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EU Global Strategy on Foreign and Security Policy and the EU's European Neighbours

EU rising to the challenges

By

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DEDICATION

to all those who have seen us at our worst...

and still think we are the best

DECLARATION OF AUTHORSHIP

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Evangelos Marios Kemos

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Kemos', written in a cursive style.

KEYWORDS

European Union, European Union Global Strategy on Foreign and Security Policy, European Neighbours, Enlargement, European Neighbourhood Policy, Eastern Europe, Eastern Partnership.

ABSTRACT

The EU's European neighbourhood is a diverse region where two distinct EU policies, integration or association-based interact. The drafting process and recent EUGS document itself, contemplates on a differentiated approach to those, by taking into account the differing realities between the enlargement policy and ENP/EaP states. However, the EUGS strategic priorities lead to a series of specific challenges in the region, *inter alia* the endorsement of EU's global actorness, the transcending of EU's policy credibility deficit, the promotion of resilience, the tackling of the divergence between EU's and Russia's policies and the ensuring of EU's energy security, to which the EU should rise and confront.

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ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

AA	Association Agreement
AKP	Justice and Development Party (Turkey)
BIRN	Balkan Investigative Reporting Network
CFSP	European Union Common Foreign and Security Policy
CIDOB	Barcelona Centre for International Affairs
CoE	Council of Europe
COE	College of Europe
CoEU	Council of the European Union
CSTO	Collective Security Treaty Organization
DCFTA	Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Areas
DG	Directorate-General
DG NEAR	Directorate-General for Neighbourhood and Enlargement Negotiations
EaP	Eastern Partnership
EC	European Council
ECFR	European Council on Foreign Relations
ECHR	European Court of Human Rights
EDA	European Defence Agency
EEAS	European External Action Service
EEU	Eurasian Economic Union
ENP	European Neighbourhood Policy
EP	European Parliament
EPC	European Policy Centre
ESDP	European Security and Defence Policy
ESS	European Security Strategy
EU	European Union
EUFS	Energy Union Framework Strategy
EUI	European University Institute

EUMM	European Union Monitoring Mission in Georgia
EC	European Commission
EUGS	European Union Global Strategy on Foreign and Security Policy
EULEX	European Union Rule of Law Mission in Kosovo
EUISS	European Union Institute for Security Studies
FAC	Council of the European Union Foreign Affairs Composition
FRONTEX	European Agency for the Management of Operational Cooperation at the External Borders
FYROM	Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia
HR/VP	HR/VP High Representative of the European Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy/Vice-President of the European Commission
IAI	Istituto Afari Internazionali
ICTY	International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia
IIFFMCG	Independent International Fact-Finding Mission on the Conflict in Georgia
MoU	Memorandum of Understanding
MP	Member of Parliament
MEP	Member of European Parliament
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organisation
NGO	Non-governmental organisation
OECD	Organisation's for Economic Co-operation and Development
OSCE	Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe
PCA	EU - (country) Partnership and Cooperation Agreement
PKK	Kurdistan Workers' Party (Turkey)
PM	Prime Minister
RFE/RL	Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty (Azerbaijan)
RIESS	Report on the implementation of the European Security Strategy
SAA	Stabilisation and Association Agreement
SC	Security Council (United Nations)
SGC	Southern Gas Corridor

TAP	Trans Adriatic Pipelines
ToL	Treaty of Lisbon
UN	United Nations
UK	United Kingdom
US	United States of America
USSR	Union of Soviet Socialist Republics
WB	World Bank

Introduction

At the end of June 2016, a few days after the United Kingdom's [UK] EU membership referendum, the High Representative of the European Union [EU] for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy/Vice-President of the European Commission [HR/VP] of the European Union [EU] Federica Mogherini presented a new EU Global Strategy on Foreign and Security policy [EUGS] (European External Action Service, 2016) replacing the 2003 European Security Strategy [ESS] (European Council, 2003) and the 2008 Report on the Implementation of the European Security Strategy [RIESS] (European Council, 2008).

The EUGS, repeatedly quoted in this dissertation, is a broad and ambitious document in terms of its geographic scope and thematic priorities. Being true that equal devotion and attention to all aspects of an improved EU's global actorness reflected in the document cannot be provided at once or by a single strategy, the EU's strategic priorities in its European neighbourhood, entailing and involving stabilizing, are present, while resilience is promoted to one of the Strategy's most prominent challenges and tasks. The EUGS's document focus on the neighbourhood, puts the interests of European citizens first, identifies civilian means, and aims on creating momentum on EU security policy. Thus, as elaborated on the Strategic Review document (2015a) leading up to the EUGS among others, the conflict over Ukraine, Russia's hybrid destabilisation tactics, EU's energy security challenges, and Turkey's rise as a regional power all highlight in different ways and to different degrees the imperative of forging a genuine common foreign policy. At the same time the EU's approach to such, should not be limited to an accession or association policy, the EU's

ordinary way of proceeding to date. A special, differentiated relationship with neighbouring countries envisaged in both documents is in need.

This dissertation, analysing the nature, priorities and challenges of the EUGS sets out to explore **in what extent the EUGS takes into account the differing realities in the EU's European neighbourhood¹ between the enlargement policy states and the European Neighbourhood Policy [ENP] eastern dimension/Eastern Partnership [EaP] states and how it seeks to rise to the challenge, to confront *inter alia* the regional conflicts, short- to long-term crises, association and integration obstacles, enlargement fatigue and reform agenda setbacks, challenging both policies.**

Aiming to elaborate on the above working hypothesis and research question, the dissertation is structured as follows. The first part explores the background processes and timeline leading to the development of the EUGS and exhibits its relevant to the EU enlargement agenda and ENP/EaP priorities pertinent to the EU's European neighbourhood. The second part refers to the European neighbourhood *per se*, distinguishing between enlargement agenda states, namely the Western Balkans and Turkey and ENP/EaP states, namely Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, Moldova, and Ukraine. The third and last

¹ Referred in text by using terms the additional terms 'wider Europe' or 'shared neighbourhood'. Depending on the context they may include both the enlargement policy states and the ENP eastern dimension/EaP states or only the latter. However, since the author's aim to comparatively analyse the differing realities between the two and the differentiation prospects offered more or less by both main policy streams discussed, the use of the term EU's European neighbourhood aims to bridge the wording gap between different uses of the relevant vocabulary.

part explores the challenges and opportunities of actions coordinated in the framework of the EUGS, whose confrontation the document aims to tackle.

For the topic's as well as the working hypothesis' elaboration, various sources were used. They included but were not limited to primary sources, notably the EUGS document, the preceding strategy documents and other relevant to both the enlargement and ENP/EaP countries' EU negotiations status official joint communications and country progress reports. Other primary sources included news articles written at the time of the events that contributed to the political developments' evaluation and were mostly retrieved from websites *inter alia* EurActiv, an independent, multilingual, EU media outlet, the Balkan Insight, the Balkan Investigative Reporting Network's [BIRN] newsfeed, Eurasianet an independent news organization and the well-known New York Times.

Moreover, the author's study and research in the Lille Institute of Political Studies (Sciences Po Lille) in France within the framework of the ERASMUS+ scheme facilitated his access to Brussels and Bruges where he participated to a series of relevant conferences organised by the esteemed institution such as the College of Europe [COE], the European University Institute [EUI] and other. There, he had the chance to collect useful insight and source material concerning security and EU foreign policy in wider Europe and the differentiation theory in general.

Primary sources were supplemented by secondary sources and relevant literature, mainly books, articles, comments and analyses gathered from reputable academic journals and periodicals. Supplementary use of other studies analysing, criticising but also interpreting primary sources has been crucial in providing useful and accurate understanding of

the actual events and developments on ground. Additionally, the author was able to facilitate its reflection on the current status of EU's relations with its European neighbourhood by making extensive use of the latest European Council of Foreign Relations' [ECFR] European Foreign Policy Scorecard published in 2016 mainly in the dissertation's second part where EU foreign policy successes and shortcomings within the states of the diverse region are exhibited.

1. EU Global Strategy on Foreign Affairs and Security Policy

The EUGS (2016) has been the product of a long process² to generate new ideas for a new strategy that was not supposed to be drawn up in secret by a selected few, but *via* a broad process of strategic reflection³ that involved the member states and EU institutions, as well as the foreign policy community spanning across academics and think tanks, the media and civil society. Within the context of such involvement of various stakeholder's, relevant discussions, events and conferences were organized where scholars, politicians, civil society organizations and the public had the chance to exchange ideas and debate on

² Even though the mandate to the former HR/VP has been provided by the December 2013 European Council, this was no mandate to produce a new strategy due to the ambiguous position of member states within the European Council at the time. The HR has been mandated for producing a report on the changes in the global environment and the challenges and opportunities arising for the EU. The strategic assessment presented to the European Council in June 2015 served however the purpose of the new HR/VP and the EEAS to move forward and concentrate on a new EUGS and initiated a second phase of consultations (European Union Institute for Security Studies, 2015, pp. 117-120).

³ Nathalie Tocci (2016) elaborates on the evolution of the EU strategic reflection which culminated in the publication of the EUGS, explains the choices made by the HR over this time period including both the initial strategic assessment and the final EUGS.

different approaches. Critical questions of the definition of strategy, its role in global politics, the necessity of an EU strategy and the EU's capability to fulfil strategic ambitions lay in the core of that process.

1.1.Strategic rationale

A prominent EU foreign affairs analyst Giovanni Grevi in a recent discussion paper (2016, p. 1) defines foreign policy strategies as are the product of the intersection between domestic politics and the surrounding international environment expressing the values, interests and priorities of the political actors adopting them, thus they outline how to advance these goals on the global stage. The new EUGS in that sense makes no exception as he asserts. Thus, in order to assess the EUGS's main rationale, features, added value and prospects one must initiate from the internal and external context.

Moreover, following Grevi's (2016) useful distinction, in the case of the EU, the 'domestic' context needs consideration at two levels, the EU politics and the EU institutional level. Looking at the level of EU politics, one observes that the cohesion of the EU is definitely under unprecedented pressure. The UK's EU membership referendum and its results must be examined as the culmination of a series of interrelated crises that include the economic and migration crises but are not limited to them. A fatigue in further enlargement and the opposition to further integration by some member states have deepened political polarisation within and between member states and provoked huge uncertainty about the future of the European project as a whole. On the EU institutional and decision taking level, as the scholar further asserts (2016, p. 1), given that EU foreign policy is the product

of intergovernmental negotiations and inter-institutional processes, its institutional foundations are a critical enabler of effective external action. Under the current Treaty of Lisbon [ToL] foreign policy acquired a firmer leadership and ensured improved continuity and coherence, although with pre-set limits (p. 3). Those concern EU's ability to influence the international order a task depending on its ability to bring together its institutions and, crucially, the member states, who remain decisive in foreign and security affairs.

Concerning the EU's international environment, incidents such as the annexation of Crimea by Russia, the continuous instability in the Southern Caucasus region and the unsuccessful military coup in Turkey indeed confirm the view of a world that has become more dangerous, divided, disorienting, contested and fragmented and in a general sense more complex even just after the EU's external borders as the Strategy acknowledges.

Furthermore, taking into account that foreign policy strategies are there to provide an alignment of means and ends and elaborate on organising principles that frame external action across a wide policy spectrum, thus they can be also be referred to as 'grand strategies'⁴. Quoting Murray, Williamson, MacGregor Knox & Alvin Bernstein; Jolyon Howorth (2013, p. 13) confirms the above statement. A strategy and namely an EU strategy

⁴ Even though there have been numerous definitions of the term 'grand strategy', Beridan (2013, p. 397) concludes that nowadays it goes beyond the military realm of the original Sir Basil Henry Liddell Hart's definition quoted, in order to include the expression of power in the sphere of economy and finance, technology and diplomacy in times of peace.

should include what in common usage is a comprehensive view of the various means or the tactics to be used for attaining an objective.

The EUGS document titled ‘Shared Vision, Common Action: Stronger Europe’ launched in June, outlines EU’s key interests and principles, guiding its external action. The global version of EU’s position in an unpredictably unstable world is following the above presented rationale. It, thus, takes into account inter-sector aspects such as politics, economy and security and geographical aspects such as the transatlantic dimension, Russia and the Middle East, but more importantly for this dissertation, the European neighbourhood. Indeed, in its 53 pages, the document presents an updated version of EU’s weaknesses in the foreign and security policy and incorporates the thoughts and opinions of the European institutions namely the European External Action Service [EEAS], the European Commission [EC], the European Parliament [EP], of the EU member states and civil society and the EU’s partner countries. In a broader sense, the EUGS strives to assess the EU’s role in promoting international law, preventing conflicts and managing crises in the context of the EU Common Foreign and Security Policy [CFSP], in a comprehensive and rather objective way.

As highlighted, issues concerning the European neighbourhood occupy an extended part of the Strategy. By doing so, the EUGS acknowledges the EU’s role in global but also regional in the European neighbourhood’s case politics. Initiating from the idea that to ensure security inside Europe, security must be generated in its proximity and by following the principle of ‘communicating vessels’ it is quickly understood what is the importance of such strategy in establishing ‘resilient’, according to the document’s wording, societies

in the neighbourhood. A critical approach to the means of establishing such is the *raison d'être* of this dissertation. During the analysis to follow, one must bear in mind that according to the foreword of the Strategy written by the HR Federica Mogherini the EU institutions and member states will from now on:

engage in a practical and principled way, sharing global responsibilities with our partners and contributing to their strengths. We have learnt the lesson: my neighbour's and my partner's weaknesses are my own weaknesses.

1.2. Background processes

Elaborating on the background processes leading up to the launching of the new EUGS, the EU institute for Security Studies [EUISS], the EU's agency undertaking the analysis of foreign, security and defence policy issues, published a reader (2015) providing a comprehensive collection of all the relevant documents since the launch of the ESS, the first document of its kind ever drafted and agreed by the EU, in order to provide "all those interested and involved in the ongoing 'strategic review' better understand the nature, the scope, the potential benefits as well as the intrinsic limitations of such exercises". The notion of a 'strategic review' lies in that sense in the centre of the debate of such an EU strategy and as the editor of the reader observes (p. 9)

the open call for a 'strategy' (...) often highlights the need for a review of political objectives in the light of new developments, or just for a clearer sense of direction and a convincing 'narrative' as an antidote to purely reactive policymaking and simply muddling through.

The latter reflects what has happened over the past years in the domain of EU foreign and security policy and in many other policies based on the EU's and member states' shared

competences. However, the text refers to the way ahead, the vision, the EUGS intends to provide.

Coming back to the EU historical timeline and in the search of the initial pursuit of a strategy, as the Reader introduces, it has been the 1997 Amsterdam Treaty that initiated ‘common strategies’ among the foreign policy instruments at the disposal of the EU (European Union Institute for Security Studies, 2015, p. 9). However, those retained a regional focus, a public document character and were agreed upon unanimously⁵. Resulting from the developments, other processes took place with the newly at the time HR/VP Javier Solana, sponsoring a critical evaluation report published by the EUISS (Missiroli, Dwan, Economides, Pastore, & Tonra, 2001) exhibiting the documents’ shortcomings⁶.

1.2.1. The 2003 European Security Strategy and the 2008 report

The ESS was first conceived, then drafted, and finally agreed against the above presented background⁷, although it is a rather contested matter whether it has been “truly a

⁵ As highlighted in the same source, the new provisions soon gave birth to three ‘common strategies’ on Russia, Ukraine and the Mediterranean while a fourth one, on the Western Balkans, was “implicitly dropped following also the simultaneous launch of the Stability Pact for the Balkans. None of these, incidentally, generated any ‘joint action’” (European Union Institute for Security Studies, 2015, p. 9).

⁶ As summarized by Antonio Missiroli (2015, p. 9) *inter alia*, firstly no added value has been provided since the documents referred to areas where common EU policies were already well established, secondly, there has been a lack of guidelines, while procedures were improvised ending up in lengthy negotiations and eventually leading to the lowest common denominator among the stakeholders and fourthly the public character of the ‘strategies’ turned them into classical declaratory texts, suitable for public diplomacy but less useful as internal working tools.

⁷ An analysis of the historical and security environment can be found in the work of Bailes (2005, pp. 1-8).

‘strategy’ in its own right or rather a general doctrine, a combination between a fresh appraisal of the new security environment and a broad set of policy guidelines and recommendations,” as most prefer to characterise it (European Union Institute for Security Studies, 2015, p. 10). This puzzling question reflects a rather frequently repeated fear of EU policy-makers. The ESS has been a strategy born out of a specific geopolitical context and it was through it that former HR/VP Javier Solana sought to heal the internal European wounds opened by the 2003 US-led war in Iraq and the divisions, notably between the UK on the one hand and France and Germany on the other, as Tocci (2015, p. 116), among others observes. The transpired in the text ‘effective multilateralism’ epitomised according to the same author the Franco-German political intent and attempted in that sense to assert a European preference for multilateralism, qualified as effective “allowing the UK and other NATO member states to give Washington a nod and a wink” (p. 116).

The ESS document included an analysis of the new security environment, its broad challenges and specific threats; an articulation of common objectives for the EU to pursue; and a set of general recommendations on how to address the former and achieve the latter. Concerning the EU’s neighbourhood, the ESS acknowledged the urgency of building security in the European neighbourhood. Quoting the Strategy (p. 7) “even in an era of globalisation, geography is still important.” thus promoting ‘a ring’ of well governed countries to the East the EU invests to long-term security.

The 2008 RIESS, the first review of the implementation of the ESS was undertaken in the light of the evolutions which have taken place since the initial launch of the ESS, in

particular the experience drawn from European Security and Defence Policy [ESDP] missions specifying the role of the European Defence Agency [EDA], Battlegroups, and Civilian Response Teams (Mälksoo, 2016, p. 7) and provided a more comprehensive analysis of the security environment and more specific policy recommendations compared to the 2003 document.

In contrast to the rather widely exhibited shortcomings of both documents it is nevertheless true that ever since and mostly since the original ESS no comparable equally comprehensive exercise has been carried out at EU level until the process of strategic reflection for the only recently published EUGS was initiated, despite the dramatic changes that both the EU itself and the wider world have gone through in recent years. Even if the above is an uncontestably positive development, there are scholars that for a series of reasons exhibited in Ion Berindan's work (2013) advocate that rather than insisting with an approach that produced very little, namely the ESS and its review:

the EU should abandon the traits of a 'grand strategy' in favour of a more realistic and restrained project that could focus on security matters in its neighbourhood including the problematic Russian and Turkish issues while relying on better transatlantic relations and true multilateralism.

1.2.2. Towards the new strategy

Having shortly exhibited the context out of which the ESS was born in the previous chapter one should question the purpose of having a new strategy in the first place. Indeed, the decision of having such is rather multifaceted. The title of the Strategy itself helps reveal its very reason of existence. Thus, the new EUGS frames the EU institutions' and

member states' shared vision and urges the EU member states to embrace common action in order to deliver a stronger Europe.

