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POLICY BRIEF

Eastern Partnership Reality Check. The case of Moldova and Georgia

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Following the latest dynamic events, this article explores the European perspectives of Moldova and Georgia – countries which, so far, progress the most since the Eastern Partnership platform has been introduced.

Since 2004, EU policy toward its Eastern borders has been dominated by the European Commission via the European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP) and later by its initiative of the Eastern Partnership (EaP). The EaP, launched in Prague in May 2009, is an alternative for the EU's Eastern neighbours to similar project the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership (EUROMED), formerly known as the Barcelona Process re-launched in Paris in July 2008, covering southern EU's neighbourhood. The proposals for the EaP were presented in December 2008 and it can be said that the official birth of the initiative was influenced and urged by the 2008 war in Georgia, which drew the international attention to the need to reinforce the relations with Eastern partners. The project was initiated by Poland and subsequent proposal was prepared in cooperation by Sweden. The principal objective of the EaP is to increase the EU's geopolitical presence in the post-Soviet region and intensify its engagement.

The key elements of this new initiative within ENP framework are to bring a multilateral dimension to the cooperation with partner countries from post-Soviet space: Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia, Moldova, Ukraine and with some conditions Belarus.¹ The EU and six part-

ner countries have the opportunity to meet, share and discuss the opened questions concerning the transition, reforms and modernisation. The Eastern Partnership enriched the framework of mutual cooperation between the EU and partner countries of these elements: Association Agreements (AA); Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Agreements (DCFTA); energy security, better mobility; regional development; border security; better infrastructure and people-to-people contacts via citizen mobility. It also offers visa liberation based on case-to-case principle (European Commission, 2008).

The Eastern Partnership aims to accelerate economic integration and further political association between the Union and partner countries. It is largely built on the European Neighbourhood Policy and its main added value is its multilateral framework. Even it works also on deepening bilateral dimension of mutual cooperation, the multilateral character of EaP initiative is the keystone. The EaP, as a part of the European Neighbourhood Policy, is based on the same principles and fundamental values such as democracy, rule of law, respect for human rights, market economy, good governance. It also maintains the conditionality principle as well as the technical, long-term approach characteristic to the Commission. The EaP creates direct links between the EU's neighbourhood policy and the policy of enlargement. The initiative is particularly important as it contains very specific elements of conditionality that could explain the adaptation processes towards the EU. The unstructured and vague

¹ Belarus is part only of the bilateral dimension of the EaP and does not participate in its multilateral dimension. It does not either participate in the European Neighbourhood Policy.

principle of conditionality is here reinforced indicating that any kind of progress is subject to meeting explicit conditions. The shadow side of the conditionality here is the asymmetric relation when the EU has the right to refuse to grant any kind of award, while this uncertainty could be balanced by the intermediary rewards.

The European Union finances projects in the EaP countries from general budget from European Neighbourhood Instrument (ENI). At its beginning, the EU assigned €600 million to the EaP, increasing the overall amount of the ENI funds for the Eastern partners to €1,9 billion during 2010-2013. The funds had been used for three main purposes: Comprehensive Institution Building programmes, aimed at supporting reforms (approximately €175 million); Pilot regional development programmes, aimed at addressing regional economic and social disparities (approximately €75 million); and Implementation of the Eastern Partnership, focusing on democracy, governance and stability, economic integration and convergence with EU policies (approximately €350 million). According to the adopted financial plan of the EU for the period from 2014 to 2020, the total volume for ENI is €15,4 billion while the final decision on the distribution of resources will be made in the mid-2014. In addition, the Commission has recently adopted a special support package of €365 million for Ukraine to respond the urgent need of stabilising the country and in May 2014 it approved additional €60 million for Georgia and Moldova to help them with the implementation of the Association Agreements (Commissioner Fule: EU ready to help..., 2014).

Table n.1: Allocation of the Eastern Partnership Funds

Eastern Partnership Funds		
Comprehensive Institution Building	Pilot regional Development programmes	Multilateral dimension
€ 175 m.	€ 75 m.	€ 350 m.

