

How the EU promotes democracy in neighbouring countries

Since the 2004 enlargement, bordering countries in Eastern Europe and Northern Africa have become increasingly relevant for the European Union (EU). The neighbouring states of the EU, including among others Ukraine and Moldavia to the East as well as Morocco and Tunisia to the South, still require considerable progress before being seen as consolidated democracies. This research project explores the question of how the EU promotes democracy in its neighbouring states.



Frank Schimmelfennig, Tatiana Skripka, Tina Freyburg, Anne Wetzel and Sandra Lavenex examine how the EU promotes democratic change in its neighbouring countries.

The EU took a significant step forward in its relations with its neighbours with the founding of the European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP) in 2003, the most important goals of which were the consolidation of the rule of law as well as promotion of democracy and welfare. However, while the process of enlargement – especially with its corresponding membership perspective – proved successful in promoting democratization in exchange for political reforms, a similar effect is not expected throughout Europe's neighbourhood. In contrast to the Eastern enlargement, ENP offers participant states no prospects for eventual membership. Without this incentive, fundamental reforms as a direct response to external pressures for democratization are expected to be quite unlikely. The associated political costs for the incumbent governments are too high and the expected rewards from the EU (such as intensified economic cooperation) too low.

With this in mind, a project team was established under the supervision of Professor Sandra Lavenex (University of Lucerne) and Professor Frank Schimmelfennig (ETH Zurich). With the help of Tina Freyburg, Robin Hertz, Hanno Scholtz, Tatiana Skripka and Anne Wetzel, this team explores the impact of EU

democracy promotion in the non-member countries of Eastern Europe and the Southern Mediterranean. The project seeks to determine whether and under what conditions three different mechanisms of EU democracy promotion have a positive impact on democratization in the target country: conditionality, transnational exchange and sector-specific cooperation.

Conditionality is a mechanism for promoting policy changes in a country by expecting it to fulfill political obligations as a prerequisite for certain benefits such as financial assistance, trade or even membership. It has been a powerful tool of democracy promotion in the context of EU enlargement; however, ENP lacks the necessary level of incentives to induce democratic change in non-candidate countries. The results of a panel study carried out by the research team demonstrate that the effectiveness of conditionality depends on a credible membership perspective for the target country. Without the offer of membership, EU incentives such as partnership and cooperation do not reliably promote democratic change. The results also show that the impact of EU conditionality varies across levels of democratization. It is smallest in autocratic countries and in countries that

have already achieved a high level of democracy. By contrast, it is most effective in promoting democratic consolidation in countries that have already experienced some democratization.

Following from this, researchers analyze a second mechanism, in which they assume that the level of democracy in a neighbouring country increases with the intensity of the *transnational exchanges* it entertains with the EU and its member states. These exchanges comprise economic exchanges such as trade and investment; personal interactions through various means of communication, tourism and academic exchanges; and cultural and informational influences via the media, churches, parties and societal associations. However, they expect that transnational exchange will not have a systematic positive impact where civil societies are only weakly developed and lack access to, and influence on, the political system.

Given the limited effectiveness of conditionality and transnational exchanges in promoting democratic governance, the research team proposes an alternative approach: the promotion of democratic governance through *policy-specific cooperation* at the political-administrative levels. The central focus of the project is thus to determine to what extent democratic principles such as transparency, accountability and participation are conveyed "through the backdoor" by way of functional cooperation between the EU and its neighbours in the framework of the European Neighbourhood Policy.