A strategy is firstly needed because EU member states do continuously have different priorities and different readings of the region surrounding the EU. Moreover, as furthermore observed (European Union Institute for Security Studies, 2015, p. 116) the EU and Europe in general is witnessing a period of relative decline of its power, sourcing arguably either from the financial and economic crisis, due to the rise of new powers across the globe, or as a result of the diffusion of power beyond institutional boundaries (p. 116), depending from the preferred or combined narrative. In similar cases, when resources are in scarcity but problems increase, making the best of what one has becomes an imperative necessity and that is in exact term the *raison d'être* of the EUGS. All in all, as Tocci (European Union Institute for Security Studies, 2015, p. 117) asserts:

by identifying and agreeing on a set of interests and goals as well as on the means to achieve them, a strategy can become a tool that encourages different actors, instruments and policies to work in greater synergy.

Additionally, taking also into account what Maria Mälksoo (2016, p. 7) advocates as internal purpose, in the post-UK EU membership referendum environment, the upheaval of nationalism all over Europe after the migration surge and the earlier solidarity crisis related to the fiscal troubles in the Eurozone, the EUGS is needed for “keeping the faith of the EU citizens in the continuous relevance of the union, and ‘forging unity’ across institutions, states, and peoples” (p. 7). Moreover, Russia's annexation of Crimea and involvement in the Ukrainian crisis further underscore the sad realization that peace and stability in Europe are no longer a given, as she concludes.

1.3.Strategic priorities

Resuming the EUGS document analysis one should make clear that the purpose of this dissertation is to elaborate on the significance of the European neighbourhood within the EUGS document. Even though this may seem a challenge in the first place, as already observed, rather than being a truly global strategy, the EUGS has a distinct focus to the EU's immediate neighbourhood, thus, "it is more concerned about the crisis in Ukraine, or the chaos in Syria and Libya, than the strategic implications of the rise of China" (Dijkstra, 2016, p. 2). Under such a prism from the five pursued by the strategy priorities⁸, three are mostly and directly pertinent to the neighbouring European region, namely the promotion of state and societal resilience to EU's East (and South), the adoption of an integrated approach to conflicts and the construction of cooperative regional orders.

1.3.1. State and societal resilience to the East

The EUGS takes the former ESS's reasoning of a well governed neighbourhood (p. 7-8) a step further. The promotion of resilience, defined as "the ability of states and societies to reform, thus withstanding and recovering from internal and external crises" finds itself within the core of the EUGS and as the Strategy's new *leitmotif* as Wolfgang Wagner & Rosanne Anholt (2016, p. 2) argue, while as they confirm it is repeated in the EUGS

⁸ Those include according to the EUGS: (1) the Security of the Union, (2) the State and Societal Resilience to EU's East and South, (3) an Integrated Approach to Conflicts, (4) Cooperative Regional Orders and (5) a Global Governance for the 21st Century.

document no less than 40 times (p. 1). However, the key idea of the ESS remains still very much alive. As the ESS suggested, in order for the EU to be best protected, a world of well-governed democratic states is to be promoted. Where the ESS considered state failure (p. 4) to be a key threat, the EUGS mentions fragility threatening “all our vital interests” (p. 23). Fragility is again linked to democracy and human rights as “repressive states are inherently fragile” (p. 25). In addition to a general promotion of human rights, the EU emphasizes ‘inclusiveness’ (p. 20) to overcome the marginalization of communities.

Therefore, it is in the utmost interest of the EU to invest in both the state and societal resilience of the region to the East of its borders which seems to be evolving into the new paradigm of EU foreign policy. Quoting the EUGS (p. 23), “a resilient state is a secure state, and security is key for prosperity and democracy.” It is rather interesting that the EUGS is acknowledging that the reverse of the abovementioned notion holds true as well. In addition, within the framework of the promotion of resiliency according to the Strategy (p. 25):

the EU will support different paths to resilience targeting the most acute cases of governmental, economic, societal and climate/energy fragility, as well as develop more effective migration policies for Europe and its partners.

The differing paths to resilience reflect developments that had already taken place in the ENP (see chapter 1.3.1.1 and part two), whereas Wagner & Anholt (2016, p. 3) observed “a one-size-fits-all approach has given way to a new emphasis on ‘differentiation between partner countries’.” In the EUGS, the new emphasis on multiple, country-specific paths and policies resonates with the ‘principled pragmatism’ that should ‘guide our external action in the years ahead’ as the document quotes (p. 8).

Concerning the rise and spread of the concept of resilience in EU foreign policy wording in general, Wagner & Anholt's analysis (2016, p. 4) confirm that the EUGS is not the first EU document to use the term⁹. However, the use of the concept in the EUGS document according to their research is based on its use as “a middle ground between the over-ambitious liberal peace-building and the under-ambitious objective of stability”, because it “(re)directs attention to local resources and practices and away from ready-made blueprints that are parachuted into conflict zones” and since it is ambiguous enough to be accepted by different stakeholders with different interests and backgrounds. This is exactly where the success of the term lies. Resilience manages to refer to a broad range of referent objects. In the example of EU's Eastern European neighbourhood, it can indicate critical infrastructure, networks and services, as well as the fostering of the resilience of its democracies (see chapter 3.3).

1.3.1.1. Resilience promotion and the ENP

A differentiated approach towards the enlargement policy states and the ENP's eastern dimension states acknowledging the differing realities in the Eastern European neighbourhood (see part two) lies in the core of this strategy priority making it the most prevalent on this dissertation. With respect to the ENP, the EUGS confirms EU's commitment to the strengthening of the EaP, the main multilateral cooperation instrument set up

⁹ As they demonstrate (Wagner & Anholt, 2016, pp. 3-4) key EU documents that have already incorporated resilience include the 2012 EU Approach to Resilience, the 2013 EU Action Plan for Resilience in Crisis Prone Countries and the EU's 2014 Resilience Marker.

in order to promote the ENP's eastern dimension and its continuing support on the implementation of the Association Agreements [AA] and the Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Areas [DCFTA] (p. 25). Also, creative approaches to further the tailor-made partnerships are to be employed. Some possibilities quoted by the Strategy document (p. 25) include the creation of an economic areas with the countries implementing DCFTAs, the extension of Trans-European Networks and the Energy Community, as well as building physical and digital connections. Trade and infrastructure are vital in bridging the gap between the EU and its neighbourhood to the East. The combination of resilience, creativity, and target audiences highlights the EUGS's underlying re-orientation towards an "expansive and noticeably more smart power-oriented approach" (Davis Cross, 2016, pp. 2, 5-6).

Through the ENP, key part of EU's foreign policy, the EU since 2004 cooperates with its neighbours aiming the closest possible political association and the greatest possible degree of economic integration. The initial launch of the policy came after the 2003 ESS, supplementing more specific measures to foster stability and safeguard security and prosperity in the region. The EU, a year ago, reaffirmed its standing commitment to the above mentioned goals by publishing its new approach, re-prioritisation and its new *modus operandi*. The long-awaited review of the ENP (EEAS, 2015b) makes explicit reference to measures seeking to "offer ways to strengthen the resilience of the EU's partners in the face of external pressures and their ability to make their own sovereign choices" (p. 4) thus recognising the vitality of resilient states in promoting stability in the region surrounding the EU. As the introduction of the document reflects (pp. 2-3), the ENP review proposes how the EU and its neighbours can build more effective partnerships in the neighbourhood. Differentiation and greater mutual ownership do also have a central role in the ENP and

the EU in a similar way to the EUGS recognises that “not all partners aspire to EU rules and standards, and reflecting the wishes of each country concerning the nature and focus of its partnership with the EU” (p. 2) is mandatory. However, the new ENP is also more making more explicit reference on the EU pursuing its interests in the region, of which promoting universal values is presented as one interest among many. Stabilisation, security, energy, economic development, job creation, and, of course, dealing with the refugee crisis are priorities.

Concerning the re-orientation of the ENP review, Steven Blockmans’ commentary article (2015) argues that the document having abandoned the idealistic goals set out at its launch in 2004 and codified in the 2009 ToL represents “little more than an elegantly crafted fig leaf that purports to be a strategic approach to the EU’s outer periphery, but masks an inclination towards a more hard-nosed *Realpolitik*” (p. 1). Mark Furness & Isabel Schäfer of the German Development Institute (2015) in their review of the ENP confirmed that more realism and less ambition is involved in the ENP review document, while interestingly enough they pointed out the use of the EU’s enlargement model, processes and instruments as one of the ENP’s most serious drawbacks. Call it *realpolitik*, realism or pragmatism, the recent ENP review constitutes EU’s reaction to a series of events such as the largely failed Arab Spring, the war in Syria, but most importantly for the Eastern European neighbourhood, Russia’s military intervention in Ukraine as a recent commentary published by the ECFR think tank (Dworkin & Wesslau, 2015) indicates. Provided that is the case, the question is whether the broader strategic vision missing at the time the ENP review was published, thus leading to it being characterised as a policy in “suspended animation” (Blockmans, p. 2). is complemented by the more recent EUGS.

1.3.2. Integrated approach to conflicts

This strategy priority outlines the EUGS's general strategic choice towards a multi-dimensional, multi-phased, multi-level and multi-lateral approach to conflicts and crises, and it underlines the EU's plans to engage further in the resolution of protracted conflicts in the neighbouring countries. The main rationale behind it, is that violent conflicts are against the vital interests of the EU (p. 9), thus the EU should be able to engage "in a practical and principled way in peacebuilding, and foster human security through an integrated approach." At the core of this strategy priority is the implementation of a comprehensive approach to conflicts and crises and the coherence of all EU policies in use (p. 9). Such comprehensive approach is defined further in the document as the EU stepping in at all stages of the conflict cycle, "acting promptly on prevention, responding responsibly and decisively to crises, investing in stabilisation, and avoiding premature disengagement when a new crisis erupts" and cooperating with different levels of governance (p. 10). This priority is very much connected to the cooperative regional orders envisaged by the priority analysis to follow. The EU by acknowledging that none of the conflicts can be solved by the EU itself, is determined to foster and support "broad, deep and durable regional and international partnerships" (p. 10).

Even though the EUGS document provides the cases of Syria and Libya as examples of conflicts that have local, national, regional and global dimensions to be addressed, since the early 1990s the EU's eastern neighbours had to contend with their fair share of security problems, affected by several protracted conflicts (see chapter 2.2 - Armenia,

Azerbaijan, Georgia, Moldova and most recently Ukraine; Figure 4). The initially advertised hope “that ‘freezing’ the conflict zones, and then eventually making progress towards greater democracy and prosperity, would gradually make the resolution of post-Soviet conflicts more likely” hasn’t reflected the reality (Gaub & Popescu, 2015, p. 57). Dealing with regional security and frozen conflicts in the region does remain one of the most controversial issues since Russia is involved.

The outbreak of the 2008 Russian-Georgian war, followed by Russia’s recognition of the breakaway republics of Abkhazia and South Ossetia, Russia’s military annexation of Crimea, as well as large-scale destabilisation and high intensity conventional combat in Donbass, are all significant changes to the worse. As a report written by Valasek, director of the Centre for European Reform (2008) suggested, the Russian-Georgian war divided the EU with some member-states based on different assumptions condemning Russia and providing aid of non-military nature to the Georgian government while others accused the Georgian government of provoking the war something that the report of the Independent International Fact-Finding Mission on the Conflict in Georgia [IIFFMCG], a commission established by the Council of the EU [CoEU] claimed¹⁰. In this poorly coordinated and incoherent *à la carte* reaction of the EU, member-states provided varying responses to the

¹⁰ IIFFMCG (2009, September) Report Volume I. Retrieved November 2016, from https://web.archive.org/web/20091007030130/http://www.ceiig.ch/pdf/IIFFMCG_Volume_I.pdf, Report Volume II. Retrieved November 2016, from https://web.archive.org/web/20110706223037/http://www.ceiig.ch/pdf/IIFFMCG_Volume_II.pdf, Report Volume III. Retrieved November 2016, from https://web.archive.org/web/20110706223252/http://www.ceiig.ch/pdf/IIFFMCG_Volume_III.pdf.

pending crisis, although the French presidency of the CoEU, refused to condemn either side, while the German foreign minister at the time advocated the solution reflecting on the EU as “an honest broker” (Valasek, 2008, p. 1). The crisis exhibited the need for a common policy on Russia in the shared neighbourhood and the strategic need of the revitalisation of the ENP still a challenge for EU foreign policy today.

Analysing the Georgian conflict (see chapter 2.2.4) under the more specific prism of the new EUGS strategy priorities discussed, Camilla Edemann Callesen’s article (2016) concludes that “the EU needs to re-consider how "its state-building policies coincide with its conflict resolution efforts.” While the EU approach including state-building policies, as observed, is successfully operationalised in intra-state conflicts where lack of social reforms has led to instability, it may be counterproductive “in a secessionist conflict where another third party is trying to transform the break-away region into a state” (Edemann Callesen, 2016). All in all, an EU multi-dimensional, integrated approach to conflicts as advocated by the EUGS refers to an EU foreign policy acknowledging that the conflict cannot be solved *via* state reforms alone.

Worse still, as summarized by Florence Gaub & Nicu Popescu (2015, p. 58), the new conflicts that have arisen in Ukraine more recently and “due to these conflicts, and their broader implications for Western-Russian relations, the security environment to the EU’s east has been revolutionised”. As highlighted in their report (p. 9) the crisis in and over Ukraine:

laid bare the fact that the predominantly technocratic approach represented by the DCFTAs could no longer compensate for the lack of a solid foreign and security policy framework that hampered the ENP – which, coupled with the lack of an EU

membership perspective, rendered the eastern neighbours more vulnerable to internal weaknesses and external pressures.

In fact, Ukraine cuts to the heart of EU's ambition and challenge to transform to a foreign policy actor basing its action on such an integrated approach (see chapter 3.1), especially since its geographically limited foreign policy actorness and the attraction of further integration of Ukraine to the EU sparked the Euromaiden movement within the country in the first place (McNamara, 2014). Learning from past examples, the EU, by including the integrated approach to conflicts priority acknowledges some of its wrongdoings. By pursuing relations with important third countries based on its own logic, namely the case of Russia, the EUGS suggests that the EU should also be ready to confront the conflicts that "its approach generates in order to prevent differences from simmering under the surface and erupting at a later stage" (Schmidt-Felzmann, 2016, p. 120). All in all, the priority requires promptly action at all stages of the conflict cycle, prevention, responsible and decisive response to crises, stabilisation, and the avoidance of premature disengagement when a new crisis erupts.

1.3.3. Cooperative regional orders

Lasting stability in the eastern European neighbourhood requires continued effort by the EU, together with other international organisations such as the United Nations [UN] and the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe [OSCE] but also major actors such as the United States [US] and Russia, the latter of extreme importance concerning the shared European neighbourhood. However, the EU relations with Russia have deteriorated over the conflict with Georgia since 2008 (see previous chapter) and confidence by

the two actors is seriously lacking. At the same time frozen conflicts remain and sustained effort to address those in the Southern Caucasus and Moldova need to be made (European Union Institute for Security Studies, 2015, p. 53).

According to the third EUGS strategy priority presented, cooperation in voluntary forms of regional governance benefits both states and peoples in a variety of ways (p. 32). Following this rationale, the EU will promote cooperation with the aim of peace and development promotion in the 21st century. Such a focus reflects the awareness of ongoing geopolitical competition between different global and regional powers and in the case of the European security order the challenges posed by Russia's violation of international law, the destabilization of Ukraine and protracted conflicts in the wider Black Sea region. After all, as observed in a recent policy brief by Sven Biscop (2016, p. 4) there is "not one but several wars ongoing (...) within the neighbourhood in which the EU ought to assume responsibility." Such is only feasible through cooperating with Russia, while as Biscop continues the EU will have to make "substantial changes in relations' dependent on Russia's respect for international law" (p. 4). Relations with Russia represent a key strategic challenge where according to the same analyst the EUGS document basically still advocates strategic patience.

Another approach to this strategy priority involves the promotion of cooperation in a multilateral fashion. Such a project has already been initiated by the EU in the framework of the EaP which can still provide more. Indeed, the EaP foresees a real step change in relations with the EU's Eastern neighbours since its launching in 2009, with a significant upgrading of political, economic and trade relations aiming to strengthen the prosperity

and stability of these countries, and thus the security of the EU. Nevertheless, as suggested by scholars observing the ENP and EaP (Delcour, 2015, p. 6) reforms should have a strong local ownership and be adjusted to local circumstances, while the EU's long-term transformative offer should be more prepared to confront challenges in a context characterised by the growing importance of geopolitics and security threats.

2. The differing realities in the EU's European neighbourhood

The Eastern European neighbourhood, sometimes referred to as 'wider Europe',¹¹ as the EUGS acknowledges is a region of differing realities that stretches from the area of South-eastern Europe and Turkey to the Black sea and Southern Caucasus. The region and the EU policies applied to it are part of two distinct EU agendas, namely the European enlargement policy and the ENP's eastern dimension¹².

The two policies are very distinct. Although, the ENP has been largely inspired by the successive experiences of enlargement, it has also been designed partly not to replicate

¹¹ It has to be stressed that the author uses the terms 'EU's European neighbourhood', 'eastern European neighbourhood' and 'wider Europe' (see Footnote) interchangeably in this chapter. In any case, the terms include both the enlargement policy and ENP states.

¹² The ENP launched in 2004 aims to help the EU support and foster stability, security and prosperity in the countries closest to its borders. Its most recent review (European External Action Service, 2015b) reaffirms the EU's commitment to these goals, although as elaborated in its introduction "events of recent years have demonstrated the need for a new approach, a re-prioritisation and an introduction of new ways of working" (p. 2). Moreover, it must be pointed out that as confirmed by a report published by the EUISS in 2015 (Gaub & Popescu, p. 6) the ENP was originally expected to deal with some 16 neighbours, however, Russia, the EU's largest neighbour "declined to be incorporated into the scheme and opted for developing bilateral co-operation with the EU on an allegedly more 'equal' basis, although it was open to accepting similar policies and actions to those implemented with other countries involved in the scheme."

exactly enlargement approaches. Within the enlargement policy, as a report of the EUISS elaborates (Gaub & Popescu, 2015, p. 7):

candidates for accession can be vetted and selected, whereas geographic neighbours cannot (...) relations with future members within the accession process are profoundly uneven (as the EU basically sets the terms for the membership negotiations), unlike those with simple neighbours, who are not (or not necessarily) *demandeurs* (...) and lastly, enlargement is based on a *finalité* that was entirely absent from the ENP.

