

# Synopses of Findings

## ‘Europeanising or Securitising the “Outsiders”? Assessing the EU’s partnership-building approach with Eastern Europe’

ESRC-funded project (RES-061-25-0001)

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## National Surveys

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**Technical report:** nation-wide representative surveys were conducted in October-November 2008; sampling was multi-staged, stratified, and random. The sample was representative of the population aged 18+ (urban and rural) by nationality, sex, region, age and education. The interview lasted on average 40-50 minutes using local languages for interlocution. The sample representation error was no more than  $\pm 3\%$ . The survey included 10% random quality control on completion. Sampling breakdown per country was as follows: Russia (1540); Belarus (1000); Ukraine (1200) and Moldova (1000, excluding Bender & TMR regions).<sup>1</sup>

The questionnaire included *three thematic blocks* addressing (i) foreign policy priorities (EU vis-à-vis Russia); (ii) relations with the EU (knowledge, perceptions, type of relations); and (iii) the ENP/EaP's effectiveness (knowledge, perceptions, problems and future). The findings are broken down by country.

In the EU, the survey data of Special Eurobarometer 'The EU's relations with its neighbours' was utilised (285, wave 76.3, Brussels 2007).

### Belarus

- Although the country should develop relations with *all* its neighbours, a union with Russia is popularly preferred to the one with the EU.
- The population is largely uninterested and uninformed about the EU: every fifth respondent has difficulty in naming EU Member States, every second fails to locate the EU headquarters.
- While Belarusians associate the EU with liberal-democratic values, they describe their own country in contrasting axiological values (e.g. of tolerance, collectivism and religiosity).
- The majority of Belarusians has heard nothing about the ENP/EaP; those who have assume that the ENP reflects mainly values and interests of the EU.
- Majority of Belarusians support a closer economic/political cooperation with the EU but in the form of *equal partnership* rather than unilateral diktat of the EU.

### Ukraine

- The participants' knowledge of the EU is barely sufficient.

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<sup>1</sup> Detailed technical reports are available on request.

- Positive emotions are evoked by the EU in less than half of the respondents, a third states negative feelings. Overall, EU relations with Ukraine are evaluated rather negatively.
- There is a 'socio-cultural gap' in the values, while for the EU these are economic values, rule of law and democracy; for Ukraine they are peacefulness, religious and general tolerance.
- There is a pronounced geographic divide: eastern Ukrainians advocate for closer relations with the CIS countries, especially with Russia, whereas western Ukrainians prioritize the EU.
- The respondents prefer a *partnership* with the EU on *equal terms* rather than accession to the EU on general terms with less than a third of the respondents believing it to be mutually advantageous.

### **Moldova**

- The respondents appear split: while most of them prefer to strengthen relations both with the EU and Russia, twice as many support cooperation with the EU to that with Russia.
- The respondents in absolute majority have heard about the EU. Actually, they are more aware of the EU activities than of the CIS.
- Two thirds of the interviewees describe the EU-Moldova relations as either 'very' or 'rather good': they firmly support the course for European integration and the deepening of EU-Moldovan relations.
- The ENP is believed to be based on *mutual trust*, common values, and political, economic and security interests.
- In future, the respondents maintain that Moldova will eventually join the EU

### **Russia<sup>2</sup>**

- The respondents in absolute majority approve Russia's foreign policy.
- The respondents adequately describe the EU as an economic and political association of European countries with headquarters in Brussels. Germany is perceived as a «business card» of the EU, symbolizing European achievements.
- Two thirds of the respondents consider Russia to be an important partner for the EU.
- The ENP is believed to aim at increasing EU security rather than assisting neighbours to achieve stability. It promotes rather than integrates European culture in the neighbourhood.

