

EU-Promoted Regionalism in the EU's Eastern Neighbourhood

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Abstract

The EU-driven initiative called the Eastern Partnership (EaP) is expected to bring about, inter alia, regional co-operation among the six post-Soviet – WNIS (Belarus, Moldova, Ukraine) and the South Caucasus countries (Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia). Thus, the EU hopes to "Europeanize" them also within "A new framework for multilateral co-operation" (along with a simultaneously running bilateral track of the Eastern Partnership) with the aim to form stable, democratic, secure, prosperous and more predictable neighbourhood. Direct Europeanization in a multilateral setting "beyond Europe" (Schimmelfennig, 2009) - beyond the EU-member, "quasi-member", candidate and potential candidate states - is a new phenomenon. The intended regional co-operation is supposed to serve as "a natural forum" to share information and experience on partners' steps towards transition, reform and modernisation, on further developments of the EaP (Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament and the Council: Eastern Partnership, 3 December 2008). According to the Commission, it should facilitate the development of common positions and joint activities and foster links among the partners themselves. However, there are several preclusive factors which cast substantial doubts on a potential of this policy vector to succeed. One of them is the absence of the "East/ Eastern region" as such.

A tradition of regional co-operation has not been established among the six target countries, their perspectives and interests differ in many respects, the "region" has faced internal conflicts (Nagorno-Karabakh, Transnistria). Although we-ness and shared notions of belonging have a secondary significance with regard to regionalism (Bechev, 2004), and "geographical proximity accounts for more than regional identity" (ibid.); for co-operation to be more than a single (temporary) engagement as an outcome of selfish cost-benefit calculations, "it must rest on and contribute to a community of values" (Zartman & Touval, 2010, p. 7). Nevertheless, "what ultimately matters is how space and belonging is interpreted in the political process" (Bechev, 2004) forasmuch as "regions are invented by political actors as a political programme" (Neumann, in Bechev, 2004). After all, "one of the few issues on which writers on regionalism agree is that there is no such thing as a 'natural' region. Regions are social constructions whose members define their boundaries." (Ravenhill, 2008, pp. 174-175) Considering related IR definitions and theoretical propositions, can regional co-operation, as encouraged by the EU, emerge among the six East European partners? Does the EU have a capacity to promote regionalism in "a non-existing region" outside its borders, and use it as a tool of approximating the target countries to the EU? Trying to answer these questions from a theoretical point of view requires first and foremost to shed light on what the terms regionalism and Europeanization entail, and what is the relationship between them.

Introduction

An Eastern dimension of the European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP), called the Eastern Partnership, is a relatively new EU-driven initiative addressed to the six countries (Belarus, Moldova, Ukraine, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia). Its expected contribution is, first and foremost, implementation of political and socio-economic reforms in these countries; and their approximation towards the EU, i.e. Europeanization. The aim is to form stabilized, democratized, better governed, secure, economically prosperous and more predictable neighbourhood of the Union. For this purpose, there is no reason to doubt a significance of intensification of bilateral relations between the EU and particular EaP partner countries, and of applying a so-called ENP/ neighbourhood conditionality (though, generally considered less effective than the pre-accession conditionality of the EU). By adopting a differential approach by the EU, a competitive atmosphere being created among the individual recipients of the EaP policies is expected to motivate them (in some cases it does motivate indeed) to strive for a further progress in their relation with the EU, for further approximation to the EU standards.¹ Among positive outcomes of this approach one can find for instance an agreement between the EU and Georgia on gradual creation of a common aviation area, harmonization of Georgian legislation and rules in the realm of air traffic, security, consumer protection with those of the EU, thanks to which an overall mutual EU-Georgia co-operation in trade and tourism should be reinforced. Another recent concrete achievement is Ukraine's full-fledged membership in the European energy community since 1 February 2011.

