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### **FATIGUE WITHIN THE EU'S EASTERN PARTNERSHIP: THE EU ROLE IN THE "NEIGHBOURHOOD OF CRISIS"**

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#### **ABSTRACT**

Since 2004, when the European neighbourhood policy was established, the European Union has already spent billions of euros to finance the new neighbourhood policies for creating more stable and more cooperative relations with eastern and southern neighbours. However, increased security concerns and challenges, less stable and less prognostic relations seem to have produced the opposite result of what was sought, and so Europe is experiencing a "neighbourhood of crisis". Did it fail? What strategy has the EU been using within the last 15 years in relations with its neighbouring countries? What specific tools and instruments have been adapted? Did the renewal of European neighbourhood policy introduce any completely new strategic elements? This article examines these questions, focusing on three perspectives suggested by role theory: intentional, interactional and institutional. The study applies qualitative research methodology and claims that the EU has been seeking to transmit not just EU values and standards but also internal institutional practices and modes of EU governance.

**KEYWORDS**

EU foreign policy, Eastern Partnership, European neighbourhood policy, Eastern European politics, European external action

*More often than not, this system is able to work  
(Interview with the representative of European  
External Action service, 2014, January).*

## INTRODUCTION

The Lithuanian minister for foreign affairs, Linas Linkevičius, has used the concept of “fatigue” to explain the recent situation within EU security issues, especially referring to the EU’s eastern neighbourhood Crimea conflict. European diplomats are tired of this conflict and generally of the unpredictability caused by challenging threats coming from neighbouring regions. Increased internal EU insecurity raises euro-skeptical sentiments and brings more and more populist, nationally oriented or strongly euro-skeptical political leaders (e.g. in Italy, Poland, Hungary). As a recent survey conducted by the think-tank Friends of Europe shows, people are becoming more euro-skeptical (“64% of Europeans aren’t convinced that their life would be worse without EU”) not because they want less “Europe” or more sovereignty<sup>1</sup> but because they feel the EU is not taking care enough of their daily life: i.e. the creation of more job places, ensuring local security, tackling asylum and migration issues, and helping to eradicate the corruption issues. Europeans see and feel the outcomes of the policies: parks full of homeless refugees and migrants, difficulties finding jobs for their daughters and sons, prolonged terms until retirement, and increased numbers of terrorists’ attacks.

The current period which started with the economic crisis in 2008 and now includes the current era of “fatigue” has lasted for a decade with no end in sight, especially with the Brexit issue looming. Both the eastern and the southern neighbourhoods have undergone armed conflicts. The ongoing Syrian war has inflicted the refugee crisis on the European continent. In the Eastern neighbourhood the annexation of the Crimea and ongoing armed conflict in the Eastern part of Ukraine predicts and conditions the instability in this country, huge economical costs and fatigue among the local people. The conflict has elicited EU responses such as diplomatic and economic sanctions, which consequentially had a negative effect not just on the Russian economy but for the EU’s as well (as Russia imposed the counter-sanctions). The period we live in has already been defined as the second “eurosclerosis”, a period that reflects economic stagnation, as well as the

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<sup>1</sup> Friends of Europe, Project “Europematters” // [https://friendsofeurope.org/sites/default/files/media-files/infographic\\_web.pdf?utm\\_source=flexmail&utm\\_medium=e-mail&utm\\_campaign=2018soepublicationalertsurveyresults11octobermorning&utm\\_content=download+the+full+infograph+](https://friendsofeurope.org/sites/default/files/media-files/infographic_web.pdf?utm_source=flexmail&utm_medium=e-mail&utm_campaign=2018soepublicationalertsurveyresults11octobermorning&utm_content=download+the+full+infograph+).

general stagnation of European integration, including the stagnation of sentiments of binding "Europeaness."<sup>2</sup>

However, the political elite have been addressed by the need for a more united Europe in the context of the changing attitude of the US presidency (e.g. Donald Trump's rhetoric) and the offensive actions of Russia. One of the first and most important agenda issues is finally to tackle the crisis in the neighbourhood. Historically the EU has used the enlargement policy towards the neighbouring regions as the most effective strategy for ensuring the desired results. However, from 2004, after the "big bang" enlargement, when future EU enlargement was denied by most of the member states, the EU started thinking through a new strategy. What strategy has the EU been using in the last 15 years in relation to its neighbouring countries? What specific tools and instruments have been adapted? What kind of the results, if any, have the EU's policies produced? Did the renewal of the European neighbourhood policy introduce any new strategic elements?

The goal of this article is to analyze the EU's political strategies and the outcomes of the European neighbourhood policies, adapting role theory and focusing on intentional, interactional and institutional perspectives. This theoretical framework is useful for covering not just policy formation but also the policy implementation stage, and it helps to structure the analysis. The Eastern partnership, which is part of European neighbourhood policy, is taken as a case study for deeper analysis of the EU neighbourhood policies' interactional modes and the achieved results. The main theses are:

- For more than a decade the EU has been seeking to transmit not just EU values and standards tied to conditionality and a 'more for more' strategy but also internal institutional practices and modes of EU governance.
- Unsuccessful developments in the eastern neighbourhood are influenced not just by Russia's emerging geopolitical power and offensive actions, but also by the highly corrupt and incompetent political elites of these countries.

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<sup>2</sup> The first eurosclerosis took the period over 20 years in 1970s and 1980s, which also followed the economic crisis and generally reflected the stagnation of European integration. The term was used by German Herbert Giersch.

## 1. THE EUROPEAN UNION AS AN INTERNATIONAL ACTOR AND ROLE THEORY

The European Union has been a unique international actor but also sometimes an “unidentified political object” as defined by Jacques Delors<sup>3</sup>, the most influential president of the European Commission ever. The EU is not just a place for debates and the pursuit of the interests of member states; the EU has grown its own institutions, the worldwide visibility and image. The EU has been identified as a civilian power<sup>4</sup>, normative power<sup>5</sup>, soft power, and “force for good<sup>6</sup>” depending on the instruments and measures the EU uses in relations with third countries. According to Andre Gerrits the most recognized EU identity is being a “normative power”. This notion, formulated by Ian Manners at the beginning of twenty-first century, has received the significant attention:<sup>7</sup> “‘Normative power Europe’ has become a grand narrative, an answer to the ever more pressing need to bestow an identity on Europe-legitimacy through foreign policy.”<sup>8</sup> The idea of normative power is an attempt to explain what the EU pursues in foreign policy and what kind of actor it is.

Two relevant conceptions – ‘soft power’ and ‘hard power’ – introduced by Joseph Nye speak more about the measures and instruments used in foreign policy action.<sup>9</sup> The EU is a soft power because it is able to impact other actors by diplomatic measures, also by attraction and persuasion. However, the EU has been using other measures such as sanctions influencing economic pain, therefore instruments which allude to “hard power” based on negative conditionality also is used for international action. All three conceptions supplement each other. When speaking about EU identity and international image it is easier to say what the EU is

<sup>3</sup> Speech by Jacques Delors, Luxembourg, September 9, 1985, CVCE, 2012, p. 2 // [https://www.cvce.eu/content/publication/2001/10/19/423d6913-b4e2-4395-9157-fe70b3ca8521/publishable\\_en.pdf](https://www.cvce.eu/content/publication/2001/10/19/423d6913-b4e2-4395-9157-fe70b3ca8521/publishable_en.pdf).

