements and memorandums between the regional authorities in Dnipro and their partners in other countries such as Poland, Germany, Belarus, Georgia or others.

As regards the issue of decentralization, a number of projects took place in 2006-2008 when representatives of local and regional authorities had opportunity to visit Poland and analyse the results of administrative reform, peculiarities of territorial communities' performance, principles of cooperation between executive authorities and local self-governments of Polish gminas and voivodships. The upshot of the visits was the deliberation of a range of proposals on changes to Ukrainian laws. The proposals were sent to Verkhovna Rada, President of Ukraine and Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine.

As for further steps on bilateral cooperation on decentralization issue, they were observed in 2014-2015 when the first actions towards the implementation of self-governance reform were adopted by the Ukrainian Parliament. Visits of heads of village councils of Dnipro region to Lublin region of

Poland were organized in order to show Ukrainian local authorities the practical aspects of Polish decentralization model that was said to be a sample model for Ukraine (Novyy Format, 2015).

A peculiar feature of Dnipro region in comparison to other selected regions of Ukraine is its participation in the Swiss-Ukrainian Decentralization Support Programme DESPRO. As for DESPRO Project mission, it concentrates on optimization of the management system and effective local development in Ukraine, which, in turn, creates favourable conditions for democratic processes and services at the community level (DESPRO (Swiss-Ukrainian project “Decentralization Support in Ukraine”, *n.a.*).

The outcome of Dnipro regional council participation in the DESPRO project has become the initiative to launch in cooperation with National Academy of State Management the project entitled “School of Local Self-government” for organizing study courses for authorities of different levels, local councilors and civil activists. The aim of the project is to prepare local authorities and social actors for the implementation of the decentralization reform. The 2015 pilot project predicted three months online course for 1200 students. Among subjects were the following: new regional policy, formation of effective communities and their participation in territorial management, budget decentralization, mechanisms of maintenance of sustainable local development under conditions of decentralization (*Unian*, 2015). An important aspect is that the students were supposed to discuss the newly adopted laws and decisions on the self-governance reform in Ukraine.

ZAPORIZZIA REGION

Zaporizzia that is a neighbouring region of Dnipro is taken into consideration in order to follow the similarities and differences between two regions which are being closed not only geographically but mentally as well.

The development of European integration is declared to be topical for new authorities of regional administration. However, the geographical position determines the priority directions of cooperation with the European and international partners. As a result of military tensions on the borders of Zaporizzia region, the accents were put on actions aimed at supporting people who moved to Zaporizzia because of war. The region has taken part in GIZ project on establishment of supportive programme for communities hosting internally displaced citizens (GIZ Project “Reform of municipal services in Eastern Ukraine”, *n.a.*). The project covers such regions as Zaporizzia, Dnipro and Charkiv.

However, Zaporizzia became a pilot region for the project entitled “Special Initiative Ukraine” planned for 2015-2018. The aim of the project is to improve the quality of services provided by the state institutions and civic society groups to internally displaced citizens. The choice might be explained by the fact that at the beginning of 2016, the region hosted 113 thousand of displaced citizens and there appeared need to adjust the services of particular area to new circumstances (Zaporizzia State Administration, *n.a.*).

Additionally, the cooperation with German partners resulted in study visits of joint groups consisted of representatives of regional council and administration to Saxony-Anhalt land in Germany. The aim of the visit was to learn the German experience of decentralization and to establish cooperation in the economic, social and cultural spheres. Meanwhile, Poland remains to be a traditional partner for Ukrainian regions in realization of the reforming processes. The cooperation takes place in the form of study visits similar to the one described above. The example might be the study trip to Silesia voivodship under the title *The Experience of Self-government: Foundations, History, Authority and Actions. Polish experience for Ukraine.*

Significant aspect in Ukrainian-Polish cooperation is the engagement of local actors to the discussion forum and study tours in order to introduce them to the outcomes of the reform. In this regard, participants from Zaporizzia region had a chance to interact with Polish counterparts in terms of the project *Decentralization Today* (Terra Humana, *n.a.*). Regional authorities started their cooperation with Polish JUT BE&ED Corporation working on creating applications for EU financial support and developing projects that could be attractive for foreign investors and could lead to positive changes of regional image on the international arena (Jutbeed, *n.a.*).