The ENP on the other hand is an integral part of the EU external action. This difference is rather easily observed by taking into account the main EU stakeholders during the negotiations with either perspective member states or ENP participants. Indeed, both are handled by the relevant Directorate-General [DG] for Neighbourhood and Enlargement Negotiations [DG NEAR]¹³, however, the ENP is jointly handled by the DG NEAR and the EEAS. This notion is partly true since the Western Balkans and Turkey are well mentioned in the EUGS document. On that topic Gerald Knaus (2016) concludes it is the outstanding success of United States [US] foreign policy in the twentieth century that inspired the EEAS in the Balkans, “therefore, the success or failure of efforts to pacify an integrated south eastern European area is what will determine whether the EU will be a credible foreign policy actor elsewhere (...) this region has to be at the heart of any EU global strategy.”

¹³ More information about the DG NEAR can be sourced on the following website: http://ec.europa.eu/enlargement/about/directorate-general/index_en.htm

However, the above notion is rather a simplification of a more complex reality. A recent policy paper published by the Bertelsmann Stiftung (2015) highlighting the shortcomings of the ENP, briefly but rather precisely exhibits the dilemmas the EU failed to address concerning the ENP. The paper points out the lack of clarification on the ambiguous relationship between the ENP and the EU enlargement and contests the concept of the homogeneity of the neighbourhood which is in the ENP is distinguished geographically rather than based on the willingness of the country each time in question to get closer to the EU (p. 5).

Concerning the differing realities in the region concerned, according to the latest ECFR European Foreign Policy Scorecard (2016, p. 70), the shared neighbourhood is expected to pose a major challenge for EU foreign policy in 2016. What especially concerns the ENP is that when defining priorities for supporting regional orders and especially in the context of the European security order (see chapter 1.3.3), Russia's violation of international norms, the annexation of Crimea and the destabilisation of Ukraine have inflicted major alternations to shared neighbourhood, thus, highlighted that “peace and stability in Europe are no longer a given” (Grevi, 2016, p. 6). The EU still has to find an effective way to deal with a Russia “that is increasingly unpredictable, is intent on pulling neighbours into its orbit, and seems to have lowered its threshold for use of force”, while as further elaborated, “the situation in Ukraine remains fragile and progress depends on Moscow” (European Council on Foreign Relations, 2016, p. 70).

The Scorecard continues by predicting that as in 2015, “wider Europe will continue to be the central testing ground for EU foreign policy.” A series of challenging circumstances and events such as the continuing armed conflict in the Donbas, the economic reforms in Kyiv, the Russian pressure on EaP countries, the stalling reforms in the Western Balkans and a new growing dependence on Turkey will be a stress test for Europe’s cohesion, its commitment to its values, and its ability to multitask (European Council on Foreign Relations, 2016, p. 70). The EUGS seeks to strike a balanced approach to the fraught relationship with Russia, stressing serious differences while recognising the need for dialogue and cooperation (p.33), while according to Grevi’s analysis (2016, p. 6), the EU should stand united in defence of international norms, whose respect is the premise for substantial changes in relations with Russia and consider selective engagement’ with Moscow where interests meet. Concerning Turkey, the EUGS uses rather prudent language on the EU-Turkey difficult relationship, calling for deepening sectoral cooperation while striving to anchor Turkish (p. 35) democracy and pursuing the accession process, based on related conditions (Grevi, 2016, p. 6).

All in all, taking into account Frank Schimmelfennig’s (2016, p. 5) research, the deepening and widening, the end goals of the enlarging EU have been indeed accompanied by a process of differentiation extremely handy in any enlargement policy and ENP/EaP states’ comparative analysis, as the one attempted. As the prominent scholar in the joint COE-EUI conference organised in autumn 2016 in Bruges, exhibited, and elaborated on a his most recent working paper (p. 5), “as the competences and the membership of the EU have grown, European integration has become less uniform,” more differentiated. Schimmelfennig affirms the more known organisational differentiation, a phenomenon not only

observed among member states, with some member states opting out from EU policies such as monetary union or the Schengen area but also non-member states participating in some¹⁴. But, more importantly he observes an additional, regional perspective of differentiation (see Table 1). Summarising (p. 5)

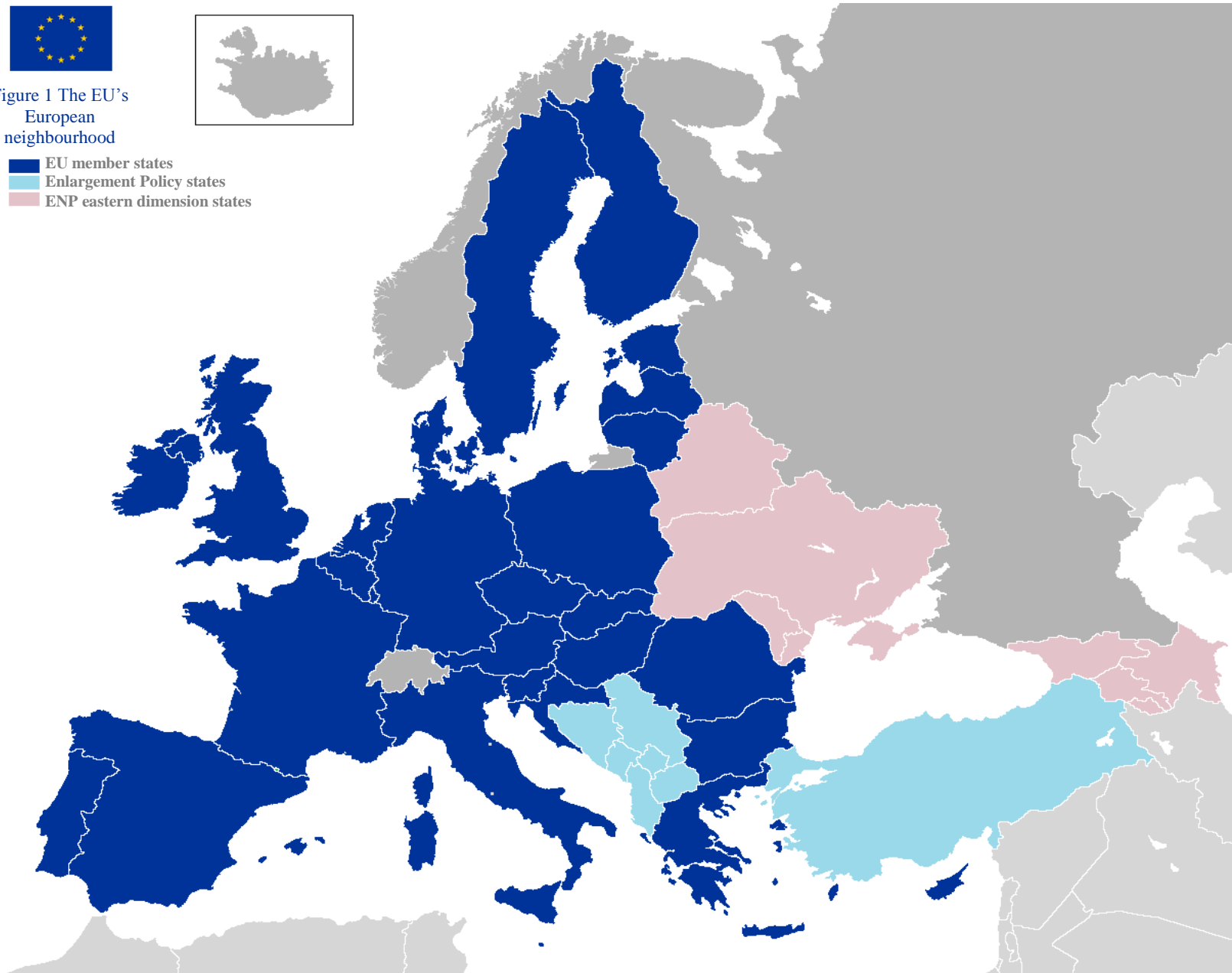
in the course of time, the EU has cast a net of varied institutional relationships across the region of Europe. An increasing number of countries have concluded broad formal agreements with the EU, which define the range and intensity of their cooperation and integration.

¹⁴ For example, Turkey participates to the EU's customs union, while Iceland and Norway to the internal market and the Schengen area. Such contemplation includes the remaining to be seen post-Brexit status of the UK as David Phinnemore elaborated on the above mentioned joint COE-EUI conference. The UK in that sense will move from an internal differentiation observed today to a sui generis external.



Figure 1 The EU's
European
neighbourhood

- EU member states
- Enlargement Policy states
- ENP eastern dimension states



Author's compilation

Table 1 Grades of association/integration in the EU's European neighbourhood

Integration policies	8	Accession negotiations	Montenegro, Serbia, Turkey
	7	Candidacy	Albania, FYROM
Association policies	6	Internal market (EEA)	
	5	Association	Bosnia Herzegovina, Georgia, Moldova, Ukraine
	4	Bilateral way	
	3	Free Trade Area	
	2	Cooperation agreement	Armenia, Azerbaijan
	1	Trade agreement	Belarus
	0	No institutionalised relationship	Kosovo
Author's compilation based on the Schimmelfennig's grading (2016, p. 20)			




2.1. Enlargement policy states

Undeniably, as confirmed by the EEAS's Strategic Review (2015a, p. 11) leading up to the publication of the EUGS in eastern and south-eastern Europe, the EU retains substantial influence and is able to generate positive change. Elaborating on the above, one comprehends that enlargement produced remarkable transformations in acceding member states in the past while, as the Review continues, the EU has been instrumental in bringing about the stabilisation and demilitarisation of the Western Balkans and the Serbia-Kosovo dialogue (p. 11).

All in all, there are five recognized candidates for future membership of the EU that, ranked according to the candidate status recognition, include Turkey, the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia [FYROM], Montenegro, Albania and Serbia. All except Albania and FYROM have started accession negotiations. Bosnia and Herzegovina, and Kosovo whose independence is not recognized by five EU member states¹⁵, are recognized as potential candidates for membership by the EU (see Table 2 and Figure 2). Bosnia-Herzegovina has formally submitted an application for membership recently, while Kosovo has a Stabilization and Association Agreement [SAA] with the EU, which generally precedes the lodging of membership application.

¹⁵ The EU is divided on its Kosovo, with 5 of 28 EU member states (Cyprus, Greece, Romania, Slovakia and Spain) not recognising its independence.

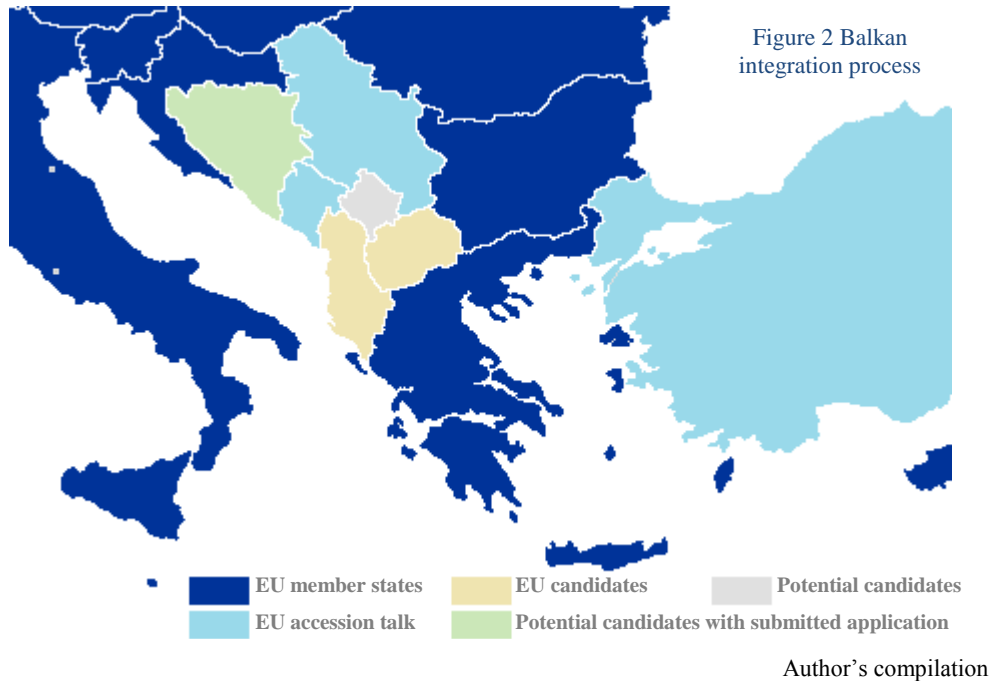
Table 2 Steps to EU accession

<p>Applicant country</p>	<p>The applicant country (potential candidate) submits its application to the country holding the rotating presidency of the CoEU.</p>  <p>In the light of the EC's opinion, the CoEU decides whether to consider the applicant a candidate country. The CoEU may also set certain conditions that need to be met before accession negotiations can begin.</p>	<p>1</p> <p>2 The EC makes an initial evaluation of the applicant country and submits its opinion to the CoEU.</p>
<p>Candidate country</p>	<p>For the accession negotiations, the <i>acquis</i> is divided into 35 chapters, each of which covers a specific policy area. The negotiations process aims to help candidate countries prepare to fulfil the obligations of EU membership. Benchmarks are set in every chapter to guide the candidate towards fulfilling the obligations.</p> 	<p>3</p> <p>4 Once accession negotiations are opened, the EC investigates the candidate country in greater detail in a process known as screening. The resulting screening report identifies shortcomings in the candidate country that need to be gradually addressed in order for it to comply with the body of rights and obligations binding for all EU member states (also known as the <i>acquis</i>).</p> <p>5</p>
<p>Acceding country</p>	<p>After the accession treaty has been signed, it must be ratified by the acceding country and each individual EU member state according to their constitutional rules (i.e. parliamentary vote, referendum).</p>	<p>6 After the candidate country has reformed its national laws so that they match the <i>acquis</i>, every criterion has been fulfilled, and every chapter has been closed, the agreements reached are set out in an accession treaty, which must be signed by the candidate country and all EU member states. The accession treaty must also win the support of the CoEU, the EC, and EP. The candidate country then becomes an acceding country.</p> <p>7</p>
<p>Member state</p>		<p>8 The acceding country then becomes an EU member state on the date specified in the accession treaty.</p>

Author's compilation based on the EU enlargement factsheet available on: http://ec.europa.eu/enlargement/pdf/publication/factsheet_en.pdf

2.1.1. Western Balkans

Although, Western Balkan countries share problems related to widespread corruption, the presence of organised crime, the lack of an independent and/or functioning judiciary, and the deep politicisation of public administration as pointed out in relevant literature (Lange, 2016, p. 3), most of them were identified as potential candidates for EU membership during the Thessaloniki European Council summit in June 2003¹⁶. Since then, a number of agreements between them and the EU have entered into force (see Table 3).



¹⁶ Those include Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, FYROM and Serbia.

Most recently, the migration and refugee crisis pushed the Western Balkans to the forefront of European politics as the ECFR scorecard suggests (2016, pp. 69-70) and into the spotlight of the EU as some other scholar's comment (Lange, 2016), with countries of the area, notably Serbia and FYROM, coming under serious strain from the inflow of migrants and refugees, particularly when neighbouring EU member states closed their bor-

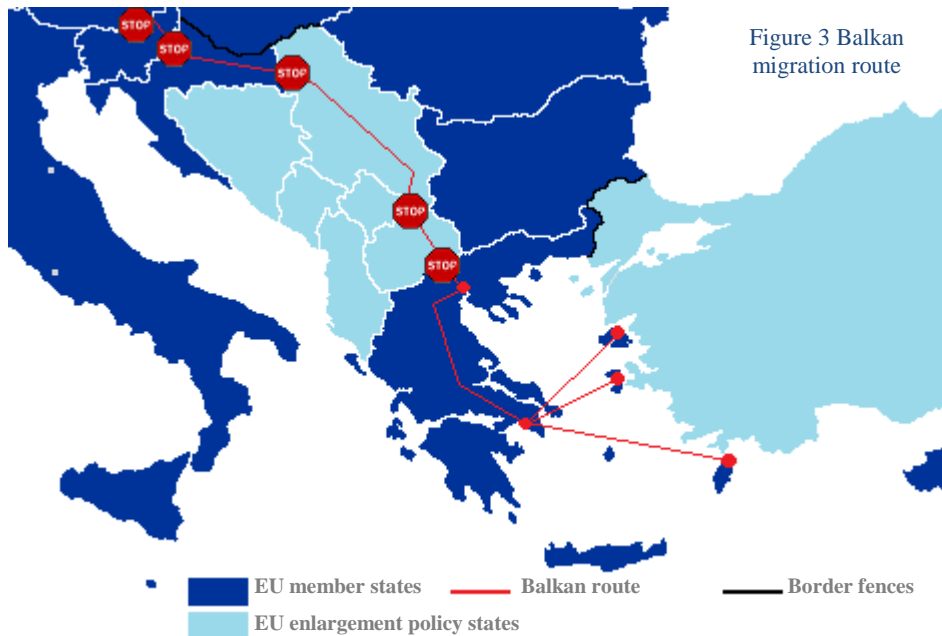


Figure 3 Balkan migration route

Author's compilation based on information traced on FRONTEX's website:
<http://frontex.europa.eu/trends-and-routes/western-balkan-route>

ders. The refugee crisis risks undermining the relative stability of the Western Balkans in which the EU has invested in the past. The severe strains the migrant flows place on states and societies along the so-called Balkan route (see Figure 3) have exposed deeper political and stability risks in the region “ranging from the dire state of the economy to the fragile state of democracy (...) [while additionally] accounts of increased radicalisation and high numbers of ‘foreign fighters’ originating from the Western Balkans are also a reason for the EU to step up its approach towards the region,” as Lange (2016, p. 1) points out.







Concerning the enlargement processes *per se*, even though important enlargement milestones were achieved in 2015, only limited progress by the governments' efforts to reform and move closer to the EU was made mainly held back by political crises (European Council on Foreign Relations, 2016, p. 77). A recent article published by the Barcelona Centre for International Affairs [CIDOB] (Fraenkel, 2016) generalized the enlargement fatigue observed by other scholars in the past by exploring whether the EU and Western Balkans do share a common future anymore. According to the very useful insight provided, even though the EU rationale for denying EU accession differs for each country, the underlying reservations are identical (p. 1) and existent. Moreover, as he continues (p. 2), the EU "is going through an incremental and not too subtle revival of historical prejudices and condescension of northern and western European states and peoples towards their southern and eastern neighbours." The author points subsequently out (p. 3) that:

rather than being encouraged to establish an authentic domestic demand to adopt and achieve the substance of the EU's membership standards, Balkan politicians are motivated to go through the motions of adhering to the mechanical criteria of the accession process

in a technocratic based way elaborated above (see Table 2).

In general, as observed, there is little motivation provided for aspiring states "to engage in meaningful and enduring reform, where progress towards mutually agreed-upon accession benchmarks would be recognized and rewarded" by the EU (p. 3). Such shortcomings do reflect a grave challenge for the EUGS in general and the enlargement policy in specific (see chapter 3.2). As Fraenkel (2016, p. 5) concludes, the EU has to behave as though both the present and the future of the Western Balkans actually matter.

