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Policy Brief
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# Importance of the European Neighbourhood Policy

## A role for Norway?

*Pernille Rieker*

### A region in transition: the need for a revised ENP

The European Neighbourhood is in transition. At the same time the EU is struggling with a serious economic crisis. This means that internal as well as regional dynamics are changing. There are threats of instability in many of the neighbouring countries, and today's EU does not seem to have the right tools for dealing with such crises. In the east, the situation in Ukraine has become highly worrying; in the south, the war in Syria risks destabilizing the whole region.

As a reaction to the Arab Spring in 2011 the EU did revise its neighbourhood policy. The aim was then to move away from the earlier top–down approach, to a greater focus on support to civil society and the promotion of democracy, and to develop more efficient and flexible conditionality based on the principle of 'more for more'. In essence, this approach implies more financial support for more reforms. While this has also led to a certain increase in the budget, the question is if this will be sufficient. And in a new and revised neighbourhood policy, Norway may also have a role to play.

### The ENP as an instrument for security community building

The EU has been engaged in promoting democracy, human rights, and the rule of law in its eastern and southern neighbourhoods since the 1990s, a process that might be understood as a one of building a security community. This policy has been particularly successful for countries with prospects of full EU membership, whereas for those without such prospects the results have been mixed. In Ukraine, on the one hand, the world is witnessing negative results after a period of progress. On the other hand, processes in Moldova, Tunisia and Morocco seem promising.

The EU still has a role to play in its neighbourhood. There is general agreement that the enlargement process has served as an important tool of security policy, given the close linkage between integration and security. There are reasons to assume that successful association of the neighbouring countries to the EU may produce the same results. In a recent report, Stefan Lehne (2014) recommends that the Neighbourhood Policy should expand the ENP framework to more countries and that engagement should be more diversified according to the needs and capacities of the individual countries. Further, notes Lehne, there is a need to improve the ENP toolbox and develop capacity for rapid reaction, as well as developing a more sophisticated approach to promoting democratic values; and finally, the EU needs to strengthen the political leadership of the ENP (Lehne 2014).

If the aim is to integrate the neighbouring countries into a broader European security community, I will argue that there are at least two conditions that have to be met. First, even though full membership cannot be offered, the partner country must achieve a certain level of integration with the EU. Second, the partner country must see the EU as more attractive than other regional actors. While the EU may have failed with regard to Ukraine, it seems to have succeeded in Moldova and two countries in the Southern neighbourhood – Tunisia and Morocco. While these countries are still far from fully integrated into the European security community, they have at least embarked on the process towards closer integration.

In a recent NUPI working paper, I make two claims concerning security community building or security governance (Rieker 2014). First, that the *level of integration* with the EU is dependent on the following dimensions: the scope of the association agreements, the level of adaptation to EU norms and rules, and the level of participation in the EU. And in addition, domestic institutions and capacities must facilitate rather than obstruct such a process of integration. Second, that the *attractiveness* of the EU is linked to the degree of domestic support in the partner country for closer EU inte-

gration; and that such domestic support, in turn, depends on the effectiveness of the ENP and the relative attractiveness of this policy compared to what competing actors can offer.

### The effectiveness of the ENP and its implications

In the working paper referred to above I present a comparative examination of four ENP countries – two in the east (Ukraine and Moldova) and two in the south (Morocco and Tunisia). These four were chosen because they are considered to be the most advanced ENP states in each region. Thus, they can be seen as being 'most-likely cases', and if the ENP is to be considered as a successful regional security policy instrument, we would expect to find positive results in these four countries. The empirical analysis is based on four individual case studies (Baltag 2014; Batora and Navratil 2014; Bremberg and Rieker 2014; Dandashly 2014) where the analysis builds on a range of national sources with information about the various dimensions of *the level of integration* and *the level of attractiveness* or domestic support for EU integration. The association agreements and action plans have been important for identifying the scope of the cooperation. In addition, the annual progress reports prepared by the European Commission have provided central information as regards the level of adaptation and participation, as well as various statistics and indexes. Further, all authors have conducted interviews with representatives of the authorities in the four partner countries. For an in-depth analysis of the individual case studies, I refer to these working papers; In this policy brief I restrict the focus to a comparative analysis of the EU's approach to its partners in the East and its partners in the south.



### ENP East and ENP South

The European Neighbourhood Policy covers 16 countries – 6 in the East (Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, Moldova, Ukraine) and ten in what has been defined as the South (Algeria, Egypt, Israel, Jordan, Lebanon, Libya, Morocco, the Palestinian Authority, Syria, Tunisia). Unsurprisingly, there is huge variety in how this policy is implemented. While we find differences within each region, the main difference is still between the EU's approach to the East and to the South. This is due to geographical and cultural factors, but also to the different historical relationships that have existed between the EU and its eastern and its southern neighbourhood.