Concrete cooperation, problem-oriented areas such as the adherence to sound

News in brief

Guest researcher Dr. Gesine Fuchs



NCCR Democracy welcomes Dr. Gesine Fuchs as guest researcher. Dr. Fuchs is a political scientist who concentrates on the question of how societies can be democratized in a

comprehensive and sustainable manner, with a strong focus on gender issues. She recently received funding from the Swiss National Science Foundation for a post-doctoral lecture qualification (*habilitation*) project. In this project, she analyzes how social movement organizations mobilize for gender pay equity. The idea of equality is a core value of democracy, but norm and reality often diverge. The gender pay gap in Europe is high, and recently, social movements have increasingly demanded greater social justice and have gone to court with their causes. However, can this advance social change? With her project, Gesine Fuchs aims to clarify the interdependence between law, cultural norms, traditions and the peculiarities of the political system in a given country. She seeks to contribute to the discussion on if and how law fosters or hampers the transformation of gender relations. More information at <http://www.gesine-fuchs.net/index.htm>.

An exhibition of knowledge in downtown Zurich

In March 2008, NCCR researchers participated in an interactive exhibition organized by the University of Zurich in the framework of its 175th anniversary festivities. The exhibition *Parcours des Wissens* ("Parcourse of knowledge") took place in downtown Zurich over a period of eight days. NCCR Democracy presented three of its tools: the *Democracy Barometer*, which assesses the quality of democracy in advanced industrializing countries; the online learning tool, *Politikzyklus*, designed for civic

education in schools; and the on-line voting assistance tool, *Smartvote*, which gives voters individual voting recommendations based on their personal political convictions. Furthermore, NCCR researchers of Module 4 presented their first results on how political actors, the media and public opinion influence each other in political campaigns ("Power, Politics and the Media"). Other NCCR researchers gave short lectures on their



© Christoph Schumacher

research topics to the public. With over 40,000 people visiting the exhibition and listening to the numerous lectures, the event was a great success. The Democracy Barometer and Module 4 will present their research again at the European Researcher's Night in Zurich on 26 September.

European Researchers' Night

Exhibition, NCCR presentations on *Democracy barometer* and *Power, Politics and the Media*
26 September 2008, Bellevue and Zürichhorn, downtown Zurich

Going democracy?

NCCR Democracy University of Zurich

No, we are not proposing a new form of government. This was only a new signposting in the NCCR Democracy headquarters in Zurich which our landlord installed a few weeks ago (and had removed the next day...).

working conditions, environmental protection and border control lies at the heart of the ENP. This cooperation is not only characterized by regular, institutionalized interaction between civil servants of the EU, its member states and their corresponding counterparts in neighbouring third states. The political reforms of the EU also foresee a transfer of European regulations and solutions, which include elements of democratic decision-making and implementation at the administrative levels.

The team seeks to explore under what conditions sector-specific cooperation is effective in promoting democratic governance. The results of the complete study will be presented in 2009. ■

Project team

Prof. Sandra Lavenex, Anne Wetzel (University of Lucerne), Prof. Frank Schimmelfennig, Tina Freyburg, Tatiana Skripka, Robin Hertz (ETH Zurich)

Contact

Sandra.Lavenex@unilu.ch
frank.schimmelfennig@eup.gess.ethz.ch

Publications

Tina Freyburg, Sandra Lavenex, Frank Schimmelfennig, Hanno Scholtz, Tatiana Skripka, and Anne Wetzel. „Neue Wege der externen Demokratieförderung: Demokratisches Regieren in der Europäischen Nachbarschaftspolitik.“ In *Externe Faktoren der Demokratisierung*, Gerold Erdmann and Marianne Kneuer (eds.), Baden-Baden: Nomos, 2008.

Sandra Lavenex. „A Governance Approach to the European Neighbourhood Policy: Integration beyond Conditionality?“ *Journal of European Public Policy* 15(6), 2008.

Frank Schimmelfennig. "EU Political Accession Conditionality after the 2004 Enlargement: Consistency and Effectiveness." *Journal of European Public Policy* 15(6), 2008.

Frank Schimmelfennig and Hanno Scholtz. "EU Democracy Promotion in the European Neighborhood. Political Conditionality, Economic Development and Transnational Exchange." *European Union Politics* 9(2), 2008, 187-215.