Source: *EaP Community, 2014*

The recent development of this initiative is marked by the unexpected bloody events in Ukraine. The Eastern Partnership Summit in Vilnius in November 2013 was expected as the most important stage of this ENP initiative. The three key countries of the initiative- Ukraine, Moldova and Georgia were about to sign the Association

Agreements with the EU. Unfortunately, it was one of the most dramatic episodes in the recent diplomatic history of the European Union. Only week before the Vilnius Summit, Ukrainian president Yanukovich had hampered the Association process which has been internationally presented as a geopolitical catastrophe that Ukraine has chosen Russia over the EU. Ukraine stood up in protest against the non-signature of the Association Agreement and bloody events followed. The Ukrainians were disappointed with the leaders of the Orange revolution, economic situation in the country is not good and moreover, Yanukovich as the president, had behaved very aggressively. He consolidated his power by appointing his family and friends with government positions while his son Oleksandr entered the Forbes rich list with assets worth of 100 million dollars. The risks of non-signature were too high but Yanukovich has not seen them.

For some authors (Popescu, 2013), the Ukrainian decision of halting of the Association process at the Vilnius summit has been interpreted not as a geopolitical catastrophe for EU, but rather as bid to buy more time (choosing not choose). In fact, Yanukovich only tried to maintain the status quo in Ukraine's foreign and domestic policy. However, this decision made things at home for Yanukovich even more difficult while pro-EU protests in Kyiv were still ongoing with thousands of people taking to the streets. Following these events, Yanukovich experienced the defection of several MPs and prominent figures from his own camp (like Petro Poroshenko, an oligarch-cum-businessman and former minister in Yanukovich's cabinet). At the end, Yanukovich's position was destabilized also by the joint statement in support of the Association Agreement with the EU from all three of Ukraine's former presidents- Kravchuk, Kuchma and Yushchenko, and growing resistance from many Ukrainian oligarchs.

As a result of the Ukrainian decision, much criticism has been directed to the effectiveness of EU foreign policy and a common position towards Russia. Especially, from the German diplomatic circles much has been said about linking of interests of important EU regional players (especially Germany and Poland) which will create more synergies in regards with development of a sustainable, long-term European strategy. However, this is not easy to achieve as different EU countries try to purchase their own national strategies. According to European Council on Foreign Relations (ECFR) report which was to analyse the differences among the EU member states regarding their general foreign policy towards Russia, governments are torn between two dominant approaches to Russia. One side sees Russia as a threat that needs to be managed with "soft-containment", the other sees the country a potential partner that can be transformed through "creeping integration" into the European sys-

tem.² At the same time, Russia's relations with the West and specifically with the European Union (EU) are characterized by uncertainty rather than permanent political conflict. Russia does not take coherent action against the West (Devyatkov, 2012) and prefers to build strategic bilateral partnerships with particular countries.

This kind of asymmetric approach and absence of common long term strategy towards Russia, might play in Russia's favour. The struggle of finding a strong joint position of EU member states was deeply present also in the discussions after the Russian military invasion in Crimea in February of 2014. Even though EU states condemned Russian actions, accused it from breaking international law and Ukrainian integrity, it failed to implement highest possible (3rd level) sanctions against Russia as they in fact may harm EU member countries more than Russia.

In case of Georgia and Moldova, the Association Agreements were initialled in Vilnius, though the process of its ratification was not sure after the Ukrainian events. However, the three key EaP countries (Ukraine, Moldova and Georgia) have met together and signed the EU Association Agreements on 27 June. Belarus is already

² Within those, the authors identify five distinct categories of countries. Greece and Cyprus are referred to as (Leonard – Popescu, 2007):

- *trojan horses* - whose governments often defend positions close to Russian interests, and who have been willing to veto common EU positions. The study reveals little-known facts such as Cyprus being the biggest official investor in Russia, due to the amount of Russian capital which is saved there;
- *strategic partners* - Germany, France, Italy and Spain whose governments have built special bilateral relationships with Russia, which has sometimes cut against the grain of common EU objectives in areas such as energy and the EU Neighbourhood Policy;
- *friendly pragmatists* - Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Finland, Hungary, Luxembourg, Malta, Portugal, Slovakia and Slovenia who maintain a close relationship with Russia and tend to put their business interests above political goals;
- *frosty pragmatists* - Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Ireland, Latvia, the Netherlands, Romania, Sweden and the United Kingdom who also focus on business interests but are less afraid than others to speak out against Russian behavior on human rights or other issues;
- *new Cold Warriors* - Lithuania and Poland who have an overtly hostile relationship with Moscow and are willing to use the veto to block EU negotiations with Russia.