<sup>4</sup> Richard Whitman, “Muscles from Brussels: the demise of civilian power Europe?”; in: Ole Elgstrom and Michael Smith, eds., *The European Union's roles in international politics: concepts and analysis* (London and New York: Routledge, Taylor & Francis Group, 2006).

<sup>5</sup> Sonia Lucarelli, “Interpreted values: a normative reading of EU role conceptions and performance”; in: Ole Elgstrom and Michael Smith, eds., *The European Union's roles in international politics: concepts and analysis* (London and New York: Routledge, Taylor & Francis Group, 2006).

<sup>6</sup> Esther Barbe and Elisabeth Johansson-Nogues, “The EU as a modest ‘force for good’: the European Neighbourhood policy,” *International Affairs* 84:I (2008).

<sup>7</sup> Ian Manners, “The symbolic manifestations of the EU's normative role in world politics”; in: Ole Elgstrom and Michael Smith, eds., *The European Union's roles in international politics: concepts and analysis* (London and New York: Routledge, Taylor & Francis Group, 2006).

<sup>8</sup> Andre Gerrits, “Normative power Europe: introductory observations on a controversial notion”: 4; in: Andre Gerrits, ed., *Normative power Europe in a changing world: a discussion* (Netherland Institute of International relations, 2009) // [https://www.clingendael.org/sites/default/files/pdfs/20091200\\_cesp\\_paper\\_gerrits.pdf](https://www.clingendael.org/sites/default/files/pdfs/20091200_cesp_paper_gerrits.pdf).

<sup>9</sup> Joseph S. Nye, “Soft power,” *Foreign policy* No. 80 (1990) // [https://www.wilsoncenter.org/sites/default/files/joseph\\_nye\\_soft\\_power\\_journal.pdf](https://www.wilsoncenter.org/sites/default/files/joseph_nye_soft_power_journal.pdf).

not than what it is. The European Union is certainly not a military power in terms of offensive actions and aggressive politics manner.

The European neighbourhood policy is an interesting case study for the analysis of the EU foreign policy and its international actorness or, put differently, international agency. Firstly, because the ENP has been prioritized in foreign policy action, secondly, it is closest EU environment, so developments here (positive or negative) influence EU as well as the opposite: the impact of the EU should be highest towards these regions.

This paper adapts role theory, which is helpful in seeking to explain the EU's foreign policies and instruments towards neighbouring countries. Roles are played by international actors<sup>10</sup> and role theory does help to find out what role it plays, how it plays it, and what the outcome of the game is. According to Helen Sjursen, the concept of "role" is often been used by the scientists for EU foreign policy analysis but rarely are tied to a specific theory.<sup>11</sup> Contrary to that, Lisbeth Aggestam developed a sociological role theory, which suggests that roles are being changed, sustained or constructed and reconstructed in foreign policy.<sup>12</sup> L. Aggestam explains that foreign policy is impacted by the national role conception.<sup>13</sup> Roles' conceptions are tied to identity, societal characteristics, cultural features and expectations by others. The theoretical role model of Lisbeth Aggestam is based on the inductive research of Kal Holsti<sup>14</sup> and the structuration theory of Anthony Giddens.<sup>15</sup> The model includes three perspectives – intentional, interactional and institutional – that help to structure role analysis.

The intentional perspective helps to define the 'ego' of the actor. What kind of policy towards specific regions, countries or within specific policy area does the actor want to pursue and why? The intentional aspect suggests that role conception involves the preferences, main goals, and strategies of the actor who wants to take this role. How they are formed depends on several factors. One factor is the identity of the actor, impacted by history, cultural, and societal characteristics.<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> Annika Bjorkdahl, "Normative and military power in EU peace support operations"; in: Richard G. Whitman, ed., *Normative power Europe. Empirical and theoretical perspectives* (Hampshire, New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011).

<sup>11</sup> Helene Sjursen, "Values or rights? Alternative conceptions of the EU's 'normative' role"; in: Ole Elgstrom and Michael Smith, eds., *The European Union's roles in international politics: concepts and analysis* (London and New York: Routledge, Taylor & Francis Group, 2006).

<sup>12</sup> Lisbeth Aggestam, "Role theory and European foreign policy: a framework of analysis"; in: Ole Elgstrom and Michael Smith, eds., *The European Union's roles in international politics: concepts and analysis* (London and New York: Routledge, Taylor & Francis Group, 2006).

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>14</sup> Ole R. Holsti, "The belief system and the national images: a case study"; in: William D. Coplin and Charles W. Kegley, eds., *Analyzing International relations: a multimethod introduction* (New York: Praeger Publishers, 1975).

<sup>15</sup> Anthony Giddens, *The constitution of society: outline of the theory of structuration* (Polity Press, 1984).

<sup>16</sup> Lisbeth Aggestam, *supra* note 12.

The other factor is role expectations by others. You cannot envision a role if nobody expects and accepts it. It is important to include the expectations of the ones whose interests are touched in the role conception. Finally, an important factor is interests and national priorities based on rational calculations.

Interactional perspective focuses on the process of role implementation. What kind of tools, actions, measures, ways, and methods are used to achieve the role conception. The interactional perspective defines the role process of how the policy is made. Bilateral and multilateral meetings, soft and hard power measures all explain the policy making process. This is the socialization process.

Finally, the institutional perspective speaks about the existing rules, norms, values that structure political behavior. It also focuses on the specific achievements and defines the results of the policy making process or, better, the results of the specific period of the policy making process. Policy making process may produce new norms and rules that impact or even change the existing socio-cultural environment, and produce the creation of a structure in a way A.Giddens has explained this.<sup>17</sup> This institutional perspective refers to role performance. Positive achievements help to establish the role and identity, but fail to become a reason for the re-creation or re-composition of the role conception for the next period and shape identity at the same. Institutional perspective defines both internal and external, international rules, norms, and institutions, and existing values that structure the behavior of political actors or seek to shape or establish new institutions, norms, values, and rules. Institutional perspective structures the beginning of the socialization and the end of the process within a specific period. It characterizes the starting positions and the change. For this reason, this perspective defines the role-set, change of the role and identity. According to L. Aggestam, if an actor seeks an effective foreign policy he needs to maintain the norms and rules used in foreign policy actions, to ensure the stability.<sup>18</sup>

While searching for the EU role in the neighbourhood space this article focuses on three perspectives: role conception/intentional aspect, which suggests that EU role conception depends on EU common interests (common denominator), EU identity (specific common image EU tries to create and sustain, e.g. normative power), and, also, following the different expectations of the neighbours, i.e. the ones the policy is focused on. The interactional aspect includes the role playing, and the different instruments the EU uses and applies for policy implementation (soft or hard power tools); and, lastly, the institutional aspect adjusts the role of norms and institutions, and the institutional impact that the EU is able (or unable) to make.

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<sup>17</sup> Anthony Giddens, *supra* note 15.

<sup>18</sup> Lisbeth Aggestam, *supra* note 12.

However, on a practical, material level and for empirical analysis these two latter perspectives (interactional and institutional) may merge; it is not easy to separate them when adapting them for an empirical case study.