However, the EaP is designed to go ahead on bilateral as well as on multilateral track simultaneously. The latter represents a novelty in the EU's external relations and Europeanization, both in theoretical and practical terms. The reason is that *direct (intentional/ conscious) Europeanization in a multilateral setting* promoted "*beyond Europe*" (Schimmelfennig, 2009); i.e. beyond the group of EU member, "quasi-member" (Norway, Liechtenstein, Switzerland), candidate (e.g. Croatia, FYROM, Iceland, Montenegro, Turkey) and potential candidate states (Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo under the UN SCR 1244, and Serbia); is an unprecedented concept. One might argue that there have already occurred EU initiatives directed at encouraging regional co-operation of countries outside the EU among themselves within various clusters such as the Black Sea Synergy and the Union for the Mediterranean/ "EuroMed" (or its predecessors called the Barcelona Process and the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership later on). However, these have been "hybrid" frameworks - they have grouped various "categories" of participants – EU members, "quasi-members", candidates, potential candidates and countries "beyond Europe" (not falling into any of the categories listed) that "are not eligible for membership in the foreseeable future" (ibid.).² Why is it important to make such careful distinctions of addressees in considering Europeanization

¹ However, other factors play a role, mainly level of interestedness and structure of domestic political elites in the EU integration, loyalty and support of the public, relations with Russia, of course, etc. Therefore, competitive pressures are somewhere perceived more, elsewhere less.

² For example, the Black Sea Synergy concerns a mixture of actors: EU members (Romania, Bulgaria, and Greece), EU candidate Turkey, and non-EU countries: Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia, Moldova, Ukraine, and Russia. As to the EuroMed, along with the EU member states, it stretches over a diverse spectrum of Southern Mediterranean, North

outside the EU? Because “mechanisms and conditions of Europeanization” (Schimmelfennig, 2010), its leverage, instruments and effects “vary significantly across contexts” (ibid.).³ Moreover, the contextual variations are illustrated also in “centres of gravity” of these regional projects. While “centre of gravity” of the Black Sea Synergy is the Black Sea (Eastern Partnership, MEMO/09/217, 2009), and that of the Union for the Mediterranean is the Mediterranean Sea; as regards the Eastern Partnership, “its centre of gravity will be Brussels” (ibid.).

Desired effects of the EaP multilateral policy vector include legislative and regulatory convergence; sharing information and experience on steps towards transition, reform and modernisation; facilitating the development of common positions and joint activities; fostering links and creating a natural forum for discussion on further developments of the EaP among the partners (Communication from the Commission, 2008). Although the project of encouraging multilateral co-operation of the six EaP countries has several major pros, such as involvement of non-governmental actors, its cons cast substantial doubts on efficiency and effectiveness of this multilateral dimension, for now as well as to the future: First, as long as the *bilateral track of the EaP* (engagement of the EU with each of the six partners separately, ranking their progress, benchmarking) “governed by the principle of differentiation” (ibid.) runs in parallel; there will be a competition among the target countries in their doings on the path of approaching the EU.⁴

Second con lies in an overall *design of the proposed multilateral policy vector* (binding time frames – deadlines for meeting commitments – not stipulated; vaguely defined goals; limited resources – widely criticized insufficient financial backing; and low frequency of multilateral meetings at various levels:

- bi-annual meetings of EaP Heads of State or Government;
- annual spring meetings of Ministers of Foreign Affairs from the EU and from the Eastern countries, attached to the Council sessions;
- four thematic platforms - democracy, good governance and stability, economic integration and convergence with EU policies, energy security, contacts between people - engaging senior officials in reform work, meeting twice a year at least, co-operating with Commission staff and the EU Presidency;

African and Middle Eastern countries, with several candidates and potential candidates for the EU membership among them (initially, in the 1990s, potential candidates and candidates later on had been part of the Barcelona Process – Cyprus, Malta, Turkey).

³ For a clearer picture of these variations, see the table arranged in the Appendix 1. It is inspired by Frank Schimmelfennig's classification of mechanisms and conditions of Europeanization beyond the EU member states, and “concentric circles” of target countries and regions (2010), however, adjusted to needs of this paper.

⁴ Nonetheless, despite endorsing the argument for differentiation and a belief in importance of treating the EU's neighbours individually for the EU's neighbourhood policy to be effective (Popescu, 2011), some analysts opine that this differentiation is insufficient. “Very often if the EU is in theory ready to give something to country X, but then there is huge pressure to give it to countries Y and Z as well, and the EU ends up not giving anything to anybody, in order not to create precedents. I have personally heard the leader of an EU member state who is generally sceptical of enlargement saying that ‘if it was only for Moldova, the EU would give Moldova an EU accession perspective tomorrow [Moldova is too small to matter and easy to swallow -n.a.], but there is Ukraine... and we cannot give this to Ukraine, nor can we treat the two differently.’” (Ibid.) “Real differentiation” should be based on and achieved through reforms, not branding (ibid.).