Table 3 Western Balkan enlargement policy states' status

	Albania	Bosnia and Her- zegovina	FYROM	Kosovo	Montenegro	Serbia
						
SAA signed entered into force	June 2006 (2009)	June 2008 (2015)	April 2001 (2004)	October 2015 (2016)	October 2007 (2010)	April 2008 (2013)
Application submission	April 2009	February 2016	March 2004	-	December 2008	December 2009
Candidacy confirmation	June 2014	Expected	December 2005	-	December 2010	March 2012
Negotiations initiation	Expected	Expected	Expected	-	June 2012	January 2014
Visa free travel to the Schengen area initiation	December 2010	December 2010	December 2009	-	December 2009	December 2009

Author's compilation based on information traced on DG NEAR's website:
http://ec.europa.eu/enlargement/policy/conditions-membership/index_en.htm

2.1.1.1. Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia

Into detail, starting from the first country of the region to apply for EU membership and been granted EU candidate status, FYROM (see Table 3), as summarised in a recent EP's information factsheet on Western Balkans (De Munter, 2016), while the EC in 2009 recommended opening accession negotiations with the country supported by the EP, such haven't been initiated yet. Moreover, in its recently report the EC (2015f, p.1) "made its recommendation conditional on the continued implementation of the summer 2015 political agreement known as the Pržino Agreement" and its renewed 2016 version¹⁷ both brokered by the EU with the participation of DG NEAR's Commissioner Johannes Hahn and 3 Members of the EP [MEP]¹⁸ providing a solution to the pending political crisis "(...) and on substantial progress in the implementation of the urgent reform priorities" (De Munter, 2016, p. 3; European Commission, 2015f, p. 4). Moreover, as already elaborated (see paragraph 2.1.1), FYROM came under pressure from the influx of refugees that intensified during 2015 (European Council on Foreign Relations, 2016, p. 81). In any case the unre-

¹⁷ Concerning the recent political crisis information can be traced in articles by Sinisa Jakov Marusic affiliated to the BIRN FYROM on Balkan Insight retrieved in November 2016: [Parliament dissolution] <http://www.balkaninsight.com/en/article/macedonia-parliament-dissolves-for-snap-polls-10-17-2016>; <http://www.balkaninsight.com/en/article/hahn-pushes-for-december-elections-in-macedonia-10-13-2016>; [2015 Deal renewal] <http://www.balkaninsight.com/en/article/macedonia-parties-renew-crisis-deal-07-20-2016>. The latest deal of July 20th 2016 between the four political parties in FYROM brokered by the EU can be retrieved in: http://eeas.europa.eu/delegations/the_former_yugoslav_republic_of_macedonia/press_corner/all_news/news/2016/2016-07-20_agreement_en.htm.

¹⁸As confirmed in EurActiv's article dated from July 16th 2015 available at: <https://www.euractiv.com/section/enlargement/news/commission-hammers-out-macedonia-compromise/>.

solved, long-standing dispute with Greece over the FYROM's use of the name 'Macedonia' as highlighted by De Munter (2016, p. 3) is an important obstacle to further EU integration.

2.1.1.2. Montenegro

Montenegro applied for EU membership in December 2008, more than two years after declaring its independence, it was given candidate status in December 2010, and accession negotiations were opened in June 2012 (see Table 3). As highlighted by De Munter (2016, p. 4):

in line with the EU's 'new approach' to the accession process, the crucial rule of law chapters — Chapter 23 on judicial reform and fundamental rights and Chapter 24 on freedom, security and justice — were opened at an early stage in the negotiations in December 2013 (...) [while] 22 chapters had been opened with Montenegro by the end of 2015.

Since the above account, two more chapters with Montenegro were opened, namely chapters 12 and 13 making Montenegro the most successful of the three countries negotiating their accession to the EU at the moment (see Table 4).

2.1.1.3. Albania

Albania applied for EU membership on April 2009, a few days after the entry into force of the EU-Albania SAA (see Table 3). Tracing Albania's EU membership processes, in October 2010, the EC recommended that accession negotiations be opened once the country met the requirements for 12 key priorities (De Munter, 2016, p. 3). Noting good

progress in its 2012 report, the EC recommended Albania be granted candidate status, subject to the adoption of pending reforms. These conditions were largely met prior to the June 2013 Albanian parliamentary elections, positively assessed by international observers as confirmed by the EP's factsheet (p. 3). In October 2013, the EC therefore unequivocally this time recommended granting Albania the status of candidate for EU membership leading to Albanian been granted candidate status in June 2014.

The actual opening of negotiations depends on Albania's progress on key priorities and notably on the urgent reform of the judicial system voted upon in the aftermath of the EU's ultimatum to Albania during the past summer. However, it remains partly stalled by the Albanian constitutional court since October¹⁹. In general, Albania is expected to do more to tackle corruption and organised crime, especially crime relating to immigration and human trafficking, and drugs as the most recently published EC report on Albania (2015a, pp. 4-5) suggests.

2.1.1.4. Serbia

Serbia submitted its application for EU membership in December 2009 and was granted candidate status in March 2012 as a result of the agreement reached on Kosovo's

¹⁹ Concerning the EU ultimatum and the parliamentary approval over and of the judicial reform information can be traced in articles by Fatjona Mejdini affiliated to the BIRN Albania on Balkan Insight retrieved in November 2016: [Court decision] <http://www.balkaninsight.com/en/article/albanian-court-decision-jeopardize-country-chances-in-eu-10-25-2016>; [Judicial reforms parliamentary approval] <http://www.balkaninsight.com/en/article/albania-passes-the-draft-that-vets-judges-and-prosecutors-08-31-2016>; <http://www.balkaninsight.com/en/article/albanian-parliament-passes-with-unanimity-the-judicial-reform-07-22-2016>.

regional representation (De Munter, 2016, p. 4). Acknowledging Serbia's progress towards normalising relations with Kosovo, in particular through the ongoing EU-facilitated Belgrade-Pristina dialogue, the June 2013 meeting of the European Council endorsed the EC's recommendation to open accession negotiations with Serbia. The EU-Serbia SAA entered into force in September 2013, and accession negotiations with Serbia were formally opened on 21 January 2014. The first two chapters, including the one on normalisation of relations with Kosovo, were opened in December 2015 (European Commission, 2015f, p. 5).




Indeed, the normalization of relations of Serbia with Kosovo and the rest of its neighbours lie at the core of Serbia's accession to the EU. A recent comment by Dragan Popovic of the BIRN, a network of local non-governmental organisations [NGO] promoting freedom of speech, human rights and democratic values (2016) suggests that Kosovo-Serbia agreements for example "were doomed from the start" since both governments have been insincere about the normalisation process from the beginning. It is important to stress that earlier this year, the Serbian Prime Minister [PM] noting that the issue of the former province of Kosovo remains a major challenge maintained that Serbia will not recognize "the unilaterally proclaimed independence of the southern Serbian province" although it would continue the EU-led dialogue with Kosovo "in the interest of regional stability and

of the best possible Serbian-Albanian relations”²⁰. In the same speech, the re-elected Serbian PM, Aleksandar Vučić, affirmed the government’s commitment to EU accession and his optimism not hiding the rather utilitarian approach to the dynamics of the EU integration shared, by naming the expected outcome, namely the “influence [of] the pace of investment” in Serbia.

All in all, Serbia seems to be taking the place of a rather reluctant Europeaniser, *inter alia* with Albania and Moldova as an article by Jelena Subotić focusing on the Europeanization processes in candidate states’ suggests (Subotić, 2010, p. 595). In the Serbian case, as she elaborates the initial concern of Serbian elites on the issue of war crimes justice and cooperation with the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia [ICTY] provoking the Serbian Europeanization reluctance “was becoming more and more obsolete as the new crisis—regional instability following Kosovo’s declaration of independence—was looming large.” (p. 607)

²⁰ As cited in an article of Sasa Dragojlo published on August 10th 2016 on the Balkan Insight website: <http://www.balkaninsight.com/en/article/vucic-presented-government-s-program-in-six-hour-parliament-speech-08-10-2016>.

Table 4 Chapter negotiations' status (Montenegro, Serbia, Turkey)

	Montenegro 	Serbia 	Turkey 
Negotiations initiated	June 2012	January 2014	October 2005
Open chapters	24	4	16
Closed chapters	2	0	1

<i>Acquis</i> chapter	Status		
1. Free Movement of Goods			Blocked by Cyprus
2. Freedom of Movement for Workers	Allegedly blocked by the UK²¹		
3. Right of Establishment for Companies & Freedom to Provide Services			
4. Free Movement of Capital			
5. Public Procurement		December 2016	
6. Company Law			
7. Intellectual Property Law			
8. Competition Policy			
9. Financial Services			
10. Information Society & Media			
11. Agriculture & Rural Development	December 2016		
12. Food Safety, Veterinary & Phytosanitary Policy			
13. Fisheries			
14. Transport Policy			
15. Energy			
16. Taxation			
17. Economic & Monetary Policy			
18. Statistics			
19. Social Policy & Employment			
20. Enterprise & Industrial Policy		December 2016	
21. Trans-European Networks			
22. Regional Policy & Coordination of Structural Instruments			
23. Judiciary & Fundamental Rights			

²¹ As reported by Dusica Tomovic of the BIRN and retrieved from Balkan Insight in November 2016: <http://www.balkaninsight.com/en/article/uk-blocks-montenegro-s-eu-accession-talks-10-11-2016>.

24. Justice, Freedom & Security			
25. Science & Research		December 2016	
26. Education & Culture		December 2016	
27. Environment and Climate Change	Expected		
28. Consumer & Health Protection			
29. Customs Union			
30. External Relations			
31. Foreign, Security & Defence Policy			Blocked by Cyprus
32. Financial Control			
33. Financial & Budgetary Provisions			
34. Institutions	-		-
35. Other issues	-	Relations with Kosovo	-

Index:
 Expected initiation
 Opened
 Closed
 Blocked

Author's compilation based on information as of November 2016 traced on DG NEAR's website:
http://ec.europa.eu/enlargement/countries/check-current-status/index_en.htm

2.1.1.5. Bosnia and Herzegovina

Even though, twenty years after the end of the war in Bosnia and Herzegovina the country continues to suffer from longstanding institutional paralysis (European Council on Foreign Relations, 2016, p. 80), Bosnia and Herzegovina is nevertheless a potential EU candidate country. As summarized in an EP's Factsheet (De Munter, 2016, p. 3) the first EU-Bosnia and Herzegovina SAA was negotiated and signed in June 2008, but its entry into force had been frozen until June 1st 2015, mainly due to the country's failure to implement a key ruling of the European Court of Human Rights [ECHR]. Interestingly enough, a month after, in July 2015, Bosnia and Herzegovina adopted a reform agenda, focusing on judicial, public administration, and socio-economic reforms (Gross, 2015, p. 1). After the EU-set progress in implementing the reform agenda was reached, Bosnia and Herzegovina membership application, submitted in February 2016 was accepted in September²².

2.1.1.6. Kosovo

Unlike Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo is a potential candidate for EU accession that hasn't applied for membership yet. After its unilateral declaration of independence in February 2008, the EU stated that "Kosovo had a clear 'European perspective'." (De Munter, 2016, p. 4) Except for the 5 out of the 28 EU member states (see Footnote), in the

²² See EurActiv's article by Georgi Gotev published on September 21st 2016 and retrieved in November 2016 in: <https://www.euractiv.com/section/enlargement/news/eu-accepts-bosnia-and-herzegovinas-membership-application/>.

region both Serbia and Bosnia and Herzegovina have not recognised Kosovo's independence. Moreover, as pointed out in Table 3, Kosovo is the only out of the Western Balkan states not applicable to the Schengen visa liberalisations scheme which is still pending. After the landmark Brussels agreement on normalising relations was reached in April 2013 by Serbia and Kosovo, the European Council decided to open negotiations on an SAA with Kosovo in June 2013, signed on October 27th 2015 and entered into force on April 1st 2016 (De Munter, 2016, p. 4). Serbia's and Kosovo's future EU integration is closely linked to the outcome and implementation of the EU-facilitated high-level brokering a long-term solution.

The EU continues to dedicate substantial resources to Kosovo in terms of financial aid, making it one of the top recipients of EU assistance in the world while the EU Rule of Law Mission in Kosovo [EULEX] is also the largest civilian CSDP mission, with a staff of 1,500 (European Council on Foreign Relations, 2016, p. 79).

2.1.2. Turkey

As Tocci (2014, p. 1) points out "Turkey's relations with the European integration project have been dense, contested, and tortuous since the outset (...) [and] despite their intensity and duration over the decades, the end point of the relationship remains unknown to this day." Turkey applied for full membership back in 1987, but it hasn't been acknowledged as an accession candidate state before the Helsinki European Council in December 1999. However, during the first decade of the 2000s before and after the initiation of EU-Turkey accession negotiations that started as late as October 2005, the EU has been critical

in fostering reforms in the country mainly within the framework of Europeanization pressures as elaborated using the case study of the protection of minority rights in the author's previous work (Kemos, 2015, pp. 8-10).

Furthermore, although Turkey met the last condition for accession talks in July 2005 when it extended a customs union with the EU to all new member states, including Cyprus, it failed to ratify the customs union and its ports and airports remain closed to Cypriot traffic. This incident led to the EU freezing accession talks in eight policy areas during 2006 until today (see Table 4). As Tocci (2014, p. 2) further observes “paradoxically, after the opening of accession negotiations in 2005, the momentum in Turkey’s accession process was lost with Turkey’s accession negotiations proceeding at an extremely slow pace their early years and stalling altogether between 2010 and 2013.” So far only 16 of Turkey's negotiating chapters have been opened, and only 1 has been provisionally closed (see Table 4). However, the negotiations are still today overshadowed by concerns about freedom of speech and democracy in Turkey (European Commission, 2015j, p. 22), treatment of religious minorities (p. 22), women's and children's rights (p. 5), civilian control of the military (pp. 10-11) and the Cyprus tensions (p. 26) as the EC’s Turkey 2015 report highlights. All in all, Recep Tayyip Erdoğan’s Justice and Development Party [AKP], the one to blame for the above described situation won a solid majority in the November 2015 snap elections.

Most recently the attempted *coup d'état* on July 15th 2016 and the pressure of the refugee crisis on Turkey have essentially altered EU-Turkey relations²³. Concerning the coup, as an ECFR Commentary (Aydıntaşbaş, Leonard, & Tcherneva, 2016) reports, “mood in Turkey is still defined by trauma and jubilation²⁴.” However, relief at its failure is mixed with fear of the government’s response to it. The coup allowed the Erdoğan presidency to further consolidate its power and initiate a wave of wide detainments, crackdown of the media outlets, the educational system and the judiciary, and confiscation and seizure of companies as part of a counter-coup purge that aims to reshape Turkish politics, economics and foreign policy.

Furthermore, the refugee crisis critically affected EU-Turkey relation and prompted the EU to step up its engagement and take a more pragmatic approach in order to secure its cooperation with the country, a rather inevitable partner in facing the crisis. The diverging perceptions shared by EU and Turkey were played down in the “unavoidable but conditional” EU-Turkey agreement signed by March 2016 (De Marcilly & Garde, 2016, p. 1). The EU in that sense agreed to re-energise the accession process with Turkey while softening its emphasis on human rights and the rule of law, even as the situation in the country deteriorated. However, as some analyses pointed out (Şenyuva & Üstün, 2016, p. 3) the

²³ As reported on articles of EurActiv retrieved in November 2016 from: <https://www.euractiv.com/section/enlargement/news/turkey-eu-agree-to-ease-tensions-after-failed-coup/>; <https://www.euractiv.com/section/global-europe/news/turkish-fm-eu-failed-the-test-after-the-coup-attempt/>.

²⁴ Due to the 265 deaths that made this coup far bloodier than previous ones while interestingly enough most Turks as the authors point out believe that it could have plunged the country into civil war had it succeeded (Aydıntaşbaş, Leonard, & Tcherneva, 2016).

deal and its implementation also raises concerns and makes stakes higher since a failure to its implementation constitutes a risk to overall Turkish-EU relations. In any case, the Turkish PM Binali Yıldırım reminded the EU of Turkey's alternatives highlighting the strained EU-Turkey relations since the attempted coup and Brussels' failure to deliver visa-liberalisation in time as part of the EU-Turkey agreement to solve the refugee crisis²⁵.

On EU's side the refugee crisis is fully preoccupying its institutions and governments, while the Eurozone crisis and the Ukraine crisis are not yet over. Janis Emmanouilidis director of Studies at the European Policy Centre [EPC] (2015, p. 2) sharply characterizes the EU's ability to tackle all these interrelated crises effectively being "restricted by a number of limiting factors which can be summarised in four words: mistrust, complexity, divergence, and disappointment."

As the ECFR on its 2016 scorecard (p. 70) exhibits, in the course of the past year the Kurdish peace process broke down and fighting between government forces and the Kurdistan Workers' Party [PKK] militant group resumed and intensified while Russia's military intervention on the side of Bashar al-Assad in Syria, and the subsequent downing by Turkey of a Russian plane, meant that Russia-Turkey relations dramatically deteriorated. The latter are in course to be restored since August when the presidents "pledged to boost their cooperation and forget the 'difficult' moments of the past," as reported in the

²⁵ As reported by EurActiv and retrieved in November 2016 from: <http://www.euractiv.com/section/global-europe/news/eu-should-not-forget-turkey-has-alternatives-pm-warns/>.

news²⁶. More recently they were seen as forwarding an ambitious joint energy projects as the two sides try to overcome a crisis in ties²⁷.

2.2. European Neighbourhood Policy/Eastern Partnership states

Quoting the Strategic Review published by the EEAS (2015a) leading up to the EUGS once more “beyond enlargement, the EU’s power of attraction [still] persists in parts of the eastern neighbourhood.” Even though the eastern neighbours have changed in many ways since the 1990s, they did not on the same pace with progress being uneven among them. Some of the countries as Florence Gaub & Nicu Popescu (2015, p. 61) highlighted “muddled through as unconsolidated democracies (in itself quite an achievement), while others faced a hardening of autocratic rule” although, “there has been a region-wide trend towards improved economic governance and ease of doing business (...) corruption seems not just to continue to thrive, but to be even more embedded than ever before” (p. 61). The authors continue observing trade flows with the EU that do seem promising but point out that it is not the case with Ukraine where trade volume with Russia grows in a faster pace (p. 61). Other successes involve the easing of travel conditions to the EU with Moldova obtaining a visa-free regime in 2014 (see Table 5), and Belarus becoming the world’s fourth-highest recipient of EU visas (p. 61).

²⁶ See EurActiv’s article from August 10th 2016, retrieved November 2016 from <http://www.euractiv.com/section/global-europe/news/turkey-and-russia-decide-to-reset-their-relationship/>.