While it is difficult to define where the EU's eastern borders should be drawn, this is not disputed in the southern neighbourhood. On the other hand, relations between the EC/EU and the countries on the other side of the Mediterranean have a longer history, since these relationship started to develop already under the Cold War. Moreover, the EU is not really challenged in the South by any powerful regional actor, as is the case in its Eastern neighbourhood. It is therefore hard to say which of the two regions will be more integrated into the European security community in the future. This will depend not only on the approaches taken by the EU and by Russia, but also on domestic factors in the partner countries, as clearly shown by recent developments in Ukraine.

However, the fact that it is not obvious where the enlargement process to the east ends and where the neighbourhood policy begins constitutes the main difference between these two approaches. While membership is not perceived as a future possibility for the partner countries in the South (at least not since Morocco's application for membership was turned down in 1987), this is still a long-term ambition for most of the partner countries in the East – even though the EU has not yet opened up for the possibility of future membership for any of these countries. There are also disagreements among the current member-states on this issue. In practice, this means that, although the EU still is reluctant to discuss the possibility of future membership with its Eastern partner countries, its approach to the East remains far more similar to the enlargement process than does its approach to the South.

As the case studies have shown, the EU has been more stringent in requiring real adaptations to the EU *acquis* in recent negotiations on Association Agreements (AAs) with Moldova and Ukraine, whereas a certain degree of alignment to the ENP norms seems to suffice in the South. This is why both Tunisia and Morocco have had AAs and free trade agreements with the EU since 1998 (Tunisia) and 2000 (Morocco). By contrast, Moldova has only recently signed an Association Agreement (2013), after a rather cumbersome process. Ukraine was on a similar track until the Ukrainian authorities decided to reject a similar agreement. Due to differing requirements and expectations, these agreements vary in content. Moldova's AA is far more ambitious, and foresees a higher level of integration with the EU than the agreements negotiated by Tunisia and Morocco. As argued by Batora and Navratil (2014), the primary difference between the EU's Southern and Eastern partners lies in the extensive economic convergence and adoption of EU legal and technical standards in the latter case.

As EU Commissioner for Enlargement and European Neighbourhood Policy, Stefan Füle, stated in an interview with Radio Free Europe in May 2013:

> The first thing to remember is that the Association Agreements on offer for the Eastern Partners do not include a path to EU membership – nor do they explicitly exclude one. So the deal is not as sweet as those offered to the countries in the Western Balkans, which received paths to membership, but it offers a whole lot more than Association Agreements with Morocco and Tunisia, which excluded eventual membership. It took Croatia 12 years from signing a stabilization and association agreement with Brussels to joining the club. Turkey signed its association back in 1962 and is still waiting.[1]

1 http://www.rferl.org/content/eu-association-agreement-explained/25174247.html

The proposed budget for the new European Neighbourhood Instrument is €15.4 billion for the period 2014–2020, which represents a 27% increase compared to the budget of the previous ENPI instrument.[2]

In line with the revised Neighbourhood Policy launched in 2011, ENI support will focus on the following areas:

- promoting human rights and the rule of law
- establishing deep and sustainable democracy and developing a thriving civil society
- sustainable and inclusive growth, including progressive integration in the EU internal market
- mobility and people-to-people contacts, including student exchanges
- regional integration, including Cross-Border Cooperation programmes.

The instrument is also intended to be flexible and follow the 'more for more' principle, whereby the countries that are the most willing to undertake reforms in line with ENP norms will receive the most. That makes it difficult to foresee how the funds will be used and which of the two regions will receive more. According to EU Commissioner Stefan Füle and Commissioner for Development Andris Piebalgs, the EU will

> ...allow for more differentiation and for giving incentives for best performers who genuinely implement deep and sustainable democracy, including respect for human rights, and agreed reform objectives.[3]

It is clear that the EU's decision to increase the ENP budget, as well as the recent revision of its approach, came as the direct result of the Arab Spring and therefore indicates the EU's intention to strengthen its neighbourhood policy in the South. However, the recent dramatic events in Ukraine may spur changes in how the EU perceives its role in the East and in the South.

There are security challenges in both regions, not improbably linked to the lack of consolidated democratic institutions. According to the 2013 Freedom House report, all four countries are considered as only 'partly free' even though all except Morocco have established democratic political systems. As shown in Table 1, Moldova scores highest on political rights and civilian liberties, but the differences are not so great, even though Moldova has had a democratic system ever since 1990.