a member of the Eurasian Customs Union with Russia being followed by Armenia that expressed its willingness to sign the roadmap to Customs Union later last year. Azerbaijan still postpones the decision to attach itself closer to the Kremlin's initiative. In fact, we can simply identify within the EaP following structure base on multi-speed integration process after the 3rd EaP summit: „advanced,” or simply „associated partners” (Ukraine, Moldova and Georgia); the countries that „does not want” (Azerbaijan); the countries that “cannot” (Armenia); and the countries that „does not want to and cannot” (Belarus).

However, in our case study we would like to primarily focus on two countries who endorsed association agreements - Moldova and Georgia and the current state of their relations with EU.

The case of Georgia

The current international relations of Georgia started after the collapse of Soviet Union when 15 new states gained independence and begun to carry out their own foreign and internal policy. As the country already experienced civil war, pressure under the Russian occupancy, unsolved territorial conflicts and poor economic situation resulting from the transition period from socialistic economy to the free market economy, Georgian new foreign policy after its independence tended to become more European oriented.



Source: *Map-of-Georgia...*, 2014

The bilateral relations between the EU and Georgia were established in 1992, but the cooperation was mainly led by Commission focusing on technical and economic assistance.

However, the legal basis of the Georgian relations with the European Union was the Partnership and Cooperation Agreement (PCA), which was concluded only in 1996 and entered into force in 1999 for the initial period of 10 years. There are several reasons that were the obstacles for the successful implementation of the ideas and objectives of PCA. As noted by Puppo (2010) and Gogberashvili (2010), the region of South Caucasus was regarded by the EU as distant and as the zone of Russian influence; implementation of the progress reforms had not been based on the conditionality principle; the coherent action plans on detailed reforms implementation were missing; and there was also lack of monitoring and benchmarking instruments. Finally, the EU did not possess the necessary mechanisms to play a more active role in the region.

It was Georgia's Rose Revolution in 2003 that definitely changed the EU's optic. Both EU and Georgia regarded this as the opportunity to push more effectively for Europeanization agenda in the country. In June 2004, the EU Council decided to include the three countries of South Caucasus into European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP) and Georgia was the first country to see the deployment of an EU rule of law mission under CSDP (in that time European Security and Defence Policy) – EUJUST Themis. This was the important step forward in the EU's engagement with the South Caucasus region. In November 2006, Georgia and the EU signed bilateral ENP Action Plan and in 2009 EU offered Georgia another form of cooperation under the framework of the Eastern Partnership (EaP). The 2008 war between Georgia and Russia and global economic and financial crisis have affected this country a lot and at the same time created very difficult conditions for the implementation of reforms. The 2008 war in Georgia showed that the 'frozen' conflict can 'unfreeze' and escalate in regional war. Five days war between Georgia and Russia destabilised the region of South Caucasus and Central Asia. Russia once again showed to the rest of the world that Moscow is not prepared to lose its influence in this region and also that it is willing to reaffirm its role as a regional hegemon. It was also the signal that Kremlin is not scared to use military force to defend its position which has been again confirmed during the Russian support for secession of Ukrainian Crimea. Visibly, the region of South Caucasus and Ukraine are in the Russian borderland which made them the buffering zones between the Western powers and Russia.