²⁷ See EurActiv’s article from October 10th 2016, retrieved November 2016 from <http://www.euractiv.com/section/energy/news/putin-in-turkey-to-push-energy-deals/>.

In the region concerned, the EU is highly involved since in contrast to the enlargement policy states, the geopolitics of the ENP's eastern dimension states is framed within the context of the competition with Russia over integration of it. EU's attractiveness in that sense is opposed to Russia's coercion and pressure²⁸. The EU's strive to promote such is observed in the EUGS document with the reference to the ENP reaffirming the policy's commitment to the EaP (p. 25)²⁹. As elaborated in the Strategy, under the ENP, the EU aims to build closer relations with the willing countries, since the EU's "(...) enduring power of attraction can spur transformation" (p. 9). Different readings of the Strategy's document do exist. Jan Techau a prominent scholar of the American Academy of Berlin strongly supports (2016) that the EUGS provides a "silent farewell to the EU's ENP" while he continues by adding that the ENP is mentioned a few times "but merely to pay tribute to a term that can't be ignored entirely." The new guiding principle of resilience and the

²⁸ In that context the example of Latvia, an EU and North Atlantic Treaty Organisation [NATO] member, and Ukraine and Belarus, belonging to the EaP, are elaborated on a very important policy paper towards the Latvian government published by the Center for Security and Strategic Research of the National Defence Academy of Latvia and written by Jānis Bērziņš (2014) introduced to the author by Major (GS) Serge Stroobants of the Belgian Army during the Re-Inventing Europe 2016 conference. In the policy papers' introduction (p. 1) it is stressed that Russia considers Ukraine and Belarus as part of itself, something that was lost with the collapse of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics [USSR] and guarantee Russia's territorial integrity. Thus, Russia considers the involvement of the US and the EU in Ukrainian internal affairs in specific to be a direct confrontation to its regional interests. Bērziņš after citing the eight phases of new-generation war schematized by Tchekinov & Bogdanov (p. 6) asserts that they are seemingly affecting not only non-EU-member states but also EU member states such as the known as Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania and Poland (p. 7).

²⁹ The EaP is a distinct to the ENP initiative of the EU governing its relationship with the post-Soviet states of Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, Moldova, and Ukraine, intended to provide a venue for discussions of trade, economic strategy, travel agreements, and other issues between the EU and its eastern neighbours.

tailor-made approaches emphasised (European External Action Service, 2016, p. 25) actually frame a rather differentiated approach unknown to the coherent ring of states envisaged in earlier documents.

Wherever the truth may lie, the recent review of the ENP (European External Action Service, 2015b, p. 3) affirms its close coordination with the ongoing at the time brainstorming on the broader task, the EUGS, part of which it aims to be according to its wording. As pointed out by some analyses nothing new was offered to the eastern neighbours that aspire to become EU members. (European Council on Foreign Relations, 2016, p. 67). The ENP review indeed prioritises the stabilising of the neighbourhood (p. 3) through EU's economic impact (pp. 7-12) *inter alia* on trade, economic modernisation, entrepreneurship, employment, growth, transports and connectivity, EU's security safeguards (pp. 12-13) and EU's effect on migration and mobility. Another priority involves the promotion of stronger and differentiated partnerships by acknowledging the different aspirations of the partners, reflecting both the EU's and partners' interests, focusing on fewer priorities, involving more the member states and enhancing ownership by the partner countries (p. 4). In any case, the EU is expected to uphold and promote universal values through the ENP, governance, democracy, rule of law and human rights being some of them (p. 5).

Moreover, within the priorities of the ENP and the EU in general is the promotion of resilience analysed in previous chapters (1.3.1) as an antidote to Russian foreign policy in the shared neighbourhood, since as Louisa Slovko in her article (2015) comparing Russian and EU foreign policy handlings points out

Russia is a power that really contests, while the EU needs a clear sense of direction [for its soft-power concept that is] (...) easily challenged by Russia as it entails

fostering liberal changes, while the Russian soft power is conservative with religious components and does not seek change.

In contrast to the EU demanding way of proceeding, Russia accepts its partners without being too demanding while behind its soft power lies hard power based on a new generation warfare model presented in Bērziņš' work (2014). The EUGS attempting to bridge the gap acknowledges that no zero-sum dynamics should be promoted in the neighbourhood and sets out in contrary to rebuild a win-win framework (p. 4).

Notwithstanding the strategies of both sides, the reality reflected in the latest ECFR scorecard (2016, p. 45) is rather different with 5 of the 6 ENP/EaP states still being in unresolved conflicts, allegedly protracted by Russia as a key part of Russia's strategy to exercise influence in the neighbourhood and prevent NATO enlargement, as some analysts suggest (Orttung & Walker, 2015). Until today tensions are continuing in breakaway territories of the former USSR (p. 55) namely in Transnistria, Crimea, Abkhazia, South Ossetia and Nagorno-Karabakh (see Figure 4 from left to right), as well as in the Donbas region in

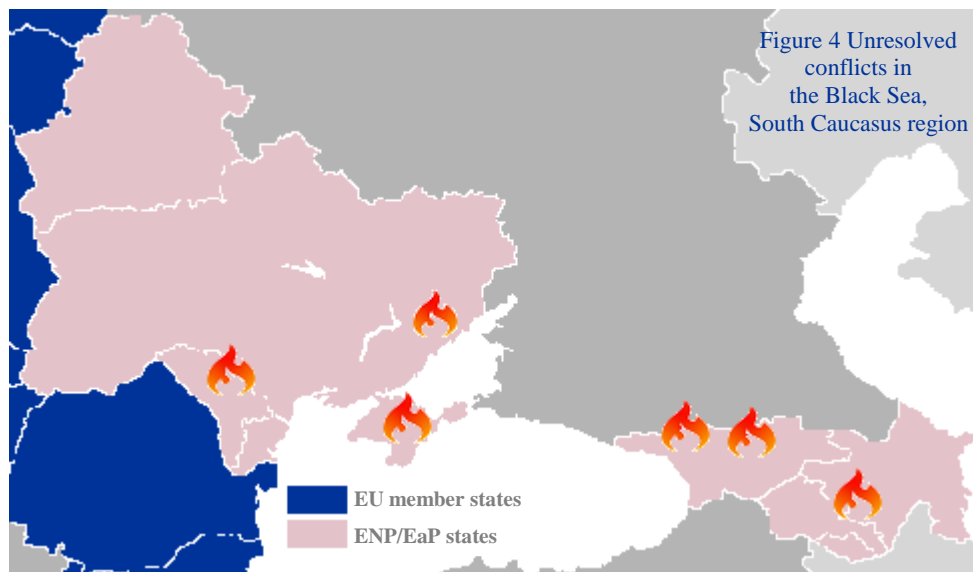


Figure 4 Unresolved conflicts in the Black Sea, South Caucasus region

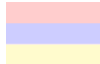

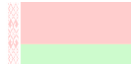



Author's compilation

order for progress in reform-minded countries on Russia's periphery to be blocked. On those allegations the EUGS document (2016, p. 29) clearly specifies that EU's actions are not aimed against a particular country, alluding to Russia, which often insinuates that both the ENP and the EaP are anti-Russia geopolitical projects.

Excepting Ukraine, the five other countries of the EU's eastern neighbourhood continued on their different trajectories, with setbacks for Georgia and Moldova, countries that aspire to become EU members and have already signed an AA with the EU (see Table 5). As highlighted in the most recent proceedings of the CoEU Foreign Affairs Composition [FAC] of October 17th (2016) on the EU's 2016 foreign policy priorities and the basis of its relations with Russia and the countries of the ENP/EaP, with those who do not seek AA, namely Armenia, Azerbaijan and Belarus (p. 4)

the EU will develop attractive and mutually beneficial alternatives based on common values and fundamental principles of the EU for promoting comprehensive cooperation and sustained reform processes in the Eastern European partner countries.

Table 5 ENP/EaP states' EU agreement status

		Armenia	Azerbaijan	Belarus	Georgia	Moldova	Ukraine
							
EU agreement signed/ entered into force	PCA	✓ PCA 1996 (1999)	✓ PCA July 1999	✗ PCA ratification procedure suspended since 1997	✓	✓	✓
	DCFTA	✗	✗	✗	✓	✓	✓
	AA	✗	✗	✗	✓ June 2014 (2016)	✓ June 2014 (2016)	✓ June 2014 Provisionally applied. Ratification still pending.
Visa-free access to the Schengen area initiation	✗	✗	✗	— Expected	✓ April 2014	— Proposed	

Author's compilation based on information traced on DG NEAR's website:
http://ec.europa.eu/enlargement/policy/conditions-membership/index_en.htm

2.2.1. Armenia

Armenia and the EU have maintained positive relations over the years however, their bilateral relations are still regulated by the EU-Armenia PCA signed in 1996 and ratified in 1999, which allows for wide-ranging, but obsolete in 2016, cooperation in the areas of political dialogue, trade, investment, economy, law-making and culture. The inclusion of Armenia in the ENP in 2004 and the EaP in 2009 has demonstrated the EU's willingness to move its cooperation with Armenia beyond the terms of the PCA, falling however short of the close cooperation and interdependency envisaged in AA's the EU has concluded with other countries of the Eastern neighbourhood region, Georgia and Moldova and Ukraine (see Table 5).

Although, Armenia had completed negotiations on an AA, which was expected to be signed at the EU's EaP summit in Vilnius in November 2013, it was unexpectedly called off in early September³⁰ *inter alia* over security reasons based on the key driver behind Russia-Armenian relations, the conflict in Nagorno-Karabakh (Alexandrova-Arbatova, 2015, p. 136). Thus, during the Summit, the EU and Armenia only agreed on the need to

³⁰ On September 3rd 2013, the Armenian President Serzh Sargsyan made headlines when he announced that Armenia would be joining the Customs Union of Russia, Belarus, and Kazakhstan, which later developed into the Eurasian Economic Union [EEU]. In doing so, Armenia effectively ditched the AA with the EU. On Sargsyan's comments see an article on EurActiv by Georgi Gotev dated September 4th 2013 and retrieved November 2016 from <http://www.euractiv.com/section/europe-s-east/news/eu-loses-armenia-to-russia-s-customs-union/>.

update the EU-Armenia Action Plan and build upon the existing framework for cooperation³¹. Following this setback, the EU nevertheless continued by negotiating a new framework agreement that would provide a new impetus for intensifying bilateral relations with the country, as the proceedings of the latest FAC (2016, p. 5) point out. Within this framework, in December 2015 as the yearly scorecard of the ECFR (2016, p. 69) confirms, talks began on an EU– Armenia agreement to replace the AA and DCFTA that Armenia rejected in 2013³². The major 2013 failure for both Armenia and the EU will consequently lead to a renewed EU-Armenian rapprochement (Giragosian & Kostanyan, 2016, p. 2) and an agreement more limited in scope than the document initially negotiated, since Armenia is now a member of the EEU as an article of Mikayel Zolyan (2015), analyst with the Regional Studies Center on Carnegie’s Europe website suggests³³.

Concerning the Armenian domestic reform challenges, according to some researchers (Giragosian & Kostanyan, 2016, p. 1) “they go well beyond its dangerous over-dependence on Russia, the unresolved Nagorno Karabakh conflict, and the enduring legacy of the Genocide,” partly analysed in the paragraphs to follow. Armenia as they observe (p. 1) is

³¹ Information concerning the current EU-Armenia cooperation status sourced by an EC’s informative fact-sheet from 2015 retrieved November 2016, from <http://ec.europa.eu/enlargement/neighbourhood/pdf/riga/20150924-eu-armenia-fact-sheet-2015.pdf>.

³² See also Gayane Abrahamyan’s article from February 9th 2015 published in Eurasianet quoting a senior Armenian government official on the government’s current actions to complete an updated version of an AA. Article retrieved November 2016, from <http://www.eurasianet.org/node/71986>.

³³ This however, might reflect better what Armenia’s foreign policy was aiming for years, ‘complementarity,’ which essentially came down to advancing cooperation with Russia and the West simultaneously (Zolyan, 2015).

entrenched in corruption and democratic deficits that impede the systemic development of sustainable economic policy and sound political reform in the country. Some recommendations following last year constitutional referendum³⁴, include the implementation of the new Electoral Code and all OSCE and Council of Europe [CoE] recommendations well before the next parliamentary elections in 2017, as urged by the CoEU (2016, p. 5). Armenia is expectedly to be supported by the EU covering, as the main donor, the financial burden for the forthcoming parliamentary elections (p. 5).

Another standing and recently revived issue that Armenia faces is the Nagorno-Karabakh, an ethnic Armenian enclave inside Azerbaijan. The conflict over the region entangles, interestingly enough, two countries of the ENP/EaP both Armenia and Azerbaijan. The confrontation over Nagorno-Karabakh broke out in 1988 when the region, sought independence from Azerbaijan and announced its intention to join Armenia. After its foundation in 1991 and its declaration of independence in 1992 Azerbaijan tried to regain control over the territory. A conflict escalated into a full-scale war with mass casualties. Since then there are frequent threats of Azerbaijan to take the mountainous Nagorno-Karabakh region back by force from the much weaker Armenia which however, maintains armed

³⁴ The controversial Armenian on December 6th endorsed constitutional changes that will transform the country into a parliamentary republic. Controversies source from allegations of rampant fraud which are clouding the legitimacy of the result. Two relevant articles by Marianna Grigoryan on Eurasianet, retrieved November 2016, elaborating on the outcome of the referendum and the alleged parties benefiting from the proposed constitutional reform, can be found on <http://www.eurasianet.org/node/76461>; <http://www.eurasianet.org/node/75891>.

forces within its territory not implementing the UN Security Council's [SC] on their withdrawal.

The two sides remain separated by a demilitarized buffer zone since the 1994 cease-fire brokered by Russia while the conflict remains unresolved to our days. Most recently, heavy fighting, the bloodiest since 1994, erupted on April 2nd 2016 and ceased two days after³⁵, unfreezing the frozen conflict as an article on Foreign Affairs advocates (Altstadt & Menon, 2016). As their analysis concludes, escalation is imminent should fighting recur with grave repercussions for regional stability³⁶. Reflecting the above explosive mixture, the EU, as affirmed by the foreign ministers of its member states (Council of the European Union, 2016, p. 6) continuously supports mediation efforts carried out by the OSCE Minsk Trilateral Contact Group, co-chaired by EU's member state France, Russia, and the US in order to find a negotiated solution to the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict in order for the conflict not to turn into a proxy fight between the antagonistic regional powers, Russia and Turkey³⁷.

³⁵ On the reached cease-fire see a post on Eurasianet from April 5th 2016 citing Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty [RFE/RL] retrieved November 2016 from <http://www.eurasianet.org/node/78121>.

³⁶ As the article elaborates, Azerbaijan has used the wealth accumulated during the energy boom to buy vast quantities of weapons, ranking "second in Europe for military imports." Despite being outclassed in resources; Armenia has also strengthened its military. While Armenian's would volunteer to join the fight and its international diaspora would support the country in the event of war. Moreover, Turkey could be drawn in to help Azerbaijan, a fellow Turkic Muslim country while such an intervention by Turkey would put Russia on the spot since Armenia, as a member of the Collective Security Treaty Organization [CSTO], is its ally. Even Iran, which sees Azerbaijan as a rival for the loyalty of its Turkic millions along their shared border, would be likely to aid Armenia, as it did in the previous war (Altstadt & Menon, 2016).

³⁷ See the article by Dorian Jones published on April 7th 2016 on Eurasianet retrieved November 2016, from <http://www.eurasianet.org/node/78206>.

2.2.2. Azerbaijan

In a similar way to Armenia with which the Azerbaijan is in conflict over Nagorno-Karabakh since the late 1980's, the EU-Azerbaijan relations are governed by a PCA since 1999 (see Table 5)³⁸. In 2006, a based on the PCA joint EU-Azerbaijan Action Plan was adopted providing a comprehensive and ambitious framework for joint work with Azerbaijan, in all key areas of reform³⁹. Taking into account the Azerbaijan's rich energy resources, in 2006, the EU and Azerbaijan signed a Memorandum of Understanding [MoU] aiming to reform and modernise the Azeri domestic energy sector as a crucial step in strengthening its energy relations with the EU. Azerbaijan is both a participant to the EaP since 2009 and ENP recipient.

As affirmed by the CoEU (2016, p. 6) currently the EU dialogue with Azerbaijan aims at launching negotiations on a new Comprehensive Agreement⁴⁰. However, concerns about the domestic environment do remain. Nonetheless, the progress made in Azerbaijan's

³⁸ However, in June 2014, Azerbaijan signed an additional Protocol to the PCA on participation in selected EU programs and Agencies.

³⁹ All official information concerning EU-Azerbaijan relations was sourced by an EC's informative factsheet from 2015 retrieved November 2016, from <http://ec.europa.eu/enlargement/neighborhood/pdf/riga/20150924-eu-azerbaijan-fact-sheet-2015.pdf>.

⁴⁰ As the roadmap published by the EC on May 13th 2016 elaborates, after a period of stagnation in bilateral relations, Azerbaijan has shown a strong interest in reengaging with the EU and inspired by the review of the ENP focusing on differentiation and tailor-made partnerships tabled its own proposal for a (Strategic) Partnership Agreement in the margins of the EaP Riga Summit in 2015. This offers the possibility of maintaining Azerbaijan on a similar track to other EaP countries, replacing the existing PCA with a new updated legal basis. The roadmap retrieved November 2016 is available from http://ec.europa.eu/smart-regulation/roadmaps/docs/2016_eas_021_framework_agreement_azerbaijan_en.pdf.

human rights situation, human rights' violations in the country have still to be addressed. Azerbaijan during the past year as ECFR reports (2016, p. 69) "further tightened its grip on civil society and imprisoned several activists."⁴¹.

Nadia Alexandrova-Arbatova (2015, p. 136) summarising the Azerbaijani position reflects how the country is "seeking to strengthen its position as a regional energy power as well as a reliable partner of the West in the region," while Russia retains a strong influence on it, namely due to the Nagorno–Karabakh conflict, the unresolved legal status of the Caspian Sea and the separatism among ethnic minorities, mainly Lezgins in its northern provinces. For the EU Azerbaijan remains crucial since it has a key role in the diversification of EU's energy supplies (see chapter 3.5; Figure 5). As confirmed by the proceedings of the latest FAC (2016, p. 6)

⁴¹ The case of RFE/RL's imprisoned journalist Khadija Ismayilova only recently freed as reported by RFE/RL and cited on a post, dated May 25th 2016 retrieved November 2016 from <http://www.eurasianet.org/node/78916>, highlights the depreciated human rights' status within the country. As Daisy Sindelar on an article published on the same source a day earlier, <http://www.eurasianet.org/node/78891>, stresses the connection between the case of jailed government critics like Ismayilova and opposition leader Ilgar Mammadov with the economy's free fall, with oil prices plunging, the country burning through its foreign-currency reserves, and the local manat currency losing half its value against the dollar in 2015. She advocates among other observers that the prospect of financial chaos rather than international pressure goes a longer way toward explaining the government's recent wave of pardons.

the Southern Gas Corridor, once completed, has the potential to increase Azerbaijan's share of the EU energy market and to establish the country as a gateway for the supply of gas from the eastern and southern banks of the Caspian Sea⁴².