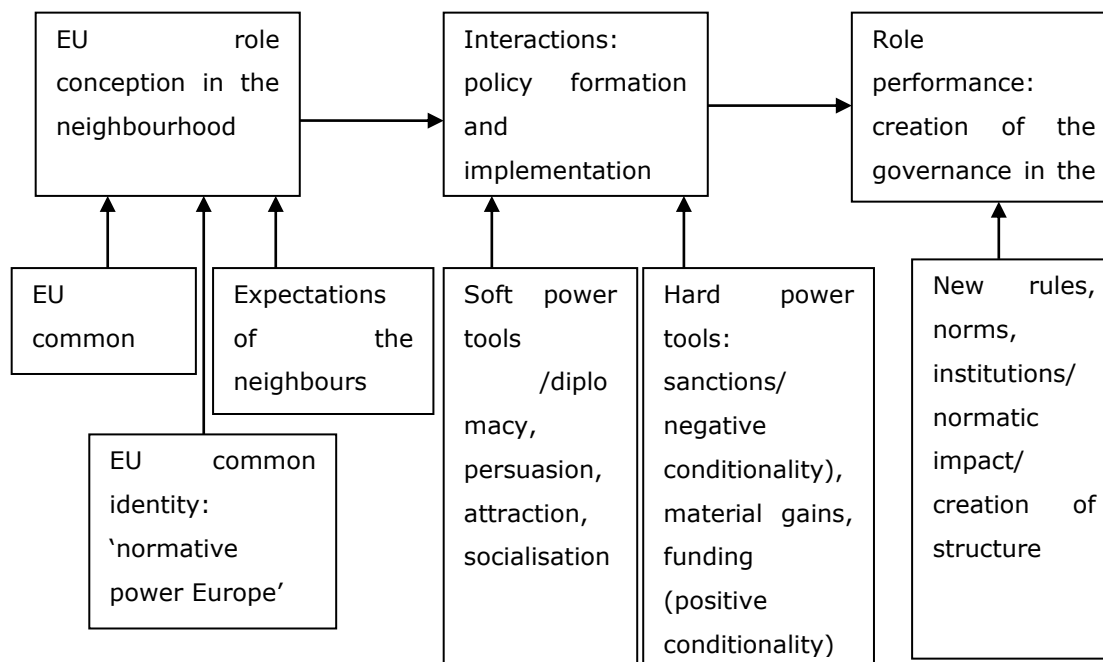


Figure 1. EU role in the neighbourhood: three perspectives

Source: Created by the author with reference to L. Aggestam, 2006<sup>19</sup>

## 2. METHODOLOGY

This study applies a qualitative research methodology by adapting several methods. Documents analysis was one of the most essential methods for studying the EU's intentions towards the neighbourhood regions. The main EU's strategies (two security policy strategies), ENP strategic papers, annual reports, country progress reports, association agreements and other documents were analyzed and compared. Additionally, semi-structured interviews were conducted from the personnel of EU institutions, including European External Action service, European Commission, European Parliament, members states (diplomats representing EU members states in their national representations in Brussels), and also representatives from the Eastern Partnership civil society forum. In total 38 interviews were conducted during the period between 2010 and 2014, with several research visits to Brussels (in 2010 October, 2011 October, 2014 January). All the respondents worked or were working for European neighbourhood policy specific sectors or projects (security, cross-border cooperation, Eastern Partnership

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*



implementation, committees, inter-parliamentary committees or permanent secretariat). As concerns members states' representatives – 43% of all EU members states representatives were visited and interviewed. In total it covered 12 representations of different EU members states including these countries: Germany, Lithuania, Latvia, Estonia, Belgium, Romania, Sweden, Italy, Denmark, Cyprus, Finland, Netherlands.

The average duration of the interview was 45 minutes. The respondents expressed willingness to grant discretion; therefore their names are hidden, highlighting only the institution they are representing. As the foreign policy of the European Union does not belong to EU competency but to member states competency it was of a key importance to collect the positions of EU member states as they are the main decision-makers within Common foreign security policy (CFSP) field. However, the European neighbourhood policy also involves trade policies whereas the role of the Commission and Parliament is visible either and finally European External Action service is the main implementing body of the CFSP. Therefore, the research collected interviews from all the participating institutions.

For studying and measuring the institutional and normative impact, a secondary quantitative analysis method was used. The data on human rights, democracy, civil liberties, and transparency levels were taken from world-trusted research institutions such as freedomhouse.org and Transparency International, which conduct annual surveys around the world.

### **3. ROLE CONCEPTION: INTENTIONAL PERSPECTIVE – THE EU 'EGO'. SUSTAINABILITY OR RECONSTRUCTION?**

It is impossible to escape the neighbours and still shape the relationship. The existing interdependencies between the neighbouring countries, which are usually characterized by common border, raise the actuality and the necessity for economic, political and cultural exchanges. The inevitable relationships sometimes require the special governance regime or innovative way of building the ties. The uniqueness, attractiveness and effectiveness of the EU in international action mostly came from the enlargement policy having a strong positive conditionality for institutional change. However, future enlargement behind the eastern border of the EU was rejected by many EU member states. So, in 2004, when the European Union was enlarged by ten new member states, it faced the new neighbourhoods and responded to this situation by establishing new "European neighbourhood policy" (ENP) with a goal to create "the stable, secure and prosperous

neighbourhood” based on “everything but institutions” strategy.<sup>20</sup> This strategy has reflected: EU common interests (lowest denominator), EU identity (attempt to create it) and tried to follow the different expectations of the neighbouring countries. The strategy was also constructed from the principles and ideas used in the enlargement policy.

Figure 2 refers to the role conception of the European Union towards the neighbouring countries. This figure is based on the ENP documents analysis and interviews, conducted from the experts working in various EU institutions. This figure explains the main vision, goals and search of the EU in the European neighbourhood policy; it also defines the implementing principles and the main instruments as explained in EU documents by the main EU actors. The figure accounts for the intentional aspect of role theory and clarifies the EU’s main intentions and the self (EU) ‘ego’ in relation with its closest environment – neighbourhood space. The underlying principles and the vision of the EU relations with the new neighbours were established by 2004 and have not been changed so far. It does explain the European perspective on the relations with ENP partners (ten countries in the southern neighbourhood and six countries in the eastern one).

This vision – the EU’s intentions towards its neighbours – was rationalized by common EU identity and common interests of EU member states based either on rational calculations or normative considerations. The expectations of the neighbouring countries were included just partly and reflected the common denominator of both the different expectations of the neighbouring countries and the different interests of EU member states. Most of the interviewed respondents (over 60 percent) working for EU member states embassies stated that neighbourhood policy is values-based EU policy.

The discourse on what kind of relationship EU should seek with the new eastern neighbours began in 2002 when Jack Straw, the foreign affairs secretary of United Kingdom, initiated new debates about the future EU policy towards new eastern neighbours such as Belarus, Ukraine and Moldova.<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>20</sup> *Communication from the Commission, European neighbourhood policy, strategy paper*, COM (2004) 373 Final.

<sup>21</sup> Julien Jeandesboz, “The genesis of the European Neighbourhood policy: alternative narratives, bureaucratic competitions”: 38; in: Thierry Balzacq, ed., *The external dimension of EU Justice and home affairs: governance, neighbours, security* (Hampshire, New York: Palgrave Macmillan: 2009).