Georgia raises the challenges for the European Neighbourhood Policy. The break-away territories of South Ossetia and Abkhazia represent the security threat in the EU's neighbourhood and the objectives set out in the European Security Strategy. Following the absence in the region, the EU under French presidency acted

very actively during the Russian-Georgian war and it has strengthened its presence in the region. The expectations of the South Caucasian states about the future role of Brussels in the region increased. However, what concerns the EU's involvement in conflict resolution, the results are limited. The priorities and objectives stated in bilateral Action Plan with Georgia have remained on paper only. Although the EU Monitoring Mission (EUMM) deployed in Georgia after the 2008 war has a broad mandate and its monitoring contribution cannot be contested, the situation in both provinces remains tense and in some respect even worsen. Russian recognition of both regions as independent states followed by the international policy of non-recognition only increases their political and economic isolation and dependence on Russia. In this context, both regions continue deny EUMM access and as a result of the 2009 termination of the OSCE mission in Georgia and UNOMIG in Abkhazia, followed by Russian veto, there is no international mechanism for monitoring Russian actions in the area. Furthermore, the EU's activity through EU Special Representative for South Caucasus and the crisis in Georgia have achieved a little in respect of conflict resolution. Moreover, the post has been vacant since January this year (in the time of the writing of the thesis –May 2014– there was no mandate occupation). Anyhow, the EU Special Representative's weak performance enlarged the gap between the EU's objectives in the region and its limited power on the ground which weakened the EU's diplomatic position.

In spite of this difficult context, Georgia made some steps forward in implementation process of the EaP. Visible success was achieved in fighting corruption, improving the business, investments climate and custom administration. Since the initialisation of the EaP in 2009, further results have been achieved by the Georgian government. Negotiations for Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Area (DCFTA), as an integral part of the Association Agreement, were launched in 2011 and Georgia made good progress in implementation the Visa Facilitation and Readmission agreements, entering into force in March 2011. Despite the criticism and uncertainty surrounding the European Neighbourhood Policy and its initiative Eastern Partnership, the overall assessment of nearly eight years of work of the ENP policy in Georgia could be considered as a 'success story' (Bockova, 2014).

The most important event in recent development of the EaP initiative was, already mentioned, the Vilnius Summit in November 2013 where Georgia and Moldova initialled the Association Agreements. The signing of the AA on 27 June 2014 have been commonly described in the press as a geopolitical choice, as a win or lose game where the winner would either be Russia or the EU.

However, they are not only that. These documents have the possibility to stimulate reform and democratisation in selected areas (Comai, 2013). The EU is enlarging the ‘ring of friends’ and it is also the way how to further Europeanize its neighbourhood. In case of successful ratification and implementation in the three countries, these agreements will change the political, economic and social scene in post-soviet space.

The existence of domestic facilitating factors such as pro-European government, general secret public hopes of entering the Euro-Atlantic structures and the absence of the domestic veto players in the political structures of Georgia, seem to advance the Georgian commitment to pursue the implementation of the EU political reform agenda. Georgia decided to Europeanize itself in order to convince the EU to change its attitudes and recognise their European vocation and the signature of the Association Agreement could be partially considered as success of this policy (Bockova,2014).

Georgia showed great progress in modernisation of the state system and economy, successful fight against the corruption, but the president Mikhail Saakashvili failed in the process of democratisation of the society and there is still lack of control of the executive. That is also why there are big expectations after recent transfer of power from Mikheil Saakashvili to the “Georgian Dream” coalition.

However, the EaP does not promise the EU membership, its implementation prepares the countries to join the EU by adapting the EU’s *aquis communautaire*. Many third countries harbouring their hopes of accession to the EU which brings to the process the internal self-motivation to proceed the reforms. This could be also the case of Georgia, when despite the absence of the explicit notion of EU membership in the ENP or EaP policy, this approach has been able to motivate Georgia to undertake reforms scheduled in the EU-Georgia ENP Action Plan. Despite the criticism and uncertainty surrounding the European Neighbourhood Policy and its initiative Eastern Partnership, the overall assessment of nearly eight years of work of this EU policy in Georgia, it can be concluded that Georgia has been a ‘success story’.

The case of Moldova

Moldova, that traces its modern roots to the Moldavian Soviet Socialist Republic, gained independence after the proclamation of the Declaration of Independence of the Republic of Moldova on 27th of August 1991 by the end of the Cold war. It was formally recognized at the United Nations on 2nd of March 1992. However, Moldova’s whole post-independence history was marked with

the legacy of Soviet Union break up as the country had to cope with the difficult economic and political consequences.