Figure 5 Southern Gas Corridor



Original map retrieved from the Trans Adriatic Pipelines' [TAP] website:
<https://www.tap-ag.com/resource-library/media-library/maps>

2.2.3. Belarus

As the EC's recent informative factsheet on Belarus⁴³ highlights, EU-Belarus bilateral relations developed gradually since the early 1990s. Negotiations on a PCA between the two partners were completed in 1995 but the agreement was never ratified (see Table

⁴² Most recently, as an article by Georgi Gotev published on EurActiv on September 5th 2016 quotes, Azerbaijani authorities' confirmed that natural gas produced in the newly discovered Absheron offshore gas field whose first extracted volumes are expected in 2019 could be exported through the SGC. Until now it was planned that only gas from Shah Deniz 2, another offshore field, would be sent to Europe. Article available as of November 2016, on <http://www.euractiv.com/section/energy/news/new-discoveries-improve-the-southern-gas-corridors-prospects/>.

⁴³ Factsheet retrieved November 2016, on <http://ec.europa.eu/enlargement/neighbourhood/pdf/riga/20150924-eu-belarus-fact-sheet-2015.pdf>.

5). The development of EU-Belarus relations remains subject to progress in the areas of democracy, respect of human rights, and the rule of law in Belarus. The EU has repeatedly condemned the government of Belarus for authoritarian and anti-democratic practices, and even imposed sanctions on the country in the past. However, the EU has been scrutinized in the past on its institutionalized pragmatic approach towards autocratic regimes such as Belarus, that has “often been labelled the ‘last dictatorship’ in Europe,” (Bosse, 2012, p. 362) that demonstrates a gradual shift from democracy promotion towards “interest-based functional co-operation” relations with even one of most ‘reluctant democratizer’ in eastern Europe.”

Under its current president, Lukashenka, Belarus has instead of the EU sought a close confederation with Russia, a short of political reunion. According to the initial ENP plan (Commission of the European Communities, 2004, p. 11) Belarus was considered a potential participant, but not ready at the time. Nowadays, the EU cooperates with Belarus in the framework of the ENP but not fully in the EaP initiative, which joined in 2009 with the other partner countries. Within the EaP it chooses to participate mostly in the multilateral track of the initiative, with the only exception on bilateral track being the Visa-Facilitation and Readmission Agreement negotiations⁴⁴. All programmes funded by the EU, as

⁴⁴ While negotiations on EU-Belarus Visa Facilitation and Readmission Agreements were launched in recently in January 2014, in the meantime, EU member states unilaterally continue to make optimal use of the existing flexibilities offered by the Visa Code, in particular the possibilities to waive and reduce visa fees for certain categories of Belarusian citizens or in individual cases. As a result, Belarus is currently one of the world leaders in the per capita number of Schengen of visas issued to its citizens as an official EC factsheet cited above confirms.

stressed in the same source, are to the benefit of Belarusian people at large and include significant support to civil society⁴⁵.

During the past year, Alyaksandr Lukashenka won the presidential elections for the fifth time. As the ECFR (2016, p. 69) reports, he “pardoned political prisoners and allowed an unprecedented level of dissent during the election campaign, causing the EU to lift most sanctions against the country,” in February 2016. However,

Belarus continued its balancing act between the EU and Russia, but demonstrated some concern about Russia’s new military assertiveness and Moscow’s demands for an airbase on its territory, as the reporting concludes (p. 69).

The EU on its side, in the latest CoEU (2016, p. 6), reaffirmed its concerns about human rights, democracy and the rule of law situation in the country, although, acknowledging the steps taken by the Belarus over the last two years which have also contributed to improving EU-Belarus relations. The FAC, condemned the application of the death pen-

⁴⁵ As elaborated in an older opinion article by the Belarusian Yaroslav Bekish, a national facilitator of the Eastern Partnership Civil Society Forum published in EurActiv and updated lastly on April 8th 2013, civil society in Belarus is a key actor in EU-Belarus dialogue that is why it must be supported by the EU at the highest levels. Opinion article exhibiting Bekish’s point of view available as of November 2016, from <http://www.euractiv.com/section/europe-s-east/opinion/civil-society-is-a-key-actor-in-eu-belarus-dialogue/>.

alty and urged Belarus once more “to set up without delay a formal moratorium on executions as a first step towards abolition of the death penalty” (p. 6) since it remains the only country in Europe applying such practice⁴⁶.

2.2.4. Georgia

EU-Georgia relations, as a recent DG NEAR factsheet highlights⁴⁷ date back to early 1990s, shortly after the country’s declaration of sovereignty following the break-up of the USSR, Georgia is one of the three countries in the region that the EU has signed an AA with the EU in June 2014 which entered into force last summer (July 2016). As analyses in an edition of Michael Emerson & Tamara Kovziridze (2016, p. 1) the AA is a comprehensive treaty covering EU-Georgian both political and economic relationship. The trade related content establishes a DCFTA, which is an important part of the overall agreement (p. 1). However, interestingly enough, as they point out, of all the countries in the region, Georgia has distinguished itself “by pushing ahead unilaterally over the years since the Rose Revolution of 2003 with a radical economic liberalisation and reform agenda.” (p. 2) Bilateral relations have also intensified since 2003, as consecutive governments have undertaken the above mentioned ambitious programmes of political and economic reforms.

⁴⁶ Concerning the Belarusian lead as the only country in Europe and Central Asia to execute prisoners the past year see the article of James Crisp published on EurActiv updated on April 17th 2015, retrieved November 2016 from <http://www.euractiv.com/section/europe-s-east/news/belarus-and-ukrainian-rebels-keep-death-penalty-alive-in-europe/>.

⁴⁷ Retrieved November 2016 and available from <http://ec.europa.eu/enlargement/neighbourhood/pdf/riga/20150924-eu-georgia-fact-sheet-2015.pdf>.

They succeeded in reducing corruption⁴⁸ and establishing a highly favourable business climate⁴⁹. Thus, as the edition concludes that the EU-Georgia agreements thus build on the most promising base (p. 2).

In this framework journalism can provide rather interesting insight. Heidi Hautala in a recent opinion article on EurActiv⁵⁰ stresses “Georgia’s achievements must be recognised”; Hautala continues thus by criticising the delay in agreeing the visa liberalisation regime between Georgia and the EU before the past Georgian parliamentary of October 8th 2016. Another EurActiv article stressed⁵¹ that the EP’s competent committee backed visa-free travel to the EU for Georgia on September 5th 2016 “after migration worries delayed the process before the summer’ while the Georgian perspective, as reflected on David Bakradze, the Georgian State Minister for European and Euro-Atlantic Integration’s article⁵²:

⁴⁸ Taking into account the Transparency International’s latest Corruption Perceptions Index 2015, Georgia ranks in the 48th place out of the 168 countries and territories included. The rank indicates its position relative to the other countries in the index. Data available as of November 2016 on Transparency International’s website: <http://www.transparency.org/cpi2015#results-table>.

⁴⁹ As confirmed by the most recent data from June 2016 of World Bank’s [WB] Ease of Doing Business Ranking, Georgia ranked 16th out of 190 countries surpassing both countries of its region and a few of the Organisation’s for Economic Co-operation and Development [OECD] countries. Data available as of November 2016 on WB’s website: <http://www.doingbusiness.org/rankings>.

⁵⁰ Article of the Finnish Green MEP and co-president of the Euronest parliamentary assembly, a multilateral body of the EP and parliaments of the EaP countries, retrieved November 2016, available from: <http://www.euractiv.com/section/europe-s-east/opinion/georgias-achievements-must-be-recognised/>.

⁵¹ Article retrieved November 2016, available from <http://www.euractiv.com/section/europe-s-east/news/eu-moves-closer-to-visa-free-travel-for-georgia-ukraine-may-follow/>.

⁵² Article retrieved November 2016, available from <http://www.euractiv.com/section/europe-s-east/opinion/lifting-the-visa-barrier-for-georgians-should-be-the-eu-response-to-russia-s-bullying-tactics/>.

lifting the visa barrier for Georgians should be the EU [first and immediate] response to Russia's bullying tactics (...) [and its objectives] to annex the territory of the former Soviet Union.

Nevertheless, the successes of political and economic reforms in the country, Georgia remains entangled in two frozen conflicts with Russia for two breakaway regions within its territory, namely in Abkhazia and South Ossetia (see Figure 4). Within this context, the EU continuously affirms its support to Georgia's efforts to overcome the consequences of internal conflicts in the breakaway regions⁵³ as well as to stabilise the situation following the outbreak of hostilities in August 2008 (Council of the European Union, 2016, p. 5). Tackling the above, among others, the EU deploys an unarmed civilian monitoring mission in Georgia [EUMM]⁵⁴ since September 2008 following the EU-mediated Six Point Agreement which ended the Russian-Georgian war. An EU Special Representative [EUSR] for the South Caucasus and the crisis in Georgia is also installed in the country (p. 5). Currently, around 200 monitors keep tabs on the agreement in Georgia that concluded a still non-delimited administrative boundary line as reported by Andrew Higgins in an article of the New York Times⁵⁵.

⁵³ An analysis of the frozen Conflicts in the USSR and the case of Georgia can be traced on the work of Neil S. MacFarlane (2008).

⁵⁴ More information concerning the EUMM can be traced on its website: <https://www.eumm.eu/en/>.

⁵⁵ Retrieved November 2016, available from: http://www.nytimes.com/2016/10/24/world/europe/in-russias-frozen-zone-a-creeping-border-with-georgia.html?_r=0.

2.2.5. Moldova

Of all the countries of the EU's eastern neighbourhood, Moldova is objectively the most European on several accounts, with a common history, language, culture and border with its direct neighbour, EU member state since 2007, Romania (Emerson & Cenuşa, 2016, p. 1). Reflecting these close ties, Moldova became the first of the six EaP countries to secure Schengen visa-free travel on April 2014 (see Table 5)⁵⁶. As a consequence, EU's increasingly close relationship with Moldova goes beyond cooperation as stressed in a fact-sheet of the DG NEAR⁵⁷, encompassing gradual economic integration and deeper political cooperation. In a similar way to Georgia the EU continues to focus on the implementation of a respective AA with Moldova signed back in 2014 and entered into force on July 1st of this year (see Table 5; Council of the European Union, 2016, p. 3). Membership of the EU is “not directly pre-figured in the Agreement as, but neither is it excluded, and its resolute implementation is the only path for securing Moldova's EU integration” (Emerson & Cenuşa, 2016, pp. 1-2). The economic purpose of the AA is nevertheless to help modernise Moldova, by boosting trade with the EU and the world, and reforming domestic regulations in line with best EU practice. Combined with an improving business climate⁵⁸ and stronger

⁵⁶ As Michael Emerson & Denis Cenuşa (2016, p. 1) continue, many Moldovan citizens also have dual Moldovan–Romanian citizenship, and thus are citizens of the EU.

⁵⁷ Retrieved November 2016 and available from <http://ec.europa.eu/enlargement/neighbourhood/pdf/riga/20150924-eu-moldova-fact-sheet-2015.pdf>.

⁵⁸ The improving business climate is confirmed by the most recent data from June 2016 of World Bank's [WB] Ease of Doing Business Ranking, Moldova ranked 44th out of 190 countries surpassing both countries

institutions, Moldova has the potential to become a good location for foreign and domestic investment⁵⁹, producing exports to the EU and international markets as Emerson & Cenușa conclude (p. 2).

However, political instability endured in Moldova during the past year when the pro-EU government fell after a billion-dollar corruption scandal⁶⁰ implicating the ruling parties providing a major obstacle to overall progress on reforms (European Council on Foreign Relations, 2016, p. 69) and leading some commentators to suggest that the country's "European integration is failing" (Kostanyan, 2016). In 2016, though fragile, Moldova has partly recovered its political stability with the appointment of a new government under Pavel Filip in January 20th although, public anger remains as pointed out in the commentary⁶¹. According to an authoritative survey cited by Hrant Kostanyan, analysing the domestic and external factors of the shrinking Moldovan support to the European integration project (2016, p. 1) "only 40% Moldovans support European integration; 44% are in favour of Eurasian integration, however."

of its region and a few of the Organisation's for Economic Co-operation and Development [OECD] countries. Data available as of November 2016 on WB's website: <http://www.doingbusiness.org/rankings>.

⁵⁹ The impact of foreign investments on Moldova's economy is undeniable as pointed out in a report of the National Bank of Moldova since "the chain of effects that they create has repercussions both on the production of goods and services and on the consumption, stimulating demand and supply simultaneously." Data retrieved November 2016 available from: <http://www.bnm.org/en/content/foreign-direct-investments-regional-competitiveness-republic-moldova-0>.

⁶⁰ An amount equivalent to one-eighth of the country's entire annual economic output as an article of New York Times available on the following website suggests: <http://www.nytimes.com/2016/01/26/world/europe/oppositions-groups-in-moldova-unite-to-protest-new-government.html>.

⁶¹ Ibid, the article of New York Times.

As the proceedings of the latest FAC affirm (Council of the European Union, 2016, p. 5), the EU continues to follow the situation closely focusing on much needed key reforms curing fragility and promote the development of democratic institutions. The proceedings highlight the EU's continuous assistance to Moldova including through technical and project support, such as peer-review missions and high-level advisers (p. 5). All in all, the EU, as stressed (p. 5) remains committed

to supporting the territorial integrity of Moldova within its internationally-recognised borders, as well as to further supporting the Transnistrian settlement process and the efforts undertaken by the OSCE in this regard.

Concurrently, Moldova is one of the ENP/EaP countries that face a frozen conflict issue. The conflict over the Transnistrian region (see Figure 4) dates back to the end of the USSR and the establishment of an independent Moldovan state. However, as a study of the EP's DG for External Policies of the EU (2012) concludes very little tangible progress has been made towards a sustainable conflict settlement even back in 2012 when the study was published. The EU is active and participates as an observer in the 5+2 negotiation process on the settlement of the Transnistrian conflict⁶², while it continues to support a comprehensive, peaceful settlement based on the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Moldova with a special status for Transnistria.

⁶² As presented in an official factsheet of the OSCE negotiations and talks are held in the 5+2 format aiming to provide a final, comprehensive, durable settlement of the Transdnestrian conflict. The format comprises the sides, mediators and observers in the negotiation process: Moldova, Transdnestria, Russia, Ukraine, the

2.2.6. Ukraine

Since early 1990s⁶³, the EU and Ukraine have developed an increasingly dynamic relationship with the EU committed to a policy of close relationship that encompasses political association and economic integration⁶⁴. The EU-Ukraine AA/DCFTA agreements were negotiated during several years of the presidency of Viktor Yanukovich, initialised back in March 2012, and were due to be signed at the EU's EaP summit in Vilnius in November 2013, side by side with the Armenian. But at the last minute, President Yanukovich decided not to sign it⁶⁵, in a similar way to its Armenian counterpart (see chapter 2.2.1), thereby in the Ukrainian case triggering the Maidan uprising and ultimately Russia's aggression in annexing Crimea⁶⁶ and its hybrid war in the eastern Donbas region (Emerson & Movchan, 2016, p. 1). The agreement was nevertheless signed in the year to follow. As described in the above cited work (p. 1), the signing took place in two stages during 2014, first in relation to its political content by the PM Arseniy Yatsenyuk, and then its economic

OSCE, the US and the EU. Factsheet retrieved November 2016 from <http://www.osce.org/mol-dova/85681?download=true>.

⁶³ Ukraine remained part of the USSR until 1991.

⁶⁴ These words serve as introduction on the EC's 2015 informative factsheet on EU-Ukraine partnership retrieved November 2016, available from <http://ec.europa.eu/enlargement/neighbourhood/pdf/riga/20150924-eu-ukraine-fact-sheet-2015.pdf>.

⁶⁵ For background reporting from the Vilnius summit see the article of Georgi Gotev published on November 23rd 2013, retrieved November 2016, available from <http://www.euractiv.com/section/europe-s-east/news/eu-seeks-time-for-reflection-after-vilnius-summit-failure/>.

⁶⁶ The rejection of the EU-Ukraine deal triggered massive pro-Western protests which the Yanukovich presidency backed by Russia attempted to violently end the uprising with no success. Protesters overturned the government and drove Yanukovich out of the country in February 2014. A month after, Russia invaded and annexed Crimea.

content by the newly elected President Petro Poroshenko. Both the Ukrainian Parliament and the EP ratified the Agreement in September of the same year, and the EU member states followed accordingly.

The provisional application of the AA started in November 2014, except for the DCFTA, which entered into force in January 1st 2016, after a one-year delay at the request of Russia, that nevertheless responded with trade sanctions to it (p. 1). As confirmed by the ECFR scorecard (2016, p. 69), the EU not only actively continued to support Ukraine's reform efforts through development and technical aid but participated in trilateral talks between the parties involved on Moscow's concerns about the DCFTA held throughout the past year. Additionally, the EU also helped Ukraine to broker a gas deal with Russian firm Gazprom for supplies over the winter (p. 69). In 2015, the EU continued the strong support provided to Ukraine since the Crimea annexation and the military intervention in the Donbas demanding that Russia return Crimea and pull out of eastern Ukraine (p. 76). The EU sanctions policy still remains in place⁶⁷, while more recently the EU linked the lifting of

⁶⁷ Even though voices of criticism and frustration from groups within the EU member states grow, as the example of the European farmers reported in a correspondence by Julius Lorenzen this April, retrieved November 2016 from EurActiv <https://www.euractiv.com/section/agriculture-food/opinion/what-is-happening-with-the-eus-russia-sanctions-policy/>, the Ukrainian government continuously lobbies the EU to maintain a hard line against Moscow as a Stratfor commentary re-published in EurActiv highlights <https://www.euractiv.com/section/europe-s-east/opinion/for-ukraine-eu-sanctions-on-russia-hang-in-the-balance/>.

sanctions on Russian economic sectors to the full implementation of the Minsk II agreements⁶⁸.

Being understandably true that while much of the contents of the AA/DCFTA are highly technical, its signing is an act of strategic and geopolitical significance, thus “emblematic of a vital struggle, to both replace the Yanukovych regime at home and resist the attempt by Russia to deny Ukraine its ‘European choice’ as a democratic, independent state.” (Emerson & Movchan, 2016, p. 2).

