

Migration Flows, Sustainable Development and Neighbourhood Policy in the New EU Countries

Georgia in EU's Neighbourhood Policy

This draft research paper is about Georgia's current challenges and future perspectives in terms of EU neighbourhood policy.

Considering the history of European Union, despite its periodical failures to cope with the challenges of the internal and external environment, the economic achievements of the EU are believed to be optimistic. One major part of modern European economic life is migration and its consequences.

After the end of Cold War, the democratic transformation processes has been a two way street. On the one hand, most of the NIS (Newly Independent States) showed willingness to deepen political and economic relationship with the EU. This denoted not only a desire for economic well-being, but a set of ideas and aspirations to fill the political and ideological vacuum created by the downfall of the Soviet system.¹ On the other hand, the Union provided significant economic and political support through number of programs designed particularly for the development of the NIS. The rationale behind such an increasing economic aid and political support was the EU's aspiration to fill the gap between east and west created during the long isolation era under the Soviet regime. For the EU, to extend its borders and achieve its long-term goal of "ever closer union" of the European states, it was inevitable to ensure democracy, stability and economic prosperity of its eastern neighbours. There is no doubt that Eastern European countries bordering EU present a common set of policy challenges to the Union. Therefore, instability in this area whether political or economic will have direct consequences for the security of the EU itself².

Anneli Kährrik argues that in disadvantaged urban neighbourhoods with their complex social, economic and physical situations physical upgrade is easier to achieve, at least in the short run, but initiatives often fail in outcomes on communities and local participation. Various interventions have had positive influence on local communities. The planned initiatives should at the same time directly benefit regional communities, and the involvement of local groups in the planning and implementation process helps to guarantee that the overall changes are accepted by the local community. Although it should be taken in mind that there is no universal recipe for a successful renewal suiting

¹ Bretherton, C., and J. Vogler (1999), *The European Union as a Global Actor*, London: Routledge, pg.144

² Gould, Tim. 2004. "The European Economic Area: a Model for the EU's Neighbourhood Policy?" *Perspectives on European Politics and Society*, 5 (2):171-202.

each neighbourhood, here culture, history, level of economic development, that create contextual matters, should always be a starting point when planning an initiative³.

ENP has created huge challenges for old and as well as new countries. For example, even Italy, a relatively new country of immigration, which, with 3,000,000 legal immigrants, has become the fourth country of immigration in Europe and the first in the Mediterranean basin⁴. In 2004-2007, the European Union acquired twelve new member states plus new neighbours. Since 2004 EU started to work on European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP) to bring some order to the EU's relations with its old and new neighbours and to ensure that the newly enlarged EU would be surrounded by a 'ring of friends'⁵. Furthermore, Smith argues that ENP is facing several problems in Eastern Europe by requiring much of the neighbours and offering only vague perspectives in return, making it unlikely that the ENP can meet its basic objectives. Furthermore, the ENP is ambiguous about where the EU's borders will end, and it is already apparent that such ambiguity is not helping to foster reform in eastern Europe. Either the EU should say 'no' to further enlargement, so the ENP becomes the framework for relations with the neighbour for the foreseeable future, or it should say 'yes' to eventually letting in a specified number of neighbours which then move out of the ENP⁶.

The abovementioned view-point coincides with Jeremy Gordon who argues that there is a widespread opinion that EU is still very young in order to develop sustainable and effective foreign policies towards its neighbours. As Jeremy Gordon puts it EU is understandably still experimenting with various regional policies⁷. In addition, despite a certain level of partnership between EU and Georgia (e.g. Partnership and Cooperation Agreement (PCA) since 1999), an EU Special Representative to the South Caucasus was appointed less than three years ago, and Georgia's incorporation into the ENP didn't happen until June 2004. "The EU's role in the country is new. As the European Union begins to wet its feet in the region, a balanced approach to sensitive political and economic issues is a reasonable policy"⁸. Georgia has strategic importance as a country thus potentially assisting the EU to counter drug smuggling, fight terrorism, prevent regional instability, and provide secure energy transport which is becoming more and more crucial with increased dependency on Russian energy market⁹.

³ Kährik, Anneli. 2006. "Tackling social exclusion in European neighbourhoods: experiences and lessons from the NEHOM project", *GeoJournal*, 67 (1): 9-25.