Table n.2: Comparison of both countries – material sources of power

	Georgia	Moldova
Population	4,935,880 (July 2014 est.)	3,583,288 (July 2014 est.)
Ethnic composition	Georgian 83.8%, Azeri 6.5%, Armenian 5.7%, Russian 1.5%, other 2.5% (2002 census)	Moldovan 75.8%, Ukrainian 8.4%, Russian 5.9%, Gagauz 4.4%, Romanian 2.2%, Bulgarian 1.9%, other 1%
GDP per capita	\$6,100 (2013 est.) (rank 150)	\$3,800 (2013 est.) (rank 172)
GDP growth rate	2.5% (2013 est.)	8.9% (2013 est.)
Export	Azerbaijan 25%, Armenia 11%, Ukraine 7%, Turkey 6%, Russia 6% (2013 est.)	Russia 26.3%, Romania 17.2%, Italy 7.7%, Ukraine 5.9%, Turkey 5.3%, Germany 4.7%, GB 4.4% (2012 est.)
Imports	Turkey 17%, Ukraine 8%, Azerbaijan 8%, Russia 7%, China 7% (2013 est.)	Russia 14.3%, Romania 13.1%, Ukraine 12%, China 8.7%, Germany 7.2%, Turkey 6.9%, Italy 6.3% (2012 est.)

Source: CIA World Factbook, 2014

Nowadays, more than two decades after the fall of Iron Curtain Moldova’s economy is still struggling. The estimated GDP per capita was around \$3,800 in 2013 (CIA World Factbook, 2014) which is, for instance, still four times less if comparing with western neighbour - Romania. No wonder that Moldova has replaced Albania as Europe’s poorest nation. The main export goods represent foodstuffs, especially excellent wines, textiles or machinery. For instance, the case of wine exports shows

how quickly Moldova exporters could redirect their exports to the West. Moldova wine producers had to deal with ban of their wine exports after the Russian-Georgian war when Moscow introduced these economic measures. Later on, Kremlin, even threatened to might hold back Russian gas in response to Moldova`s closer move to the West. Examples like this only underline the vulnerability of Moldova to external energy and economic pressures.

Moldova foreign policy experienced major shifts in the mid-2000s when the domestic internal environment started to play more important role in the pro-Western puzzle of the country. According to Cantir and Kennedy, the country adopted a soft balancing strategy once Russia posed a threat to the internal stability of the government and changes in EU policy created a permissive international environment for the strategy (Cantir-Kennedy, 2014).

First closer relationship with the EU was established in the mid-nineties within the framework of Partnership and Cooperation Agreement (PCA) which entered into force on 1st of July 1998. However, it took Moldova one decade to intensify established relations, especially after the 2009 parliamentary elections and after EaP platform has been officially inaugurated in Prague (ECFR, 2014). The year 2009, however, seems to be a crucial in the modern history of Moldova. The country experienced repetitive parliamentary elections after the opposition accused the ruling communist party of rigging the elections, rejected the results and the situation escalated into huge protests in Chişinău.

A rerun of the parliamentary elections in July 2009 saw the ousting of the communist government by a coalition of four opposition parties,³ calling themselves the “Alliance for European Integration” (AEI). EU integration was the AEI’s declared top priority and the new Moldovan prime minister, Vladimir Filat and foreign affairs minister, Iurie Leancă, flew to Brussels on their first diplomatic trip (Ticu, 2011). Following these events Chişinău started to negotiate the Association Agreement (AA) which constitutes a main reform agenda for Moldova, based on approximation of its legislation to EU norms. The ruling coalition possessed a fragile majority of 53 out of 101 seats (53:48) and whole legislative period of this coalition has been marked with internal political crises - the inability to elect president during two constitutional attempts. New elections in November 2010,

which had to be hold,⁴ kept the ruling coalition AEI in power by comfortable majority of 59 seats.

Thus, the government has followed through on its pledges, taking the bold step of seeking closer political and trade ties with the European Union. Moldova’s turn toward the EU stood in stark contrast to ousted Ukrainian President Yanukovich’s decision to spurn those very same EU agreements in favour of \$15 billion in loans and discounted gas from Russia (Luxner, 2014). However, Moldova experienced another internal political difficulty. In March 2013 prime minister Filat was dismissed and succeeded by the former minister of foreign affairs Iurie Leancă (Coalition for a Pro-European Government).