Another significant initiative on self-government in the region is cooperation on the decentralization issue between local self-governments of Zaporizzia region and Federation of Canadian municipalities. It is important to notice that Zaporizzia became one of four Ukrainian regions selected for the participation in the PLEDDG Project that is supported by the Canadian Government and aimed at strengthening of municipal sector in Ukraine, implementation of effective democratic management and increase of Ukrainian cities’ abilities to efficiently develop democratic techniques of governing; support the decentralization processes and the process of integrating development planning at local, regional and state level (Partnership for Local Economic Development and Democratic Governance Project [PLEDDG], *n.a.*).

2.3. Summary of Regional International Cooperation on Self-governance

The brief overview of the regional accents of international cooperation vividly shows that the direction toward European integration and implementation of democratic principles is the official course in all the three regions. At the same time, the major partner in regional cooperation on self-governance is Poland. Apart from close and effective relationship with Poland, a number of Ukrainian regions happened to be engaged into international projects on decentralization and self-governance reform organized and conducted by European and world democracies with strong traditions of civic society and its participation in political life of their own country. The important aspect is that the mentioned programmes and initiatives are long-term oriented and provide educational opportunities for the Ukrainian policy makers.

3. Officials, NGOs and Scholars – Outcomes and Perspectives for Cooperation

Furthermore, the outcomes of the international project initiated by Pultusk Academy of Humanities is presented in the context of universities' role in the educational programmes for local policy makers and effectiveness of similar steps in different parts of Ukraine. The rationale of the project lies in the opportunity to analyse the outcomes of Ukrainian research in the decentralization reform and to engage Pultusk Academy and partner universities in Ukraine into the professional discussion process on self-governance reform.

On the one hand, local political actors may share their vision on the reform and peculiarities of particular territory or region while on the other, theorists from Academia may advice on successful practices and mistakes made in Poland and other EU countries. Additionally, regional NGOs and activists should be encouraged and welcomed to participate in the discussion. Given triangle cooperation prioritize the possibility of equal access to the discussion process and the right to advice for every single participant. Therefore, the learning process includes participation of lecturers from different countries to enrich the discussion by sharing diverse views on particular topic, opportunity to work in multinational groups and hear the position of European practitioners in the field of self-governance.

Meantime, the article focuses on the outcomes of round table discussion on self-governance reform in Ukraine and Polish experience on the matter under the title: **Civil Partners of Local Authorities**. The round table took place in all the three regions: Rivne, Zaporizzia and Dnipro. The coordinator invited representatives from respected Polish non-governmental organizations to

participate and share their experience on fruitful cooperation with the local authorities. The focuses of the round tables were the following:

Focus on NGOs role in the reforming processes

- state of awareness of the proposed governmental proposal on planned action toward self-governance and decentralization reform in Ukraine;
- state of cooperation between NGOs and local administrations;
- role of media in the functioning of NGOs and cooperation with the administration;
- level of public trust to local NGOs.

Focus on International Assistance to Ukrainian NGOs

- exchange of good working practices of NGOs in Poland and the European Union;
- NGOs as actor in building civil society in the European Union states;
- legal basis for the functioning of NGOs in the European Union states.

Focus on Polish-Ukrainian cooperation on reform matter

- possibilities of cooperation between Polish and Ukrainian NGOs;
- the search for possibilities of joint application by Polish and Ukrainian NGOs for programmes co-financed by the European Union.

Focus on Civil Support for the Reform

- civic expectations toward reform;
- major arguments for and against the reform;
- availability of resources for the reform implementation on local scale;
- education initiatives on raising civic awareness of the self-governance and essence of the proposed concept.