### **EU: Eurobarometer (285, wave 76.3)**

- The respondents in majority identify Ukraine, Russia, and Belarus as EU neighbours; fewer however treat Moldova as such.
- A third of the respondents concur that neighbours share the EU's *values*

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<sup>2</sup> Although *Russia* is not part of the ENP/EaP, it has been included in research as a greater geopolitical neighbour affecting EU relations with Eastern Europe.

- The respondents believe the EU should help its neighbours to promote democracy and reduce the risk of war and conflict. The opinions divide whether the EU should provide financial support.
- Every fifth respondent has heard of the ENP with northern member states being the most cognizant, southern the least. The ENP awareness level is higher in those states which place more importance on cooperation with neighbour-states.



## **Focus Group Discussions**

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**Technical report:** focus-groups were conducted in May-June 2009, comprising of 8 participants each who were sampled using a snowballing method and a screening questionnaire. On average individual groups included (i) students; (ii) female higher education; (iii) male higher education; (iv) think-tanks with some knowledge of the ENP/EaP; and (v) control group of mixed origin. Interviews lasted up to 2 hours; and were audio- and video-recorded, using local languages for interlocution. Geographic & numerical breakdown per country was as follows: Belarus (6 focus-groups; Minsk, Grodno, Gomel); Ukraine (10 focus-groups; Kyiv, L'vov, Donetsk); Moldova (5 focus-groups; Chisinau, Beltsi and Cahul); and Russia (10 focus-groups; Moscow, St Petersburg, Penza, Yekaterinburg).

The focus-group scenario included **three thematic blocks** addressing (i) foreign policy priorities (EU vis-à-vis Russia); (ii) relations with the EU (knowledge, perceptions, type of relations); and (iii) the ENP/EaP's effectiveness (knowledge, perceptions, problems and future). The findings are broken down by country.

### **Belarus:**

- The discussants converge on the multi-vectored direction of Belarus foreign policy. Russia is seen as important due to Belarus-Russia interdependence.
- The majority of the discussants insist on *cultural differences*, especially in mentality and religion, between Belarusians and Europeans.
- The ENP/EaP policies are known to the discussants only by its title due to lack of information on the policy in the media. In their opinion, the EaP initiative signifies rapprochement of Belarus with the EU and is directed at optimization of bilateral relations.

### **Ukraine:**

- Ukraine's foreign policy is seen as indefinite, unstable, and ineffective; moreover, it does not reflect public preferences according to the discussants.
- The EU policy towards Ukraine is believed to be restrained and careful in response to Ukraine's fiddling with Russia, political instability and economic backwardness.
- The Ukrainian policy towards the EU is perceived as unstable with shifting foreign policy priorities, declarative in nature, devoid of concrete steps and generally disappointing.

- The EaP is seen as low-efficient containing regulations already realized in the past.
- The discussants want partnership with the EU to be *equal*, but they acquiesce that it is not possible as Ukraine is inferior and dependent on the EU.

### Moldova

- The discussants are discontented with the Moldovan foreign policy, describing it as inconsistent and ambiguous.
- Officially European integration is declared the main objective, in reality Russia is still a priority.
- Moldova is *perceived* in the EU negatively as a poor and underdeveloped country.
- The discussants believe the ENP/EaP chiefly reflect EU interest, but they acknowledge them to be profitable for Moldova. Policies are seen as decreasing Russia's influence in the region.
- The discussants are unanimous in the European future of Moldova.

### Russia

- The discussants prioritize the post-Soviet states in Russia's foreign policy. Russia should pursue *equal* partnership with countries, though its imperial ambitions impede the process.
- In opinion of discussants, EU-Russia interdependence is seen as a basis for *mutually beneficial partnership* between the polities in future. At present, the relations are tense chiefly for political reasons: Russia objects to the EU's expansion into Eastern Europe, the EU rebukes Russia's imperial behaviour and perceives the country as a threat.
- The cultural differences are *critical* according to most discussants.
- The ENP/EaP policies are perceived either cautiously or negatively by the majority of discussants. The policies may be beneficial to participating countries and the EU, but contesting Russian traditional sphere of influence on the post-Soviet space, they deepen contradictions and create a hostile image of the EU.