Even so, Moldova`s progress with the EU relations intensified after the Eastern Partnership Summit on 29th of November 2013 when AA was initialled and later on signed on 27th of June 2014 (ECFR, 2014). As a result Moldova will significantly deepen its political association and economic integration with the EU and start to gradually implement the Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Area. Signing of the AA was not the only visible success of Leancă`s government. In April, six years after starting the Visa Facilitation Agreement with the EU, Moldovan citizens were finally rewarded with one of the most visible benefits of EU – free visa waiver policies.

However, the Moldova`s biggest political challenge lies in Transnistria, eastern region of Moldova, which represents a post-Soviet “frozen conflict zone” not completely under the Moldovan control. As a result, it is recognized by the Republic of Moldova as an autonomous territorial unit with special legal status. The territory has so far not been recognised by any United Nations member state. The conflict, settled by cease-fire agreement from July 1992, established peacekeeping forces composed of forces composed of Moldovan, Russian, and Transnistrian units.

The Russian military presence is, however, continually straining relations with Moldova. Moscow is therefore able to play so called “ethnicity card”⁵ in the region (one

3 Four Moldovan parties – Liberal Democratic Party, Liberal Party, Democratic Party, and Our Moldova Alliance – agreed to create a governing coalition that will push the Communist party into opposition.

4 Two failed attempts of electing the president by at least 61 votes, which, according to the Constitution, had to be followed by the dissolution of parliament. The new coalition finally broke the three years lasting deadlock (2009-2012) of inability to elect president in 2012 as the parliament elected Nicolae Timofti for president of Moldova on 16th of March 2012. The constitutional threshold was exceeded only by one vote.

5 Moldova is also a home for Gagauz people - ethnicity that descends from Seljuq Turks. Gagauzia, lying in the south-eastern part of the country, is since 1994 a “national-territorial autonomous unit”.

third of the population in Transnistria is of Russian origin). Looking at the conflict from broader geopolitical perspective, the perseverance of the status quo and Russian presence in Transnistria in fact plays in Moscow favour as “it virtually guarantees that Moldova will never be accepted by NATO” (Totten in Luxner, 2014).



Source: Balti Moldova, 2014

The dilemma caused by the inability to control the break-away region brought Moldova’s government to solution with rather broad cultural and political autonomy to the region. However, the negotiations to resolve the conflict continue within 5+2 format⁶ (Goda, 2012) and several other actors play an important role in settlement of this

⁶ Russia, Ukraine, the OSCE, the EU and the U.S.

conflict. The OSCE has had an observer mission in place for several years and mainly thanks to Germany’s initiative Transnistria was a topic put on table also in Meseberg Memorandum.⁷

Russian national interests in Moldova could be characterized using terms such as protectiveness and reactivity driven by fears that the post-Soviet space will fragment, leaving Russia isolated from Greater Europe. Russian officials repeatedly mention three processes that to some extent influence the Republic of Moldova and its relations with Russia: North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) enlargement, “Romanization,” and “Euro-integration.” NATO is the key here. In fact, Moldova is a small country, but its eventual accession to NATO will create a precedent for the potential accession of Ukraine, which plays a crucial role in the future of the post-Soviet space (Devyatkov, 2012).

With this in mind, Jean-Claude Juncker, former Luxembourg premier, has expressed that “Europe should have a deal with Moldova so that Russian president Vladimir Putin doesn’t target Moldova. EU must ensure Moldova isn’t the next Crimea” (Europe must ensure..., 2014). Even though Moldovans should not over-expect geopolitical value of its territory for the West, we have to ask ourselves, what is the EU capable of doing if Russia opts for the same strategy in Moldova as in the case of Crimea. Even though this scenario seems almost unlikely, EU could do most probably nothing.