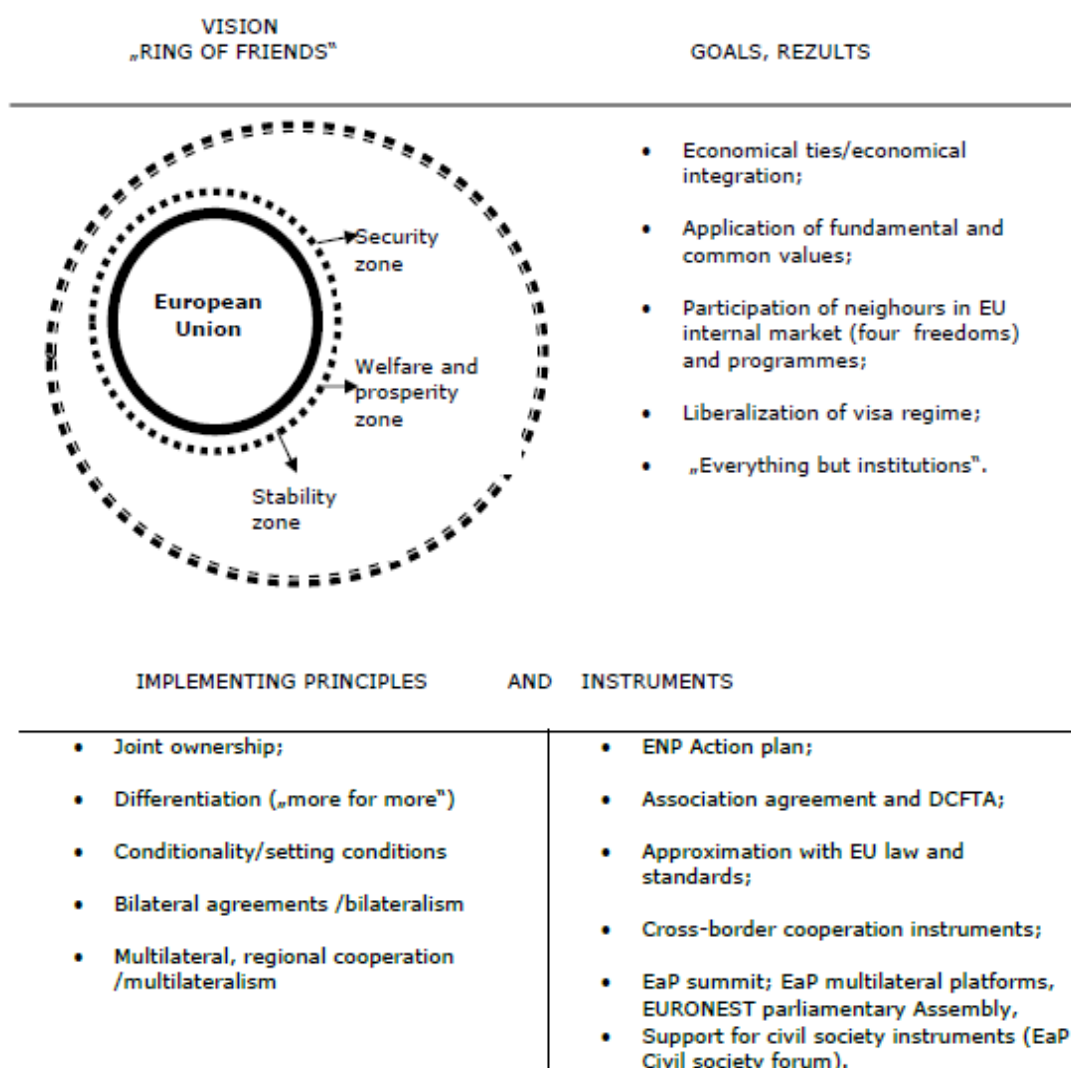


Figure 2. EU role conception towards neighbouring countries

Source: author with reference to EU documents

Despite that the initial idea was focused just on one region, after harsh debates and the concerns of southern EU member states about the future EU attention on southern neighbourhood, the common denominator gave the roots for the birth of European neighbourhood policy in 2004. The main documents - European security strategy (2003) and Wider Europe: neighbourhood (2004) - reflect the idea that the EU should spread the norms, values, and rules towards the neighbourhood countries and is tied to civilian and normative EU identity.

These two primary documents produced the idea of creating the “Wider Europe - ring of friends”, which has become the vision for the new EU neighbourhood policy.<sup>22</sup>

It is in the European interest that countries on our borders are well-governed.  
<...> Our task is to promote a ring of well governed countries to the East of the European Union and on the borders of the Mediterranean with whom we can enjoy close and cooperative relations.<sup>23</sup>

The European security strategy of 2003 also highlighted the importance of economic and political instruments in seeking to “tackle political problems there.”<sup>24</sup> However, during the recent decade the neighbourhood countries experienced turbulence of events including Arab spring in MENA<sup>25</sup> region, ongoing armed conflicts in eastern neighbourhood and Syria war. Following the recent events the EU established a new security strategy in 2016. In this strategy the EU stated that: “Our wider region has become more unstable and more insecure. The crises within and beyond our borders are affecting directly our citizens’ lives”.<sup>26</sup> However, for tackling the crisis, similar instruments and ideas were repeated once more in this strategy:

This is necessary to promote the common interests of our citizens, as well as our principles and values. Yet we know that such priorities are best served when we are not alone. And they are best served in an international system based on rules and on multilateralism.<sup>27</sup>

The European Union again emphasized promotion of rules, multilateralism and highlighted the importance of creating the regional orders. “We will invest in regional orders, and in cooperation among and within regions.”<sup>28</sup> In this newest strategy, once again the neighbourhood regions are explained as one of the most important priority:

The second priority of the new EU global strategy was titled as ‘state and societal resilience to our East and South’. It is in the interests of our citizens to invest in the resilience of states and societies to the east stretching into Central Asia, and to the south down to Central Africa. <...>Under the European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP), many people wish to build closer relations with the

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<sup>22</sup> *European Security strategy: A secure Europe in a better world*, 2003, p. 8 // <https://europa.eu/globalstrategy/en/european-security-strategy-secure-europe-better-world>.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 7–8.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 8.

<sup>25</sup> MENA – Middle East and North Africa region.

<sup>26</sup> *Shared vision, common action: a stronger Europe, A global strategy for the European Union's foreign and security policy*, 2016, p. 3 // [https://europa.eu/globalstrategy/sites/globalstrategy/files/regions/files/eugs\\_review\\_web\\_0.pdf](https://europa.eu/globalstrategy/sites/globalstrategy/files/regions/files/eugs_review_web_0.pdf).

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 4.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*

Union: our enduring power of attraction can spur transformation in these countries.<sup>29</sup>

As it is envisioned in Figure 2 the EU has been using various strategies towards the neighbouring countries with an idea to impact the transformation. For the last decade (or even more) the EU has been building multilateral cooperation (Eastern partnership for the eastern neighbours, Union for Mediterranean – for MENA region), and the ENP action plan is based on bilateral interactions and implies the principle “more for more” tied to conditionality and differentiation among the neighbours, whereas rules and normative promotion is a primary goal. Furthermore, support for civil society forums and human rights defenders is also highly promoted.