This ‘European choice’ lies in the core of all the agreements signed between the ENP/EaP states’ and the EU. By making a reality the fundamental European values enshrined in the treaties, namely democracy, the rule of law and respect for human rights and norms of the European security order, the countries of the region express their wishes for full membership of the EU which, however, is carefully not pre-figured in any agreement signed between the EU and the countries of the eastern European neighbourhood, but nei-

⁶⁸ As confirmed by European Council President Donald Tusk’s press conference following the March 2016 European Council summit “the duration of economic sanctions will be clearly linked to the complete implementation of the Minsk agreements.” Speech retrieved November 2016 from <http://www.euractiv.com/section/europe-s-east/video/eu-links-sanctions-on-russia-to-minsk-ceasefire-deal/>. The full text of the Minsk II agreements translated to English, overseen by the OSCE and agreed upon on February 2015, can be found on <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/europe/ukraine/11408266/Minsk-agreement-on-Ukraine-crisis-text-in-full.html>.

ther is it excluded in the longer run. The above being the political criteria, part of the accession criteria also known as Copenhagen criteria⁶⁹, according to their economic counterparts a functioning market economy and the capacity to cope with competition and market forces are equally essential. Such a modernisation of the Ukrainian economy, by boosted trade with the EU and internationally and reforming economic regulations in line with best European practice can only lead to further foreign and domestic investment in export-oriented production. Last but not least, the Copenhagen criteria also rest up the acceding country's administrative and institutional capacity to effectively implement the *acquis* and its ability to take on the obligations of membership. A continued commitment on “the principle of fundamentals first” continuously reaffirmed by the EU remains essential for the enlargement countries and is therefore recognised by the most recently published enlargement package (European Commission, 2016, p. 2).

3. EU rising to the challenges

The variety of challenges, posed by both domestic and transnational issues within the EU's European neighbourhood, per country summarised in the previous part, easily lead to conclusions about the status of stability in this region. Thus, stability promotion among others, is a project need to be sought further by security actors and is in no way a given fact. Additionally, taking into account what the EUISS's researcher Thierry Tardy

⁶⁹ Named after the European Council in Copenhagen in 1993 which defined them. The full text of the press release of the 1993 European Council in Copenhagen can be retrieved November 2016 from http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release_DOC-93-3_en.htm?locale=en.

in a collective edition back in 2010 (Herd, p. 171) suggested, “with general long-term perspectives towards a multipolar system, (...) [the EU is placed] in the category of potential poles of that system.” Once more it can easily be concluded that EU’s global actorness is anything but given as well, thus posing one of the biggest challenges ahead for what the EUGS wants to succeed in. As analysed in part one and elaborated by Mälksoo’s recent article (2016) the EUGS is a security strategy as important for narrating the EU into existence as a security actor, as for tackling the issues actually faced in the international environment. In that sense as she summarises the EUGS reflects an “external policy with internal purpose” (2016). Initiating from this most general challenge of EU’s global actorness, the author analyses a series of the most provident challenges for the EU in its European neighbourhood ranked from the vaguest to the more specific.

3.1. Endorse EU’s global actorness

An endorsement of the EU’s actorness is a project that needs to critically confront both domestically- and internationally-sourced issues to be analysed further. Domestically, as Kristin Archick, a European affairs specialist in her recent report (2016) prepared for the US Congress summarises, the EU faces a range of political and economic pressures, including slow growth and persistently high unemployment in many EU countries, as well as the rise of populist political parties, at least some of which harbour anti-EU or Euro-sceptic sentiments as well as anti-immigrant views (pp. 5-7). Such factors, as she implies are making EU’s ability to deal with the multitude of internal and external challenges more complicated since they are contributing to the current uncertainty surrounding the EU’s

future, legitimacy levels and structure of itself and its institutions (p. 5). The most prominent of those crises is the ongoing Greek debt crisis (pp. 7-9), the migration and refugee crisis (pp. 9-11) and the recent uncertainty following the UK referendum on EU membership (pp. 11-12). In its adjacent international environment, the EU needs to tackle at least two main security concerns directly affecting it, the resurgent Russia (pp. 12-13) and the heightened terrorism threat (pp. 14-15). The above report coming from the US puts in a rather objective perspective the inter-EU unresolved crises as confirmed by European think tanks' similar findings' reporting⁷⁰.

During the last year the EU not only failed to handle the migration and refugee crisis but even to orientate its neighbourhood towards successfully co-managing the migration and refugee flows, shortcomings reflecting the EU's diminishing ability to even influence its closest neighbours (European Council on Foreign Relations, 2016, p. 29). In contrast, the EU grew more dependent on the cooperation of neighbouring countries, namely Turkey in order to both manage the refugee crisis and monitor terrorist threats (see Figure 6, page 86, where the above concerns shared by EU citizens are reflected). Turkey,

⁷⁰ A recent ECFR publication (2016, p. 28) for example, also confirms the centrality of tackling “the refugee crisis and the broader humanitarian catastrophe in Syria but other countries of the region as well,” preferably with the management of issues at source since the EU during the past year failed to provide financial and political support to actors on the ground trying “to reverse the chaos of 2015, which showed that the EU lacked the capability and cohesion to manage major crises in its backyard.”

an accession candidate country, as presented in chapter 2.1.2, is well aware of this dependence⁷¹.

According to the above cited work (p. 10) the EU–Turkey summit found the EU and its member states:

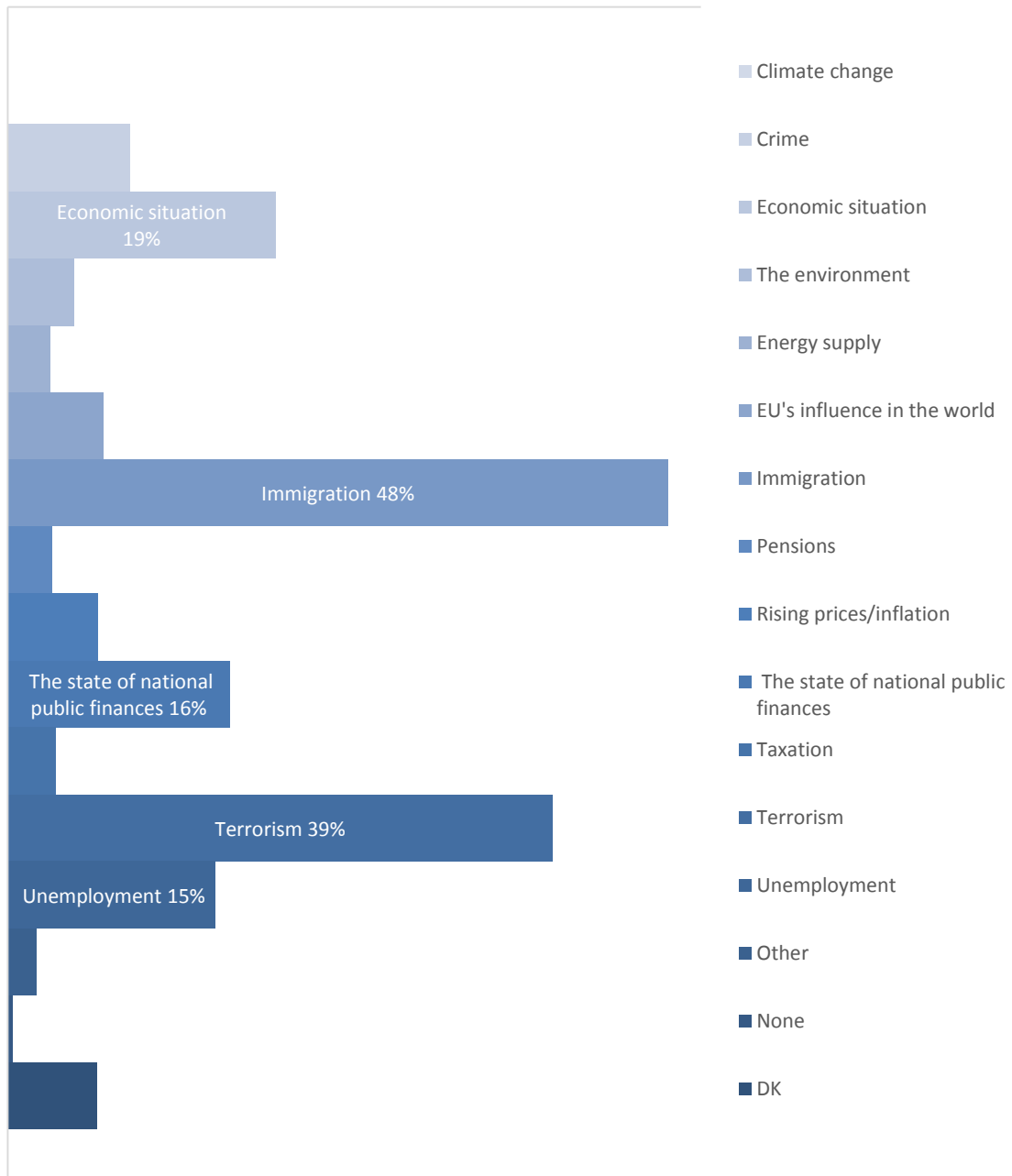
in the uncomfortable position of *demandeur* (...) forced to offer significant aid packages to secure support for managing Europe’s borders, with no way of ensuring that their partners would deliver on their side of the bargain,

while the deal signed as a result of the negotiations reflected the above situation as well. Even though this might not in general be a source of concern but mostly a source for questioning EU’s prestige, the summit and the EU-Turkey deal both took place during a year which has seen significant backsliding on the rule of law and freedom of expression in Turkey continuing until today⁷². The imperative of tackling such backslidings enforces those urging for forging a genuine common foreign policy that includes but is not limited to accession or association policies as operationalised by the DG NEAR and the EEAS.

⁷¹ Expressed rather publicly, as observed on an article published last month on EurActiv, available as of November 2016 from <http://www.euractiv.com/section/global-europe/news/eu-should-not-forget-turkey-has-alternatives-pm-warns/>, where the Turkish PM Binali Yıldırım warned the EU on not to forget that Turkey has alternatives to the bloc, confirming the increasingly strained ties of Turkey to the EU. Turkey confident to its strategic location in

⁷² The backsliding has turned even worse after the attempted *coup d’état* in mid-July. As reported by several EurActiv articles there have been subsequent purges of the state apparatus, arrests of journalists and curbs of press freedoms with no response from the EU, expected more and more. The article dated from September to November 2016, are available from <http://www.euractiv.com/section/enlargement/news/turkish-return-to-death-penalty-would-be-ko-to-membership-dreams/>, <http://www.euractiv.com/section/all/news/turkey-detains-editor-of-opposition-newspaper-cumhuriyet/>, <http://www.euractiv.com/section/global-europe/news/turkey-suspends-12800-police-shuts-tv-channel/>, <http://www.euractiv.com/section/global-europe/news/turkey-removes-two-dozen-elected-mayors-in-kurdish-militant-crackdown/>.

Figure 6 Public perception of most important issues faced by the EU



Author's compilation of latest available data (May 2016) based on EC's Eurobarometer interactive charts available on: <http://ec.europa.eu/COMMFrontOffice/publicopinion/index.cfm/Chart/index>.

But then, it is rather common as a thought that all challenges, similarly the above described, have the potential to turn into opportunities depending from the will of participating members and institutions in tackling them effectively. Quoting Barend ter Haar' (2016), a senior visiting research fellow of the Dutch think tank Clingendael, remarks'

writing a good strategy is important [as in the case of the EUGS], but not even half the work. Without a broad and sustained action, the Strategy might end up in the drawers of policy makers as an inspiring text, but little more than that.

It is therefore important, as he concludes, that a large and sustained effort is made, not only of the EU institutions, but in member states as well. The EUGS has potential by following a series of recommendation not limited to his proposals⁷³ that touch upon the EU, its member states and their national officials in order to evolve in that direction taking into account that the will of stakeholders is not falling short of the challenges posed.

3.2. Transcend EU's policy credibility deficit

The uncertainty on the EU's future, due to the multiple crises currently faced reflect an uncharted territory, for both the EU and its member states, while there are expressed concerns that at least some aspects of EU integration may be stopped or reversed due to

⁷³ As Barend ter Haar (2016) summarises, (1) lessons should be drawn from past experiences, (2) member states should adopt the Strategy as the basis of their individual foreign policies, (3) ministers and national officials should read, accept and apply the strategy, (4) the EU should take full advantage of the widening of the foreign policy agenda and the blurring of the distinction between domestic and foreign policy, (5) domestic ministries should contribute to the implementation of the EUGS, (6) the Strategy should be discussed with foreign countries, not necessarily with friends but also with potential adversaries and (7) it should involve the citizens of current and future member states in the development and implementation of it.

their effect. As highlighted in part two and quoted in the most recent EU enlargement package published this month (European Commission, 2016) the attractiveness of the EU in the enlargement countries “is partly affected by the economic downturn and scepticism regarding the European project,” due to the multitude of interrelated crises the EU faces with varying success. However, the author firmly believes it was the sum of both recent events and the muddling through approaches of the past that gave rise to the concerns on EU’s policy credibility deficit and not the recent events leading to the existential crisis as the EUGS document accounts (p. 7). Such linking would have the potential to provide more explanations to the lack of reform momentum in both the eastern neighbourhood and the enlargement policy states⁷⁴.

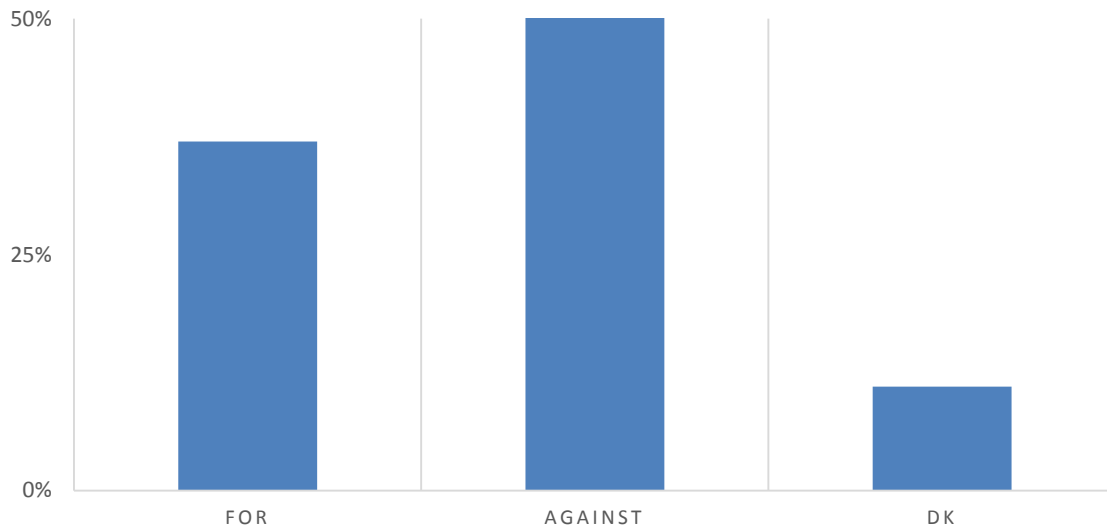
Into the core of the above discussion, a recent article by Michael Smith (2016), published in the aftermath of EUGS’s publication, explores in what extent can the EU make credible commitments to protect and advance its core strategic interests outlined in the EUGS. On these premises, it is, after an elaboration of EU’s stance up to date, suggested that the EUGS is “about style rather than about substance; so we can expect ‘business as usual’ regarding most of what the EU does in world politics” (p. 5). Once more as in most

⁷⁴ Additionally, developments such as the decision of the EC President Jean-Claude Juncker not to mention EU enlargement in the annual state-of-the-Union address has left Balkan observers feeling concerned and disappointed further diminishing EU influence over the region, as some analysts suggest. Balkan countries do have the feeling of not being a priority for a troubled EU, a sentiment that could be exacerbated by Brexit. Quoting an article by Mariya Cheresheva published by Balkan Insight on September 14th 2016, available as of November 2016 from <http://www.balkaninsight.com/en/article/no-mention-of-enlargement-in-juncker-s-state-of-the-union-address-raises-concerns-09-14-2016>.

EU-member states shared competences, in order to transcend EU's policy credibility deficit one must tackle EU member states' diverging politics themselves which are a major impediment to a single unified policy implementation. As further elaborated, not only member states are not willing to delegate more authority over foreign or security policy to EU institutions, but there is little political will across the EU for "another major reform such as the ill-fated Constitutional Treaty" (p. 4) whatsoever. Consequently, as concluded, the EU will "continue to be hobbled by lowest-common-denominator decisions, or worse, stalemate/paralysis," when attempting to solve difficult challenges such the ones EU's global actorness entails. Such implementation shortcomings affect both the accession and association policy toolkits involved in the enlargement policy and the ENP/EaP respectively, thus undermining the imperative enlargement rejuvenation and resilience promotion in the shared neighbourhood.

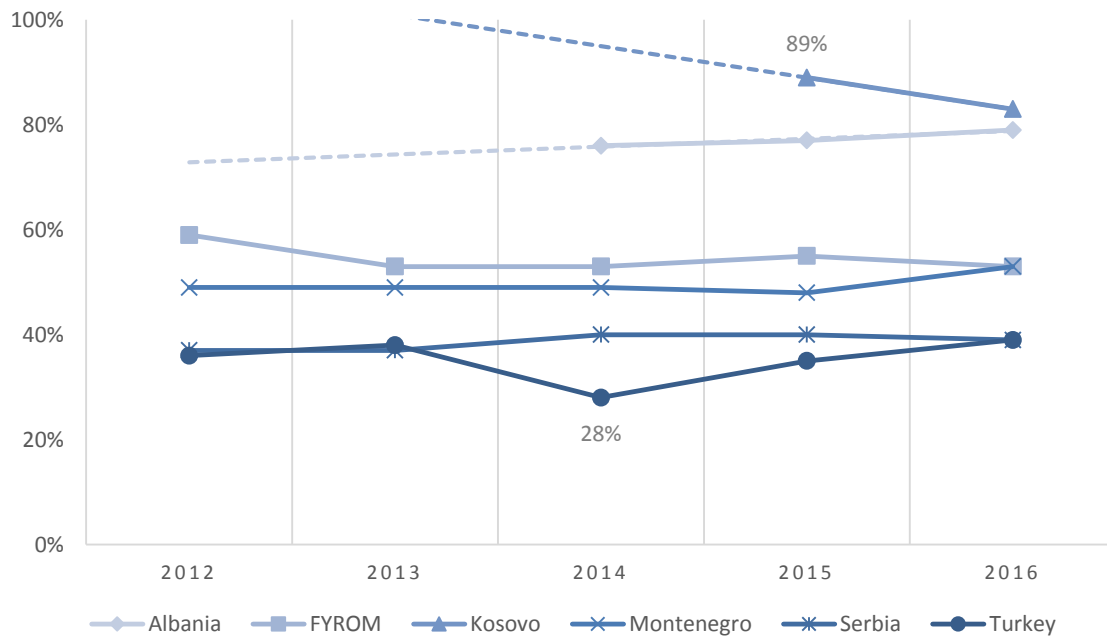
Enlargement is a policy whose sense of direction is openly contested, as even the Strategic Review (European External Action Service, 2015a, pp. 15-16) confirms. Meanwhile, faith in it is declining within the EU and enlargement candidate countries alike, as the most recent Eurobarometer data demonstrate (see Figure 7 and 8). As summarised in Fraenkel's work (2016, p. 1) an explanation to the above data could be provided by observing the technocratic approaches applied in promoting modernisation and democratisation processes in line with the accession criteria, and the lack of encouragement by local political elites to "establish authentic domestic demands to adopt and achieve the substance of the EU's membership standards." At the same time, wherever the truth may rest, there is no credible alternative to enlargement policy in the Western Balkans today, and a strict and fair accession process remains the most promising channel to support reforms both in

Figure 7 EU wide public perception towards further enlargement



Author's compilation of most recent available (May 2016), based on EC's Eurobarometer interactive charts available on: <http://ec.europa.eu/COMMFrontOffice/publicopinion/index.cfm/Chart/index>.