There are indeed differences in the EU's approach towards its Eastern and its Southern neighbourhoods. While the approach in the East is more similar to the enlargement process, with requirements of adaptation to the *acquis*, the approach towards the South has been a more flexible process, supporting and stimulating positive developments and requiring alignment rather than *acquis* adaptation. If we sought to evaluate which of these two approaches has been more successful as an instrument for security community building, the answer would not be self-evident.

**Table 1. Freedom, political rights and civilian liberties**

| | Political system | Freedom | Political rights* | Civilian liberties* |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Moldova | Parliamentary democracy (since 1990) | Partly free | 3 | 3 |
| Ukraine | Parliamentary democracy (since 1991) | Partly free | 4 | 3 |
| Morocco | Authoritarian monarchy characterized by gradual political liberalization | Partly free | 5 | 4 |
| Tunisia | Parliamentary democracy (since 2011) | Partly free democracy (since 2011) | 3 | 4 |

## Potential and limits of the EU as a security community building institution

As recent events have shown, what has been defined as the European Neighbourhood has clearly not yet become an integrated part of the European security community. This is evident in many of the Southern partner countries in the aftermath of the Arab Spring, and not least in the East with the recent events in Ukraine.

While the EU has not been the main actor directly involved in the domestic revolutionary events in the south or more recently in the east, the EU still plays an important role. It was also the Ukrainian people's frustration over the government's decision to finally reject the Association Agreement with the EU that led to the protests in the first place. Moreover, the European Neighbourhood Policy has gained renewed attention as a result of these events. However, they have also shown that the ENP mechanisms were not set up for dealing with crises. The ENP functions best as an instrument for supporting positive processes initiated by domestic forces in the partner countries. In this sense, it has the potential to contribute to long-term security community building. Interestingly, it seems that the process in the South, with its focus on alignment with ENP norms rather than the cumbersome process of adaptation to the EU acquis, might prove to be a more fruitful approach for countries where national absorptive capacity still is limited – at least while the long-term goal is building a security community, not achieving full EU membership.

## Possible recommendations for Norway's linkages to ENP

Contributing to a stability and security in the EU's neighbourhood is important and will continue to be a priority in EU foreign policy. As part of the Internal Market and the



2 http://www.enpi-info.eu/ENI
3 http://www.enpi-info.eu/medportal/news/latest/35547/Parliament-approves-new-European-Neighbourhood-Instrument-with-more-than-€15-billion-in-funding-for-2014-2020

Schengen agreements, Norway shares a common neighbourhood with the EU. Thus, it is also in Norway's interest to contribute to security and stability in these regions. Recent events in Ukraine clearly underline how crucial this is for the security of all Europe. Combined with the challenges in the southern neighbourhood, this is also a policy area that will get increased attention from the EU. The ENP has already been modified and revised as a result of the Arab Spring. It is also likely that it will be revised and adapted further as a consequence of the Ukrainian crisis. The Arab Spring led to a revision of the policy in order to make it more flexible and tailor made to the developments and need of the individual countries. This new ENP is clearly more bottom–up than the earlier approach, and has a greater focus on how developing and strengthening civil society. In addition, the EU has proposed a more flexible conditionality instrument based on a 'more for more' approach, which basically means more financial support in return for more reforms. While these revisions are important, they are instruments for *long-term* conflict prevention. As recent events have shown, the ENP also needs an instrument for crisis response and rapid reaction. It has also revealed how the (largely Commission-driven) technocratic and cumbersome approach, focusing on adaptation to EU regulations etc., has its limitations, especially when faced with the more geopolitical approach taken by Russia.

With the EU caught up in a financial crisis, Norway may have something to offer the EU as regards strengthening the ENP. In return, Norway would benefit from linking to the ENP. It might be fruitful to integrate Norwegian development policies (and regional policies towards the MENA region) with the EU dimension in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Consideration should also be given to how Norway might use the on-going negotiations concerning the size of EEA grants as a way of buying itself into this policy, not necessarily by expanding EEA financial mechanism to these countries, but rather by contributing financially to the EU policy in some way.



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**About the author**
**Pernille Rieker** is a Senior Researcher at the Norwegian Institute of International Affairs (NUPI). She holds a doctoral degree from the University of Oslo from 2004. Her research focuses on different issues related to European integration and European security, including French and the Nordic countries foreign and security policy.



**NUPI**
Norwegian Institute of International Affairs
C.J. Hambros plass 2D
PO Box 8159 Dep. NO-0033 Oslo, Norway
www.nupi.no | info@nupi.no