The EU has reviewed and renewed the strategy several times: in 2007<sup>30</sup>, in 2011<sup>31</sup> and in 2015<sup>32</sup>. However, in different documents similar points were repeated: normative strategic aims (especially promotion of rule of law, human rights, democracy), building stronger economies and the key principles such as “more for more” has been repeatedly notified:

The incentive-based approach (‘More for More’) has been successful in supporting reforms in the fields of good governance, democracy, the rule of law and human rights, where there is a commitment by partners to such reforms. However, it has not proven a sufficiently strong incentive to create a commitment to reform, where there is not the political will. In these cases, the EU will explore more effective ways to make its case for fundamental reforms with partners, including through engagement with civil, economic and social actors.<sup>33</sup>

The newest review of the European Neighbourhood policy, which was made in 2015 by the European Union, introduced some changes concerning the policy implementation level - the progress reports on all partner countries will be based on meeting the goals but not evaluated annually as it used to be done.<sup>34</sup> Therefore, the goals-oriented approach and even more differentiation among the partner

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<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 9.

<sup>30</sup> *Commission of the European Communities, A strong European neighbourhood policy*, COM (2007), 774 final, Brussels, 05.12.2007 // [https://www.ab.gov.tr/files/ardb/evt/1\\_avrupa\\_birligi/1\\_9\\_komsuluk\\_politikalari/A\\_strong\\_European\\_Neighbourhood\\_Policy\\_5\\_12\\_2007.pdf](https://www.ab.gov.tr/files/ardb/evt/1_avrupa_birligi/1_9_komsuluk_politikalari/A_strong_European_Neighbourhood_Policy_5_12_2007.pdf).

<sup>31</sup> *European Commission, High representative of the Union for foreign affairs and security policy, A new response to a changing Neighbourhood*, COM (2011)303 final, Brussels, 25.05.2011 // [https://ec.europa.eu/research/iscp/pdf/policy/com\\_2011\\_303.pdf](https://ec.europa.eu/research/iscp/pdf/policy/com_2011_303.pdf).

<sup>32</sup> *European Commission, High representative of the Union for foreign affairs and security policy, Review of the European Neighbourhood policy*, Join (2015) 50 final, Brussels, 18.11.2015 // [http://eeas.europa.eu/archives/docs/enp/documents/2015/151118\\_joint-communication\\_review-of-the-enp\\_en.pdf](http://eeas.europa.eu/archives/docs/enp/documents/2015/151118_joint-communication_review-of-the-enp_en.pdf).

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 5.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*

countries (depending on what kind of strategic aims the specific partner-neighbour seeks) were crystallized in the recent strategy. So, the tendency is to reflect more the "expectation of others" (neighbours) and be more flexible when adapting specific tools for different neighbourhood situations.

Thus, on the intentional level we find a full box of ideas and instruments. For the next analysis we will take the Eastern Partnership as a case study.

#### 4. ROLE PLAYING: INTERACTIONAL ASPECT

"Now we have a net. It's time to catch a fish"<sup>35</sup>, said a Lithuanian diplomat working in Brussels when being interviewed about the Eastern Partnership initiative (EaP). The Eastern Partnership was established in 2009, because of the big national promotion of Poland and Sweden with support of Baltic and some other EU member states. Even though it became EU official policy towards Moldova, Georgia, Ukraine, Armenia, Azerbaijan and Belarus,<sup>36</sup> however it did not change the European neighbourhood policy but just supplemented it with what was called a "multilateral track".<sup>37</sup> On the intentional level the goals and intentions remain the similar- to promote EU rules, law, norms, values in exchange providing Association and approximation towards EU process as a "carrot". The membership perspective was not a case, even though Moldova, Ukraine and Georgia expressed interest and still seek to attain it. Therefore, the expectations of these countries were not yet met.

When speaking about the "net" that the Lithuanian diplomat mentioned, the interactional structure was created by the Eastern Partnership within several years after the initiative's establishment. The table 1 shows this structure, which involves the interactions on various levels (summit, ministers' meetings, committees' meetings (bureaucrats, experts' level), Parliamentary Assembly, civil society networks). This established structure for multi-level interactions also reminds us of the EU internal multi-level governance structure very much, just the level of interactions is very low here (Eastern Partnership). This also suggests that the EU is building and trying to reproduce not just the law and rules coming from EU *acquis communautaire*, but also the ways that the interactions and multi-level multilateralism are made. It is a reproduction of the EU internal governance system, but could this artificial reproduction work out for the Eastern neighbourhood countries?

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<sup>35</sup> Interview with Lithuanian diplomat, Brussels, January 2014.

<sup>36</sup> Russia was invited by the EU to take part in the Eastern Partnership initiative, but it refused to be put into what it's called as europeanisation and euro-centric politics.

<sup>37</sup> Commission of the European Communities, *Eastern partnership*, COM (2008) 823 final, Brussels, 3.12.2008, p.3.

Table 1. Institutional structure of Eastern Partnership multilateral meetings<sup>38</sup>

<i>Institution/ structure</i>	<i>Frequency of meetings</i>	<i>Representation</i>	<i>Level</i>	<i>Decisions</i>
Eastern Partnership summit (Meetings of state leaders)	Once in two years	Leaders of EU members states, Leaders of EaP states; EU high Representative; President of EC; President of EU Council; Commissioner for ENP	Highest political level meetings	Political declarations
Meetings of foreign affairs ministers	Once a year	Ministers of EU member states and EaP states;	Ministers level	Political agenda
Ministers meetings (other areas)		Ministers of EU member states and EaP states;	Ministers level	Political agenda
Sectoral committees ("similar to Coreper") four thematic platforms, organized by Commission	Twice a year	Bureaucracy: senior bureaucrats' level, experts' level	Bureaucracy, experts' level	Sectoral agenda; common activities
EURONEST Parliamentary Assembly	Once a year <sup>39</sup> Session	Members of European Parliament; Members of the parliaments of EaP states	Parliamentary level	Declarations

<sup>38</sup> Source: author with reference to EU documents.

<sup>39</sup> See Euronest Parliamentary Assembly: <http://www.europarl.europa.eu/euronest/en/home.html>.

Regional and local municipalities conference ("Committee of Regions")		Representatives of regions, local municipalities	Subregional, local municipality level	Common Actions
Civil society forum	Once a year <sup>40</sup> Annual conference	EaP interests groups, representatives of civil society	Interest groups level	Common Actions, declarations

The interactional structure (table 1) of the Eastern Partnership, all these multilateral meetings focused on different level cooperation enabled a socialization process with the partner countries. It was mostly EU representatives who educated, supported, criticized or promoted something in relations with the neighbourhood countries. However, the partner countries have also had opportunities to present their attitudes. The exchange of good practices, especially in the areas of good governance, economic governance, approximation with EU law were the most common issues on the agenda of the lower level meetings (sectoral committees<sup>41</sup>).

In comparison to the European Neighbourhood policy, the Eastern Partnership also gave birth to a new element – a parliamentary dimension – namely, Euronest. This parliamentary Assembly is composed of partner countries' parliamentarians (in total 60 – 10 from each of partner country) and euro-parliamentarians (60 – members of European Parliament). It became an additional platform for Europeans to socialized and get more involved into the internal situations and policies of the partners. The first plenary session, which took place in 2011, became the physical battle field between Armenians and Azerbaijanis and according to a respondent: "Europeans understood they will have to work on for a long time seeking a better political culture".<sup>42</sup> However, the later annual plenary sessions produced the results – resolutions – concerning the political situations in the Eastern partnership countries (human rights violations, Yulia Tymoshenko's imprisonment, trade agreements and other matters). Resolutions, as well as all these multi-level interactions, are soft power instruments such as diplomacy, persuasion, socialization, attraction and shaming.