⁴ Melotti, Umberto. 2006. "Migration Policies and Political Cultures in Europe: A Changing Trend" *International Review of Sociology* 16(2).

⁵ Smith, Karane. 2005. "The Outsiders: the European Neighbourhood Policy". *International Affairs*, 81(4):757-773.

⁶ Smith, Karane. 2005. "The Outsiders: the European Neighbourhood Policy". *International Affairs*, 81(4):757-773.

⁷ Jeremy Gordon. 2006. "Georgia's Relationship with the EU: A Diverging Union". www.gfsis.org

⁸ Jeremy Gordon. 2006. "Georgia's Relationship with the EU: A Diverging Union". www.gfsis.org

⁹ Jeremy Gordon. 2006. "Georgia's Relationship with the EU: A Diverging Union". www.gfsis.org

Experts suggest that EU should get more serious about Georgia as far as security situation in the country replicates beyond the Caucasus region. Although the conflicts in Georgia's breakaway regions of South Ossetia and Abkhazia are said to be 'frozen', the regular shootings, killings and kidnappings risk escalating into full-scale civil wars. As a result, these lawless formations have become international centers of smuggling, drug-trafficking, the sale of illegal weapons¹⁰. Since January 2007 EU is sharing a sea border with Georgia as a result of moving Eastern to Bulgaria and Romania.

Mark Leonard and Charles Grant argue that political instability in Georgia would have economic implications for the EU. Georgia has become an important transit-route for oil and gas from the Caspian area. In 2005, the 1,800 kilometre Baku-Tbilisi-Cehan pipeline opened, with the potential to bring a million barrels of oil a day from Azerbaijan through the Caucasus to the Mediterranean coast of Turkey. A gas pipeline is being built alongside the oil one. Although Central Asia's oil and gas reserves are not as big as those in Russia or the Middle East, they could help to decrease Europe's dependence on those potentially unstable regions.

The final and very strong argument for more efficient EU involvement in Georgia's political and economic life is that EU institutions could have a profound effect at very little cost. "Georgia represents an important test of the EU's ability to take responsibility for the security of the European neighborhood, and to develop a meaningful policy for a country that cannot yet be considered a candidate for accession. More specifically, Georgia is a test-case for the EU's new neighborhood policy"¹¹.

There is a perception that the 'shared neighbourhood' is a common challenge for both the future of the EU-Russian Strategic Partnership and the new European Neighbourhood Policy. The EU policy towards Russia is unclear and the relationship between both remains highly ambiguous. Security still remains as the main problem in this "strategic partnership". ENP might create better conditions for foreign policy developments with neighbouring countries but there is a possibility of intensifying constraints as well. Russian factor is usually underestimated towards the new neighbours¹². Georgia is openly blaming Russia in supporting breakaway regions on the territory of Georgia. The relationship of these two countries have been a subject of many leading countries as well as international organisations thus underlining the importance of security and stability in th region as a part of EU's neighbourhood policy.

¹⁰ Leonard Mark & Grant Charles. 2005. "Georgia and the EU: Can Europe's neighbourhood policy deliver?" *Centre for European Reform*. www.cer.org.uk

¹¹ Leonard Mark & Grant Charles. 2005. "Georgia and the EU: Can Europe's neighbourhood policy deliver?" *Centre for European Reform*. www.cer.org.uk

¹² De Wilde, Tanguy & Pellon, Gaëlle. 2006. "The implications of the European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP) on the EU-Russian 'Strategic Partnership'". *Helsinki Monitor*. 17(2):119-132.

Finally, Georgia can become an important test for Europe's neighborhood policy. It is a country whose geography, history and culture are in many respects European. Its role as an energy transit route, its location close to Russia, and its frozen conflicts give it strategic importance. Georgia now has a government that is committed to reform and democracy, and has shown a strong desire to be part of the European club. Without much effort, and at even less cost, the European Union could have a major impact on Georgia, and in doing so continue the process of turning the European continent into a zone of peace, prosperity and democracy¹³.

¹³ Leonard Mark & Grant Charles. 2005. "Georgia and the EU: Can Europe's neighbourhood policy deliver?" *Centre for European Reform*. www.cer.org.uk