Round Table Results

Interestingly enough, the discussions brought somewhat unexpected outcomes. Rivne, Dnipro and Zaporizzia demonstrated strong interest and motivation from the side of regional authorities in further cooperation with the Polish colleagues. However, the reaction from non-governmental organization was not that unanimous. Dnipro and Zaporizzia expressed enthusiasm and readiness to cooperate in the following areas:

- knowledge and availability of legal basis for the formation and functioning of NGOs in the European Union and chances for its adaptation in Ukraine;
- exchange of experiences, good practices, the functioning of NGOs in the European Union;

- possibilities of cooperation with Polish / EU NGOs;
- knowledge of the mechanisms related to the financing of NGOs in Poland and the EU;
- joint projects in the field of civil society development in Ukraine;
- implementation of Polish experience in the policy of engaging senior citizens into the life of particular community, i.e. establishment of the University of the Third Age etc.

At the same time, the observations of discussions between the Ukrainian NGOs and the local authorities or between different generations of NGOs in Ukraine who blame each other for the lack of independence illustrate that those non-governmental organizations who were active for longer time accuse their younger counterparts of having lack of experience and professional standards while NGOs that were established during or after the Revolution of Dignity criticize older colleagues for collaboration with former political regime of Yanukoych and willingness to cooperate with representatives of former team.

As for round table in Rivne, it brought contrasting results in reference to the position of regional NGOs. In fact, all regional NGOs received invitation from regional state administration and brochure with the description of all Polish non-governmental organizations participating in the event. However, only **one** non-governmental organization appeared at the meeting – Rivne Department of Committee of Voters of Ukraine, the organization whose representatives are members of the reformatory team on the self-governance reform in Ukraine. However, the representative of the organization did not show much interest in the discussion on Polish experience of the self-governance reform. The similar situation came as a surprise for the coordinator and partners in Rivne regions and posed a question of possible reasons for such lack of interest among non-governmental organizations in Rivne. As a result of analysis conducted with the participation of Rivne regional state administration, among possible reasons the following were underlined:

- low level of trust to local authorities;
- small amount of NGOs acting in the field of self-governance development;
- lack of information on active citizens and NGOs in the Rivne regional state administration;
- lack of interest in the activity of NGOs from the side of local administrations.

Particularly, it should be stressed that the organizer of the event in Rivne was the regional state administration while in Dnipro and Zaporizzia, the event was hosted by partner universities. That might be another proof for tensions in relationships between local state administrators and representatives of NGOs and serve as an argument in favour of the engagement of universities in the process of reformatory changes.

Conclusions

The analysis of the EU-Ukrainian cooperation trends on the matter of self-governance and implementation of European good practices in Ukrainian reforming attempts clearly illustrate the significance of the Eastern Partnership Initiatives for reforming processes in Ukraine and their impact on positive dynamics of Ukrainian transformation. At the same time, the analysis of the issue often brings controversial outcomes that only prove the topicality of the research on the Eastern Partnership policy and the initiative itself. Additionally, the survey of cooperation tradition between representatives of local authorities and representatives of local Academia in Ukrainian regions leads to various outcomes that define the areas of prospective joint projects.

On the one hand, the proposal in terms of the Eastern Partnership is wide and gives opportunity to provide local and regional decision-makers with necessary skills and tools to successfully perform in the transformation process of their regions. However, when it comes to cooperation between local actors, they illustrate rather weak eagerness to productively cooperate on a range of issues from both sides. In fact, there might be drawn a parallel with Joseph S. Nye statement on the gap between theorists and practitioners in the field of international relations. To remind, Nye asserts that Academia and policymaking circles are inherently different, but in recent years the gap between the two was growing wider. Therefore, the scholar recommends that Academia and the government take a series of measures to enhance cooperation and understanding, to promote two-way interaction between the two. What is more, scholars should also increase pragmatic and close contact with the government (Nye, 2008, p. 651).

The very same recommendations might be applicable for those officials who are implementing the self-governance reform in Ukraine and those academic luminaries who specialize in the field of decentralization and reforms overall. In their turn, the European partners and donors should conduct careful monitoring over the performance of Ukrainian counterparts for the success of Eastern Partnership initiatives to be achieved.

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