<sup>40</sup> See Eastern Partnership Civil Society Forum: <http://www.eap-csf.eu/en/about-eap-csf/how-we-function/>.

<sup>41</sup> *Update on Eastern Partnership implementation, EuropeAid Development and cooperation DG-02/09/2011*, EaP Summit 29-30, September 2011, Warsaw, p. 3 // [http://ec.europa.eu/europeaid/where/neighbourhood/eastern\\_partnership/documents/update\\_on\\_the\\_eastern\\_partnership\\_en.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/europeaid/where/neighbourhood/eastern_partnership/documents/update_on_the_eastern_partnership_en.pdf).

<sup>42</sup> *Interview with a diplomat of the European Parliament, advisor to the president J.Buzek*, January 2014.



## **5. ROLE PERFORMANCE: INSTITUTIONAL PERSPECTIVE AND NORMATIVE IMPACT**

To create the new regulating rules and norms for a better governance regime in the neighbourhood has been the aim. Even though the structure for multi-level meetings and networking was established per se, it is not the desired outcome as it reflects the process-interactions – but not the outcomes. Just after having the normative impact and institutional change the positive outcomes might be visible. Therefore, this chapter will focus on institutional perspective.

New rules and norms are created by contractual and legally binding agreements. When looking at the specific sectors' achievements and the agreements signed between the European Union and Eastern partnership countries it is visible that the implementation of the Eastern Partnership has brought very specific results. Following the documents' analysis, we may focus on two main areas of the cooperation and discuss the results within each of them. The most important cooperation area is the sector of economic integration and approximation.

### **5.1. ECONOMIC INTEGRATION AND APPROXIMATION WITH EU LAW AND STANDARDS**

Economic integration, political association and approximation with EU law are the processes which should lead towards the access to an EU Common market. It has been defined as one of the main goals and "carrots" for the neighbouring countries from the very beginning of the ENP conception. It reflects the idea of "everything but institution" or integration without enlargement. Association agreement which includes Deep and Comprehensive free trade area (DCFTA) as the supplementing part, is the main instrument to promote political and economic reforms in the neighbouring countries. For seeking to sign this agreement the partners are obliged to make the reforms, to adapt EU rules, norms and standards in exchange, and the principle "more for more" (more EU funding for more reforms) is adapted by the EU to promote the social, economic, juridical and political changes in their political systems.



Figure 3. Continuum of partner country integration in the EU  
(integration without membership)

Source: author with reference to EU documents

Finally, in 2014, three of the six Eastern Partnership countries – Ukraine, Moldova and Georgia – signed the Association agreements and DCFTA and the final ratification of the treaties should open new opportunities and extension of trade relations with the EU. Ukraine, as well as other countries, introduced a number of reforms and law packages in law enforcement, human rights, trade-related issues, local-government, financial services and other areas.<sup>43</sup>

Nevertheless, economical approximation with the EU means the refocus of economical life and some short-term difficulties and shocks (especially when Russia imposed economic sanctions).<sup>44</sup> When it became clear that the country cannot be part of the single market and the Russian-led Eurasian economic union at the same time, the largest geopolitical drama over the Ukraine started. After 2013 Eastern Partnership Vilnius summit, when Ukrainian president Viktor Yanukovych refused to sign the Association agreement with EU, the streets in Kiev were flooded by the people and finally Euromaidan revolution kicked the president out of the power. However, the euphoria and victory of the civil society soon were muffled by Russian offensive actions: annexation of Crimea in 2014 and further re-escalation of the conflict in the eastern parts of Ukraine (Donbas region). The European Union imposed economic sanctions which targeted energy, defense and financial sectors (acted as a hard power using negative conditionality tools) for Crimea region and

<sup>43</sup> European Commission, High representative of the EU for foreign affairs and security policy, Joint staff working document, *Implementation of the European Neighbourhood policy in Ukraine in 2014 and recommendations for actions*, Brussels, 25.3.2015 SWD (2015)74 final // [http://eeas.europa.eu/archives/docs/enp/pdf/2015/ukraine-enp-report-2015\\_en.pdf](http://eeas.europa.eu/archives/docs/enp/pdf/2015/ukraine-enp-report-2015_en.pdf).

<sup>44</sup> European Commission, High representative of the EU for foreign affairs and security policy, Joint staff working document, *Association Implementation report on Ukraine*, Brussels, 14.11.2017 SWD (2017)376 final, p. 2 // [https://cdn2-eeas.fpfis.tech.ec.europa.eu/cdn/farfuture/\\_15aL4U8X4gBgA58M87CyjAApUdq8Hwcb-O-u9rf6yU/mtime:1510670011/sites/eeas/files/association\\_implementation\\_report\\_on\\_ukraine.pdf](https://cdn2-eeas.fpfis.tech.ec.europa.eu/cdn/farfuture/_15aL4U8X4gBgA58M87CyjAApUdq8Hwcb-O-u9rf6yU/mtime:1510670011/sites/eeas/files/association_implementation_report_on_ukraine.pdf).

for Russia.<sup>45</sup> However, the conflict remains unsolved. The cost of war for Ukraine is unbearable. A group of Lithuanian deputies raised an idea, a proposal, which was called a "New Marshall plan for Ukraine" (financial investments to this country) with connotations of the post-war Europe period when financial contributions from the USA saved Europe from the Soviets' influence.<sup>46</sup>

Even though economical exchanges are intensifying (between EU and EaP countries), the political systems still face the big challenges especially in coping with political corruption and democracy assurance (6.3 chapter). The newest report (2017) on EU relations with ENP countries highlights EU commitments for "political association and economic integration" with Ukraine, Georgia and Moldova.<sup>47</sup> Even though we can find that report emphasizes Ukraine's governmental major reforms in the areas of "anti-corruption, judicial independence and public administration",<sup>48</sup> the scores of political rights, civil liberties and huge corruption levels are the obstacles for better economic and political recovery in the country. Recently the new rules and norms, adaptation of EU standards and values, are visible just on the "surface level" without deeper touch on the real socio-political life, politics functioning level.

## 5.2. MIGRATION AND MOBILITY: GRADUAL INSTITUTIONALISATION/ INTEGRATION

Migration, mobility and visa politics are the other important areas whereas the cooperation with ENP countries is important too. In this policy sector we can also find the schema or 'road-map', which defines the deeper and stronger institutionalization between the EU and specific ENP countries. In exchange for more reforms and better governance of the border, an ENP partner may receive visa free travel regime (at the final point of the roadmap) as a 'carrot' for their commitments (e.g. to create high standards on border management procedures, effective data protection regime, exchange of operational information with Europol and Eurojust<sup>49</sup>). As figure 4 shows these goals have been already achieved by Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine – three of six Eastern Partnership countries. While Armenia and Azerbaijan have signed Visa facilitation and Readmission agreements

<sup>45</sup> *Think tank of European Parliament, Sanctions over Ukraine: impact on Russia*, 17.01.2018 // [http://www.europarl.europa.eu/thinktank/en/document.html?reference=EPRS\\_BRI\(2018\)614665](http://www.europarl.europa.eu/thinktank/en/document.html?reference=EPRS_BRI(2018)614665).

<sup>46</sup> Andrius Kubilius, "Maršalo planas Ukrainai" tampa realybe- kas toliau?" *Delfi.lt* (May 5, 2018) // <https://www.delfi.lt/news/ringas/politics/andrius-kubilius-marsalo-planas-ukrainai-tampa-realybe-kas-toliau.d?id=77901257>.