Figure 8 Public perception of EU membership as a good thing



Author's compilation of available data (2012-2016) as of November 2016, based on EC's Eurobarometer interactive charts and the Regional Cooperation Council's Balkan Barometer available on: <http://ec.europa.eu/COMMFrontOffice/publicopinion/index.cfm/Chart/index>; <http://www.rcc.int/seeds/results/2/balkan-opinion-barometer>.

the region. A credible pre-accession policy in which belief is restored both by the EU citizens and the candidate countries would be a win-win for all policy, as envisaged by the EUGS (p. 24).

The case of Turkey's accession has proved itself to be more complex while recent development seems to be further diminishing EU's reform-promoting grip over the country. Turkey is a country where the enlargement fatigue is openly expressed by its political establishment while recent events such as the attempted *coup d'état* this summer have severely altered the basis of EU-Turkey, leading some scholars (Aydıntaşbaş, Leonard, & Tcherneva, 2016) commenting the "complex and explosive mixture of misunderstandings, bad blood and unrecognised but shared interests," to suggest that the EU-Turkey relationship was consequently pushed to its most critical juncture.

The enlargement approaches reflected in a similar but differentiated and wider way on the ENP/EaP provide leverage and help cultivate a domestic not externally induced constituency for reform since the revival of the reform momentum and the provision of necessary impetus is another EUGS aim in the eastern neighbourhood. The EU is taking lessons from past experiences, especially those where a serious misalignment of interests among actors was involved. An example would definitely include the countries of central and eastern Europe acceding the EU during the 2000s. Into detail, even though their accession carried a promise of enhancing and enriching the EU's policies to the eastern neighbourhood based on the assumption that they had the strongest interests to ensure that countries to their East are prosperous, stable, and democratic, as a group of scholars (Lightfoot, Szent-Iványi, & Wolczuk, 2016) describe, their support was rather based on the expected

short and medium-term personal transition gains, thus failing to contribute in a general sense.

3.3.Promote resilience in the EU’s European neighbourhood

The notion of resilience is not new in EU’s global approach to development cooperation (see chapter 1.3.1), nevertheless, a post-EUGS addition to the EU foreign and security policy⁷⁵. According to the principle idea, the EUGS should promote resilience through coherence between internal and external policies, in line with the UN 2030 Sustainable Development Goals [SDG] Agenda, as an analysis of the Istituto Afari Internazionali [IAI] (Venturi & Helly, 2016, pp. 5-7), points out. By including resilience, the EUGS establishes a new approach combining development and conflict sensitivity, while as similarly highlighted by other scholars (Ülgen, 2016), the use of resilience overcomes the “dichotomy between democracy and stability that has tended to bedevil the EU’s approach to its neighbourhood.”

In the post-EUGS EU foreign and security policy, resilience applies to both enlargement policy and ENP/EaP states. Nevertheless, the EUGS-advocated support to different paths to resilience, “targeting the most acute cases of governmental, economic, societal and climate/energy fragility,” (European External Action Service, 2016, p. 9) and the

⁷⁵ As the proceedings of the international conference titled ‘NATO-EU Cooperation after the Warsaw Summit: Countering Hybrid Threats,’ which the author participated in, in Brussels, confirmed, resilience made its way to one of the most prominent strategic priorities in promoting stability and security both domestically, within the EU, NATO member state structures’ but internationally as well.

development of more effective migration policies for Europe and its partners, an aim to comprehensively deter or manage crises and conflicts, has already sparked some criticism as the most incoherent part of the entire EUGS (Smith, 2016, p. 6).

Incoherence sources from the challenging nature of promoting resilience in a general way. However, the EUGS is not there to reflect on specific solutions but rather to provide the general orientation, a framework of priorities and pending actions in EU's relations with among others, its neighbours. More detailed projects, tackling narrower needs are to be decided upon and implemented further. The creation of economic areas with the countries implementing DCFTAs and the extension of Trans-European Networks and the Energy Community, as well as the construction of both physical and digital connections are some ideas already advocated (Davis Cross, 2016, pp. 2, 5-6). Trade and infrastructure are vital in bridging the gap between the EU and its neighbourhood. The combination of resilience, creativity, and target audiences highlights the EUGS's underlying re-orientation towards an "expansive and noticeably more smart power-oriented approach" (p. 2).

3.4. Tackle the divergence between EU's and Russia's policies

As highlighted in chapter 1.3.3, forming cooperative regional orders is one of the main strategic priorities the EUGS and particularly pertinent to the EU's European neighbourhood. In the region, relations with the EU's most important neighbour, Russia, are of great importance and represent a key strategic challenge, thus, as elaborated both in the above mentioned chapter and up-to-date research, the EUGS advocates the fade of the short lived strategic patience (Biscop, 2016; Schmidt-Felzmann, 2016). Consequently, the confrontation over Ukraine should be approached not as the cause but rather a symptom of

deeply rooted long-term policy controversies. The often cited soft and smart power strategy summarised in the work of Averre (2009, p. 1690) is therefore seen as a result of the EU's extension of a European

‘postmodern’ security community across the wider Europe and (...) [the creation of] a ‘ring of well governed countries’ to the east, without offering them the prospect of accession.

Such an idea remains present in both the reviewed ENP (European External Action Service, 2015b, pp. 3-4) and the EUGS, and reinforced in the EaP and is based on the full respect for international law and principles, the Paris Charter and the ten principles of the Helsinki Final Act of 1975 called upon by the EUGS (p. 33) but overall violated by Russia (Alexandrova-Arbatova, 2015, p. 130). In the contrary, Russia is often perceived, as Averre at the above cited work points out, as

seeking to maintain or recreate a traditional, realist ‘sphere of influence’ by manipulating a range of hard and soft instruments to exploit its predominant structural power in the post-Soviet space.

Concerning the hard power instruments used by Russia, some scholars (Fischer, 2016, p. 16) make account of a “militarisation of Russian Eurasia policy” taking place in this context. Both the divergence between the EU's and Russia's policies towards the shared neighbourhood described above and the EU adopted strategic patience doctrine, “falling from

grace” approach⁷⁶ (Schmidt-Felzmann, 2016, p. 103) is rather well reflected on the most recent FAC’s CFSP report (Council of the European Union, 2016). The proceedings confirm the impact of Russia's illegal annexation of Crimea and Sevastopol and continuing destabilisation of Ukraine leading to a continuing “double-track approach of firmness⁷⁷ coupled with diplomatic outreach” by the EU (p. 6).

One could include the four other allegedly protracted by Russia conflicts in the region to the sum (see chapter 2.2)⁷⁸. Those, albeit allegedly frozen, as suggested by a recent study of the German Institute for International and Security Affairs (Fischer, 2016) should not be handle as such, thus not frozen anymore⁷⁹. Indeed, the study base its assumptions on the observation that the crisis over Ukraine and the geopolitical confrontation between the EU and Russia cannot provide to the full extent the reasons for the deterioration

⁷⁶ The EU and Russia maintain a relationship initiated after the collapse of the USSR built on a series of declarations, agreements and dialogues cited in the work of Anke Schmidt-Felzmann (2016, pp. 103-104) aiming to coordinate *inter alia* responses to international security challenges. The EU maintains a PCA framework agreement since 1994 that entered into force in 1997.

⁷⁷ A policy brief of the Norwegian Institute of International Affairs (Le Gloanec, 2015) elaborating on the two opposing worlds, confirms that no solution can be foreseen to be reached illustrating the shortcomings of the EU’s double track approach. On the latter, the policy brief points out that since the outbreak of the crisis in 2014 the EU has mustered the capacity to target sanctions at Russian individuals that bear responsibility for the war in Ukraine, and at specific sectors crucial to the Russian economy, all the while attempting to pursue political dialogue with the authorities (Le Gloanec, 2015, pp. 3-4).

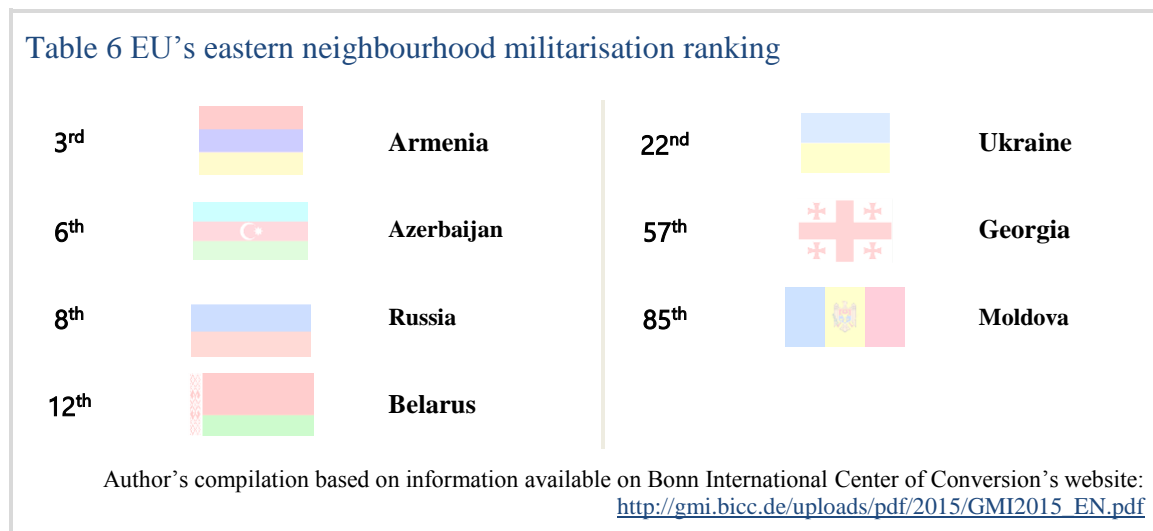
⁷⁸ There are scholars that question Russia’s primacy over the four protracted frozen conflicts in the region. For the noted western expert’s De Waal note on Russia involvement in the Nagorno-Karabakh, see the post from RFE/RL published in Eurasianet on April 4th 2016, available as of November 2016 from <http://www.eurasianet.org/node/78101>. However, Russia’s role remains highly ambivalent.

⁷⁹ The 2015 Global Militarisation Index (Grebe & Mutschler, 2015), prepared by the Bonn International Center for Conversion and quoted by the study of Sabine Fischer (2016, p. 67), elaborates on the militarisation status of both the countries of the shared neighbourhood and Russia. Interestingly enough, in the 2015 index, Armenia, Russia and Azerbaijan ranked among the top ten countries with the highest militarisation (pp. 5, 14) in third, sixth and eighth position respectively (see Table 6).

in the regional conflicts since 2014 (p. 5). As the same author continues, a vicious circle seems to be taking up with conflict regulation undermined

by a proliferating systemic crisis that is laying bare the political and economic deficits in all the region’s states including Russia. (...) the frozen conflicts prevent sustainable development of the affected states and societies, while political and economic instability in turn make constructive conflict regulation impossible.

Those deficits, were the ones that the ENP/EaP aimed to tackle in the first place and in that sense the EU predicted promptly but inadequately. It is from now on the EUGS’s challenge to forge a consistent and united approach of EU policy towards Russia’s destabilizing tactics in the EU’s Eastern neighbourhood since in the post-Ukraine era it is clear to European governments that Russia is not a problematic strategic partner, but rather a strategic problem (European Council on Foreign Relations, 2016, p. 46).



The EU should in the words of Fischer (2016, pp. 81-82) make a decision between reflecting its EU’s historical experience and pursuing “a policy of Europeanisation in its eastern neighbourhood, directed towards democratisation and economic liberalisation” or direct engagement in conflict regulation processes at state and nonstate level. Among others, an

example of such involvement is the 5+2 format within which the Transnistria conflict is negotiated (see chapter 2.2.5), where the EU has enjoyed observer status since 2005.

Concluding on the frozen conflicts issue, the EUGS successfully in this context includes the additional aim to confront destabilisation plans in act, at all stages of the conflict cycle to the strategic priorities (see chapter 1.3.2). In this context, the arc of conflict of the eastern neighbourhood interlinking at local, regional and international levels requires a strategy that acknowledges the above links specifying on resolution structures. As affirmed by Fischer's work (2016, p. 6) aiming to provide different approaches to conflict resolution to the individual cases in the region "the short- to medium-term goals differ (...) ranging from preserving the possibilities for interaction (Transnistria) through de-isolation (Abkhazia and South Ossetia) to de-escalation and conflict prevention (Nagorno-Karabakh)."

3.5.Ensure EU's energy security

Concurrently, EU's European neighbourhood remains pivotal for the EU's energy policy and efforts to diversify gas supply routes away from Russia, relations with which have been strained since 2014. Responding to the above, in February 2015, the EU launched its Energy Union Framework Strategy [EUFS] aimed at maintaining energy security for its members primarily by diversifying sources and integrating the internal energy market (European Commission, 2014, p. 3) that however, according to the ECFR scorecard (2016, p. 75) "provides the basis for a loose arrangement rather than a fully-fledged union". Russia has not, however, given up on its plans to bypass eastern Europe and access the

Central European gas market directly, as shown by the launch of the Nord Stream 2 pipeline, a project not endorsed by the EU and not receiving EU funding (p. 69).

It is easily assumed that strong asymmetries characterize the EU–Russia energy relationship as Schmidt-Felzmann (2016, p. 117) observes. Into detail, the EU’s dominant position as the primary buyer of Russian gas and oil, their geographic proximity, and Russia’s status as a key producer of fossil fuels “make the EU and Russia partners with complementary strengths and needs” (p. 117). Although such dependence on Russian energy supplies was perceived as a liability only by some member states in the past, the official EU view from being positive turned to negative in the last couple of years as well. Nevertheless, the EU remains a major consumer of Russian energy, and Russia remains a key supplier of energy to the EU, but “their positions on matters of principle are fundamentally difficult to reconcile,” especially after the 2014 events in Ukraine, as the same author (p. 119) concludes.

Turkey is another important player in the EU’s energy transportation endeavours and another problematic partner. As elaborated in chapter 2.2.2, Azerbaijani gas, crucial for the diversification of EU’s energy supplies away from Russia, is expected according to the South Gas Corridor to cross Turkey on its way to Europe. This project alone could drastically transform Turkey to an integral part of EU’s energy sources’ diversification but raises serious concerns about the prospects of a partnership with such a reluctant partner.

Conclusion

The new EUGS contrary to its predecessors initiating from a pessimist assumption about the EU's surrounding environment and its domestic existential challenges elaborates on its aim to produce a stronger Europe according to what the EU's citizens deserve and the wider world expects. Exploring the need leading to the adoption of such strategy in the first place, and by following the processes all the way from the first 2003 ESS, the author elaborated on the strategic rationale followed during the process of composing the EUGS. The Strategic review preceding the EUGS, provided a reflection of a general violated European security, with terrorism and violent conflicts plaguing EU's neighbourhood, and Europe itself.

Based on the authors' assumptions and point of view that the EU cannot possibly tackle the global needs, equally effectively and at the same time, the author decided to concentrate on EU's European neighbourhood on the account of the regions' vitality for the EU and its member states confirmed by EUGS reference to the region. The key point is indeed that it was EU's failure to manage its neighbourhood in the past, or more that EU's actions and policies have led directly to many of the current difficulties among others regarding terrorism, migrants and refugees, organized crime, energy security, hybrid threats. The EUGS reaffirms what seems clear that if the EU cannot effectively build resilience, stability, and cooperation with its own close neighbours, its internal legitimacy and its credibility as a strategic actor elsewhere could be undermined, thus further challenging the EU. Consequently, the second part of the dissertation reflected upon the insecurities and unpredictable conflicts taking place in the EU's European neighbourhood. Even

though, those affect less the enlargement policy states today, their resolution remains vital for the EU's eastern neighbours. An unexpected event in one of the several unresolved conflicts presented, like a renewed escalation in Nagorno–Karabakh or sudden internal political unrest in Moldova or any other regional country could trigger new conflicts in the region deviating for the processes the EUGS's strategic priorities aim, stability and resilience promotion in the region.

Thus, the EU initiated taking into account the differing realities in the EU's European neighbourhood between the enlargement agenda states, seeking accession and the ENP/EaP states to its east seeking association. The EU aims in that sense to confront the contracted conflicts, short-term crises, enlargement fatigue and reform agenda setbacks, challenging both policies in a differentiated way. Differentiation however will take place within each distinct policy itself. The EU aims to navigate this difficult, more connected, contested and complex world guided by its shared interests, principles but most interestingly priorities. Those pertinent to the region discussed is the promotion of state and societal resilience, an integrated approach to conflicts and their resolution and the construction of cooperative regional orders to restore a functioning and peaceful European security framework.

The unveiling of a new EUGS for the EU, immediately post-Brexit, could be conceived as a pledge to remain together for the purposes of contributing to global security in a particular way. This dissertation offering a brief stock-taking of the EU's way of writing security from the ESS to the EUGS elaborated on the concise exegesis of the EUGS docu-

ments' preceding strategies. The comparative snapshot provided showed an EU increasingly anxious to prove its relevance for its own citizens, yet notably less confident about its actual convincingness in providing a security framework. Thus, as the author discovered one of the EU's most prominent challenges is the endorsement of its global actorness.

But then, by summarising the variety of other challenges, posed by both domestic and transnational issues within the EU's European neighbourhood one discovers the imperative of a comprehensive EU action in promoting reforms and resilience but also tackling the divergence between the EU's and Russia's views concerning the shared neighbourhood. Last but not least, a comprehensive strategy is needed in order to tackle the energy security concerns of the EU and its member states. Acknowledging EU's global actorness as being anything but given, the combination of the above challenges pose an existential threat. Tackling them is where the EUGS wants to succeed in, allowing the EU to rise as a true global actor to the challenges.

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