## Interviews

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**Technical report:** interview fieldwork was organised in three phases: (i) January-February 2009 in Eastern Europe by sub-contractors; (ii) September-October 2009 in Brussels and Strasburg by research assistant; and (iii) September-October 2009 in Eastern Europe by the principal investigator. Interviews in the EU included officials of the European Commission, members of the European Parliament and permanent Member States representations. In Eastern Europe, interviews comprised of members of Parliament, senior officials of Ministries of Foreign Affairs, relevant Committees and Presidential Administrations, civil servants, mass media and think-tanks representatives, businessmen and members of political parties; as well as in-country senior officials of the EU delegations and Member States' representations. Interviews were semi-structured, in-depth, audio-recorded when permitted, anonymised when requested, and lasted on average 40-50 minutes. Interviews were conducted in English or local language. Over 100 interviews were conducted in total, and included the following breakdown per country: EU (11 interviews); Belarus (25 interviews); Ukraine (27 interviews); Moldova (18 interviews); and Russia (23 interviews).

The questionnaire included *three thematic blocks* addressing foreign policy priorities (EU vis-à-vis Russia); (ii) relations with the EU (knowledge, perceptions, type of relations); and (iii) the ENP/EaP's effectiveness (knowledge, perceptions, problems and future). The findings are broken down by country.

\*\*\*\*\*January-February 2009\*\*\*\*\*

### **Belarus:**

- The interviewees in the majority believe that Belarus rightfully pursues a *multi-vectored* foreign policy. Belarus-Russia relations are seen as historically preconditioned and upheld by the Union State. The relations with the EU are considered to be a new direction for Belarus, being beneficial for its national economy.
- The EU policy toward Belarus is described as changeable and conditional, but gradually becoming more stable and open, as the principle of partnership prevails.
- The interviewees are unanimous that Belarus is of crucial importance for the EU geopolitically and as a guardian of the EU's external borders.

- The interviewees unanimously consent that the ENP does not make proposals but *requirements* which are negatively perceived as representing one-sided interest of EU.
- Main *problems* are ascribed to the EU approach of double standards and lack of understanding between the parties.

#### **Ukraine:**

- The optimal alternative for Ukraine is a *multi-vector strategy* which apart from the EU, includes a fresh dialogue with Russia, a changed policy in the Caucasus, and the CIS countries.
- The interviewees maintain that the EU-Ukrainian relations are ambiguous, vague and devoid of membership prospects.
- Lack of incentives for the Ukrainian elite and corruption depletes Ukraine's enthusiasm for European integration.
- The ENP is *conceptually* unsatisfactory since it does not reflect Ukraine's strategic goal for European integration.
- Most interviewees point out *asymmetry* in Ukraine-EU relations; they however also think that equal partnership between the two polities is impossible.

#### **Moldova:**

- The interviewees are divided in their estimation of the EU-Moldovan relations, characterizing them as open and deepening, on the one hand, ambiguous and vague, on the other.
- They assert that the EU is presently focused on resolving its own issues in the first instance.
- The interviewees believe that Moldova has real EU membership *prospects* but only in the long run.
- The interviewees complain that what is proposed for Moldova under the ENP/EaP is insufficient.
- The interviewees expect the EU to give directions and dictate requirements for Moldova to comply with, because it is Moldova who wants EU membership.

#### **Russia:**

- The interviewees think that Russian foreign policy is *multi-vector*. They unilaterally support integration with the CIS countries; though disagree on whether it is to be reconstruction of the Russian empire or the USSR.
- The EU policy towards Russia is seen as vague and cautious, characterized by the Cold War syndrome and dependence on energy resources.
- There are cultural differences between Russia and Europe, however, they are not insurmountable, and not of "civilization" nature.
- The ENP is assessed mostly negatively as a pragmatic policy contesting the Russian traditional sphere of influence in its near abroad.