<sup>47</sup> *Report on the Implementation of the European Neighbourhood policy review*, JOIN (2017)18 final, Brussels, 18.5.2017, p. 7.

<sup>48</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>49</sup> *Commission of the European Communities, Eastern partnership*, COM (2008) 823 final, Brussels, 3.12.2008, p. 7.

and started visa dialogue. Only Belarus has had only a mobility partnership, lacking any deeper institutionalization and contractual relations with the EU.



Figure 4. Continuum in mobility sector: approximation with EU law and standards

Source: author with reference to EU documents

This sector is significant for 'people to people' contacts which is one of four multilateral platforms and cooperative areas with partner countries.<sup>50</sup> It enables for scientific and cultural exchange and possibilities for the citizens of partner countries participate in EU Erasmus+, Horizon2020 and other programmes.

### 5.3. POLITICAL AND NORMATIVE IMPACT ON PARTNERS' POLITICAL SYSTEMS

For measuring the institutional and normative impact we can take the scores and data from Freedomhouse.org and transparency.org. As the data shows within the period from 2002 (even before the ENP was applied) the scores of political rights in Eastern Partnership countries did not gradually improve. The score of political rights includes rights for political participation, electoral process and functioning of government and is rated from 1 to 7 (7 means the lowest level of freedom<sup>51</sup>). The worldwide surveys are conducted annually and is trusted internationally.

We find that even in the countries who signed association agreements with the EU (Georgia, Ukraine, Moldova) and towards whom theoretically the pressure from the EU should have been highest for normative change, the scores of political rights were fluctuating. For example, in Moldova the score was better in 2002 in comparison to 2017. It has not had just a positive trend.

<sup>50</sup> European External Action Service, *Eastern Partnership multilateral platforms, General guidelines and rules of procedure*, Brussels, November 17, 2011 // [http://eeas.europa.eu/archives/docs/eastern/platforms/rules\\_procedure\\_en.pdf](http://eeas.europa.eu/archives/docs/eastern/platforms/rules_procedure_en.pdf).

<sup>51</sup> Freedom House, *Methodology* // <https://freedomhouse.org/report/freedom-world-2012/methodology>.

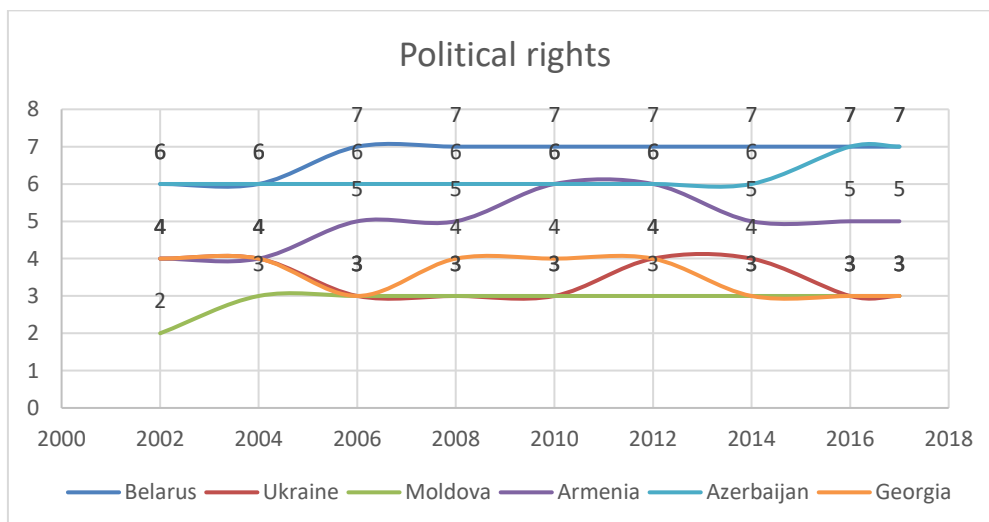


Figure 5. Political rights score in EaP countries 2002-2017

Source: author using Freedom House data

We can find similar tendencies in analyzing the scores of civil liberties. This score measures the freedom of expression, association rights, rule of law and individual rights.<sup>52</sup> For example, in Ukraine between 2006-2010 the civil liberties were more respected than today, there has been no gradual positive trend as the surveys show. However, in Moldova and Georgia the trend is positive. If we compare it with 2002 the score of civil liberties now is 3. Nevertheless, the change was not essential. Three Eastern partnership countries, Moldova, Ukraine and Georgia, which have undergone the process of reforms and transformations are still regarded as transitional democracies or hybrid regimes and just partly (not fully) ensuring democracy, human rights and civil liberties. Another three states, Belarus, Armenia, Azerbaijan, are considered authoritarian states with strong concentration of political power and hard violations of human and political rights.

<sup>52</sup> *Ibid.*

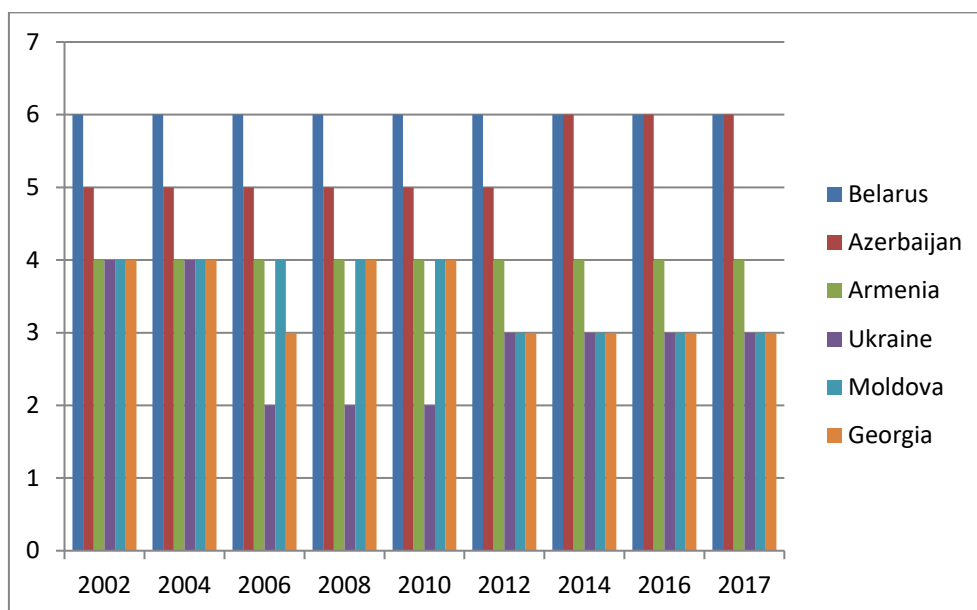


Figure 6. Civil liberties scores in EaP countries 2002-2017

Source: author using Freedom House data

The issue of corruption has become one of the major problems. The so-called “front runners” of EaP countries - Moldova and Ukraine - cannot cope with the corruption levels in their countries and are on the most corrupted countries list worldwide. Figure 6 shows<sup>53</sup> that while in Ukraine the trend is at least minimally positive in recent years tackling corruption issue, in Moldova the situation has become dramatic. It even impacted some major change in national thinking about the country’s foreign policy direction and the future path of Europeanisation, after the pro-Western, EU integration oriented political elite, was tied to the disappearance of 1 billion dollars from three national banks in 2014. As the surveys showed: “support for EU accession declined from 72 percent in 2007 to 40 percent in 2015”.<sup>54</sup> The recent progress report (2017) also identifies that “corruption remains widespread”.<sup>55</sup> As Theodor Tudoroiu stated:

In power since 2009, Moldova’s pro-democracy and pro-European ruling coalition has been unable to implement effectively much-needed reforms. <...> Cynical elites have engaged in a fierce competition for the capture of state

<sup>53</sup> Transparency index is formed by Transparency International annually and rated from 0-100 percent, when highest percentage means highest level of transparency in the country. See: <https://www.transparency.org/research>.