In the cases of Armenia and Ukraine, Russia set out to persuade the respective governments not to sign an EU Association Agreement and, if possible, convince them to join its Customs Union. In its relations with Moldova, however, Moscow’s strategy is not to attempt to change the mind of the government but to assist domestic actors in changing the government altogether (Popescu, 2013). Moldova’s case is much more complex based on the fact that the country has strong economy ties with Russia (export number one country for Moldova) and many Moldovans are working in Russia. Therefore, support of disruption by Moldovan communist, vast investments and take overs in banking, energy, economy and

⁷ The Meseberg process is an initiative meant to establish a routine but multifaceted strategic partnership between Russia and the EU in such fields as crisis management with a potential “spill-over” onto other issues. However, problems with the implementation of this initiative indicate how difficult it is to develop effective and institutionalized cooperation even just to stop a conflict that has not involved weapons since 1992 (Devyatkov, 2012). It was thought that possible resolution, even very unlikely, of Transnistria conflict could serve as a potential lab for containing Russia unilateralism.

media sectors can serve Putin as much more effective soft power tools as any other conventional threat. This could work perfectly once Russia fully commits to slowing down the Moldova's bid for EU perspective or even putting an end to it. Moldova's prospects are therefore much more unclear at the moment. The country is facing new elections in autumn and only a lunatic could expect severe economic reforms from the government if it wants to stay in power. The opinion polls, however, slightly favour the communist opposition at the moment. If the EU wants Moldova to stay on the track, it has a huge job to do. Firstly, it has to effectively fight the "propaganda war" regarding the viewing of DCFTA only as a deal that will ruin the competitiveness of Moldavian companies. Secondly, if necessary, EU should be ready to introduce financial stimulus and consultancy for Moldovan companies.

EU has also to be present if Russia decides to apply mechanisms to defend its markets and extend the ban of particular imports from Moldova. Even though this will contravene WTO rules, Russia's main concerns are connected with the issue of re-export from AA countries. The Moscow position is more than clear: "Moldova cannot combine two regulatory systems: of the CIS and of the EU. It will have to make some choice" (Russia warns Moldova...,2014).

Conclusions

However, the Eastern Partnership was considered as a positive development of the EU's policy towards its Eastern neighbourhood, the EaP summit in Vilnius in November 2013 badly marked the EaP reputation as it is considered as one of the demonstration of the EU's inability to prevent the escalation of the recent violent events on Ukraine. In order to keep the EaP alive, the EU should act in all three cases as the Association Agreements were already in force even the ratification process could take the long time. The EU should begin to introduce the most attractive rewards of the Treaty, such as the visa-free travel, to show its readiness to fulfil its promises. As Brussels has a great interest in the post-soviet region, not only in terms of security and stability but also in terms of energy transport and resources, more EU proactive policy is necessary. Russia showed its power on Ukraine, so the EU has to stand up from its passive position and its proactive role is necessary. We consider rewarding of associated countries based on the principle "more for more" as the most appropriate tool when it comes to keeping the partners motivated in implementation of reforms.

Regarding the position of two analysed countries it is no surprise that Georgia and Moldova managed to progress the most. However, nothing can be taken for granted. At the moment the case of Georgia offers a much more posi-

tive prospects if compared with Moldova. Georgia shows better resistance against the external pressures not only in terms of forced diversification in economy, but also in terms of energy security. Moldova's main concerns lie in terms of economy and hardly predictable moves from Moscow. Moldova's position is therefore rather much more complex, but mainly due to the following reasons: strong economic and energy ties with Russia, settlement of Transnistria conflict and internal dichotomy following the upcoming parliamentary elections.

Important condition for improving the position of the European Union in the region of its Eastern neighbourhood is the common position within the EU on Russian role in the area. This region is a battlefield for the EU-member states on how they should develop a policy towards Russia and its post-Soviet neighbourhoods. However, the EU's relationship with Russia is a difficult one for a variety of reasons; it has to be clearly defined. Moreover, secessionist entities are largely dependent on political-military patron states and visibly Russia is such patron to all separatist regimes in the area (Abkhazia, South Ossetia, Nagorno Karabakh and Transnistria). Politically, these societies see Russia as the only political protector and they are suspicious of the 'international community' whom they see as main state's supporters.

To conclude, the EU approach toward the EaP countries must take into consideration the heterogeneity of the states, their different levels of economic development, transformation and interest of the integration with the EU. There should be one strategy towards whole region, the common position of all the EU member states, but it shouldn't be forgotten that each country in this region has its own demands and needs.

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