\*\*\*\*\*September-October 2009\*\*\*\*\*

EU:

- Commission (EC) officials argue that the ENP/EaP is a step forward and necessary to structure relations with EU's neighbours. They believe *partnership* is the right form of engagement.
- The EC officials criticize the understanding of partnership by partner-states, who often assume a passive role in the process, expecting the EU to decide, and ultimately to reform the country.
- MEPs and Member State (MS) representatives believe the EaP is as amalgam of governance and partnership modes of cooperation.
- EC officials reduce their expectations and gauge them by gradual successes.
- EU's failures in the EaP should be partly attributed to some external factors including traditional affinity of Eastern neighbours to Russia.
- Absence of membership perspective deprives the EU of its main motivational tool and accounts for pessimism of the population according to MEPs.
- MEPs and MS acknowledge that *common values*, understood as economic and political stability and transferred onto the neighbours, reflect primarily the EU's interpretation of them.
- Overall, *mutual interests* predominate.

## Essays

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**Technical report:** school essays were conducted in March-April 2009. Sampling involved random selection of secondary schools in urban areas, in which *school leavers* were requested, without prior warning, to write a maximum of two-page essay on pre-set questions. The survey lasted on average 30-45 minutes. Essays were anonymised and computerised. Numerical and geographical breakdown of survey per country was as follows: Belarus (50 essays, 4 schools in Minsk and Mozyr), Ukraine (80 essays, 3 schools in Kyiv); Moldova (50 essays, 3 schools in Chisinau) and Russia (100 essays, 4 schools in Moscow).

The essay included *three main themes* addressing (i) knowledge/perceptions of the EU; (ii) similarities/differences with the EU; and (iii) future relations with the EU. The findings are broken down by country.

### Belarus

- School leavers are very knowledgeable about the EU.
- According to school leavers, the EU differs from Belarus in high living standards, common currency and free movement of people, developed economy and medicine, etc. Besides, Europeans have a different mentality: they are more individualistic and pragmatic.
- The school leavers' opinion on the EU-Belarus relations is divided. Most believe Belarus should prioritise cooperation with the EU. Others expect Belarus to revive the union with Russia or to retain neutrality as Switzerland.

### Ukraine

- The knowledge of school leavers on the EU is substantive
- The predominant opinion is that Ukraine is regarded by Europeans in either neutral or negative way primarily because of underperforming economy and political instability.
- The EU and Ukraine are believed to have little in common. Internal affairs of the country, described as unsatisfactory, lead to divergent development of two polities.
- The absolute majority support integration of Ukraine into the EU. Everybody concedes, however, that EU membership is a perspective of a far future because of economic/political instability in Ukraine.



### Moldova

- School graduates are for the most part well-informed about the EU. They believe that Moldova is perceived by the EU as a poor, politically unstable, and backward country.
- Most graduates observe more differences than similarities between Moldova and EU. The former is notorious for its political instability, corrupted and incompetent leadership, and lack of democratic principles.
- The graduates enthusiastically support Moldova's accession to the EU which would allow visa-free movement within the EU countries, open study opportunities in Europe, and improve the quality of life.
- They are certain in future Moldova will join the EU on meeting basic requirements for membership.

### Russia

- School leavers primarily associate the EU with an economic union.
- Some school leavers assert that the EU treats Russia negatively as an untrustworthy partner after the war with Georgia and 'gas' conflicts with Ukraine.
- School leavers argue that there are *more differences* than commonalities with the EU. The EU and Russia have different political views, *values*, and goals. The democracy in the EU is more developed than in Russia.
- The Russia-Georgia war and conflicts with Ukraine worsened the EU-Russia relations. Besides, the EU attempts to expand its influence over Post-Soviet countries and gets confronted by Russia. Nonetheless, Russia is an important trade partner upon which natural resources Europe depends.



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