<sup>54</sup> Stanislav Secieru, “The Eastern Partnership: the view from Moldova” (May 19, 2015) // [https://www.ecfr.eu/article/commentary\\_moldova3026](https://www.ecfr.eu/article/commentary_moldova3026).

<sup>55</sup> European Commission, High representative of the EU for foreign affairs and security policy, Joint staff working document, Association Implementation report on the Republic of Moldova, Brussels, 10.03.2017 SWD (2017) 110 final, p. 6 // [https://cdn3-eeas.fpfis.tech.ec.europa.eu/cdn/farfuture/1PzR9cTcFz8yRO8a8lbDfXHaQmFPecExTkFunYFmInM/mtime:1489161663/sites/eeas/files/association\\_implementation\\_report\\_on\\_the\\_republic\\_of\\_moldova\\_2017\\_03\\_10\\_final.pdf](https://cdn3-eeas.fpfis.tech.ec.europa.eu/cdn/farfuture/1PzR9cTcFz8yRO8a8lbDfXHaQmFPecExTkFunYFmInM/mtime:1489161663/sites/eeas/files/association_implementation_report_on_the_republic_of_moldova_2017_03_10_final.pdf).

institutions and for the control of policymaking in order to promote their own private economic interests.<sup>56</sup>

Only Georgia, after having harsh reforms, achieved over 50% of transparency in the country, meaning that the country is ably coping with corruption issues. The positive trend is also visible in the case of Belarus, even though the country did not experience any noticeable democratic reforms and remains under the authoritarian rule of Alexander Lukashenka.

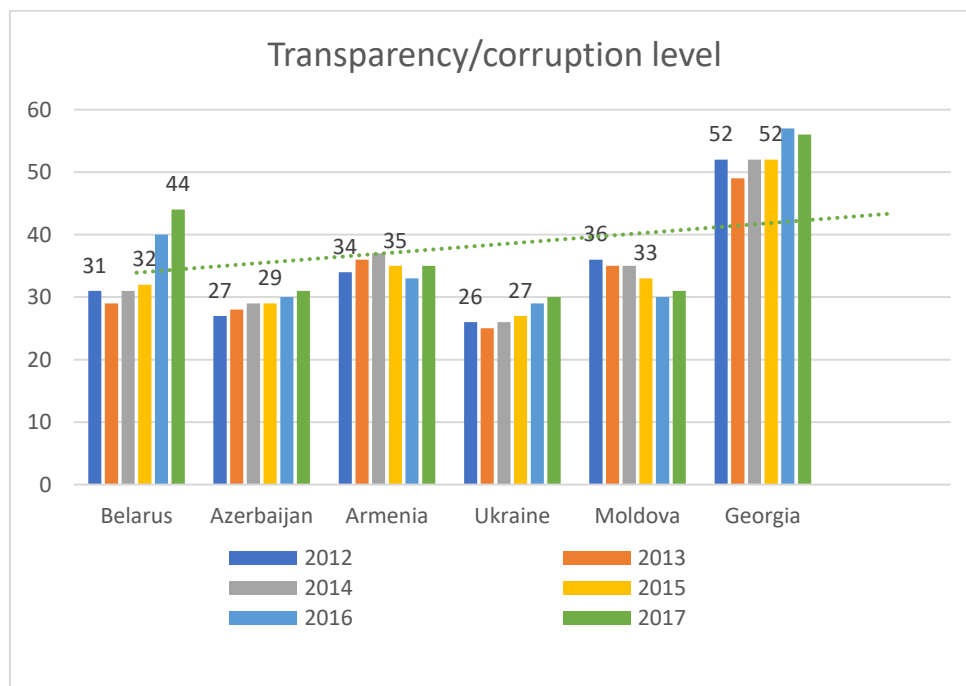


Figure 7. Corruption levels in EaP countries

Source<sup>57</sup>: made by author based on transparency.org data 2012-2017 (0-highly corrupted, 100- highly transparent)

## CONCLUSIONS

When looking at the EU neighbourhood policies' outcomes, the picture is twofold. On the one hand, the European Union has signed the Association agreements and DCFTA with three of six Eastern Partnership countries and it is considered a very successful result by many respondents. These agreements already increased the trade integration with EU and continue impacting reforms in these countries. Geopolitically, the countries have already chosen their European paths. Even more institutionalization and approximation are also visible in other

<sup>56</sup> Theodor Tudoroiu, "Democracy and state capture in Moldova," *Democratization* 22:4 // doi.org/10.1080/13510347.2013.868438.

<sup>57</sup> The data was taken from 2012 as from this year Transparency International applied new methodology for measuring transparency worldwide. Also, there is a limited access to prior date scores.

sectoral cooperation areas, for example, mobility/visa/judicial affairs. As the analysis showed, the EU has been seeking to impact transformation in neighbourhood countries and the EU strategy is tied to conditionality, 'more for more', and 'integration without enlargement' strategy.

However, the recent decade identifies the fluctuation of democracy, political rights, civil liberties, transparency indexes and scores in Eastern Partnership countries. It is quite evident that positive or negative trends are more correlating with the changes of political power inside the neighboring countries than with EU strategic politics. Ukraine is the best example. After 2010, when pro-Russian Ukrainian president Viktor Yanukovich gained presidential post, the scores of civil liberties and political rights got worsened. There is no such direct link or correlation between EU conditionality, "more for more" strategy and positive trend of democratization in these countries. Of course, it is more likely that the countries that desire association with EU, would accept conditionality principle. However, even in this case, the process of reforms and transformation has been too slow, and the picture might become slightly different after every next election despite the decade long transformation process promoted by the EU.

Additionally, pro-western politicians (as well as others) inside these countries (Georgia is slightly different), as the case of Moldova showed, are highly corrupt and incompetent; they are more likely to make some camouflage transformation than impact the real change. This is one of the reasons why the citizens' support for euro-integration in these countries has decreased and this is also the reason to raise the question what other strategy EU should think out?

This article argues that the EU has sought to transmit not just norms, standards and values tied to *acquis communautaire*, but also interactional modes of cooperation (similar to EU internal structure). This is especially visible in the Eastern Partnership case. This process reflects a different strategy: the establishment of multi-level networks for having more socialization with the different social groups of ENP countries (parliamentarians, civil servants, governments' representatives, civil society representatives) and is more tied to soft power instruments. Furthermore, after several revision stages of the neighbourhood policies, in 2015 the EU declared a change in its existing approach and diminished the conditionality principle in relations with those countries that don not desire for more association with the European Union. The new strategy should be more 'goals oriented', which should supplement the existing strategies and even more highlights already long-term used the principle of differentiation. This also suggests that the EU attempt to become more open to the "expectations of others"



(neighbours) and diminish its concentration on transforming the socio-political systems of these countries.

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