- so-called flagship initiatives (integrated border management programme; small and medium-sized enterprise; regional energy markets and energy efficiency; prevention of, preparedness for, and response to natural and man-made disasters, promotion of good environmental governance);
- involvement of broad spectrum of actors - representatives of governments, European Commission, other EU institutions, IOs, IFIs, business representatives, local authorities, etc., including civil society – the EaP Civil Society Forum).

In addition, for those non-EU members willing to be integrated with the EU as much as possible (expressing membership aspirations), the costs of domestic adaptation to the EU requirements, standards and *acquis* have increased gradually, primarily because the range of the EU *acquis* and agenda being decided at the EU-level instead of at national level has been extended. The same cannot be said in regard to the range of benefits springing from “paying” these costs of domestic adaptation. Thus, a carrot-and-stick approach cannot be fully applied under such circumstances of mutual interaction between the EU and the partners from its Eastern neighbourhood orbit. Instead of a “*power of attraction*”, one can speak rather of a *potential* of the EU “to empower domestic actors and shape policy-making agenda when these countries open up to the EU influence” (Wolczuk, 2008). Nor it is to the EU’s credit that for most of the time since the EaP has been launched; the EU has been busy with its own, highly-publicized, internal turbulences: copying with the economic crisis; ratification of the Treaty of Lisbon; tough creation of the EEAS; controversial expulsion of Roma people from France; and, last but not least, occasional wasting time on fiddling scrambles for amounts of the ENP funds being allocated to the East and South dimensions of the ENP, for prioritizing between “‘European’ neighbours of the EU and ‘neighbours of Europe’” (Popescu, 2011)⁵, plus a certain internal EU conditioning by some EU members because of their particular state interests and bilateral relations with Russia⁶. These and other complicated issues affecting the EU’s image and credibility in general have not stimulated the EaP countries without a membership perspective further to stick to the EU’s plan for the multilateral partnership⁷.

The third problem questioning the potential for success of the multilateral dimension of the Eastern Partnership is the absence of the “Eastern region” (pinpointed by the EU) as such⁸ (The Future of the Eastern Partnership: Challenges and Opportunities, 2010; Boonstra & Shapovalova, 2010). The “region” has faced internal difficulties connected to problems (not only) with neighbourliness (Nagorno-Karabakh,

⁵ In the aftermath of the most recent calls of some EU member states for reconsidering recipients of the ENP funds, “[t]he Hungarian EU presidency’s plan to hold a summit with six post-Soviet countries in May had recently to be put aside when France tabled a G20 summit on the same date” (Rettman, 2011a).

⁶ A leaked cable from November 2008 releases that following the Russia-Georgia war, France threatened to stall the Eastern Partnership initiative if Sweden, Poland “and others opposed to ‘business as usual’ with Moscow refused to resume EU-Russia talks” (Rettman, 2011b). “Once the decision on talks on the Partnership and Co-operation Agreement [with Russia] was made, Sweden and Poland, co-drafters of the [Eastern Partnership] initiative, were given a green light to ‘move ahead’.” (R. Silverman’s dispatch, in Rettman, 2011b)

⁷ “The states of this group have all been asking for a long-term perspective of EU membership, which the EU has refused out of concern of raising premature or totally unrealistic expectations.” (Emerson & Noutcheva, 2004)

⁸ The six countries are designated as East/ Eastern region in the EU’s official releases (communications, reports, strategy papers, posts on the Eastern Partnership website, etc.). (See for example the ENPI Regional East Programme/ Strategy Paper 2010-2013 or a rubric “Frequently asked questions” on the EaP website.)

Transnistria, Russia-Georgia war in summer 2008); perspectives and interests of the six countries under discussion differ in many respects; a tradition of regional co-operation has not been established, to say nothing of lacking in any regional identity. Can such a tradition be implanted in them from the outside? Can regional co-operation be made work due to the conscious (EU-driven) external influence, without its prior cultivation by the target “region” and without “regional identity” being established among the “region’s” constituents? Does the EU have a capacity to promote regionalism in “a non-existing region” beyond the EU, and use it as a tool of approximating the target countries to the EU? Trying to answer these questions from a theoretical point of view requires first and foremost to shed light on what the terms regionalism and Europeanization entail, and what is the relationship between them.

Regionalism

Broadly speaking, *regionalism* is regarded as a multidimensional formal process of co-operation of actors - including “states, non-state actors, organisations and social groupings” (Farrell, 2005b, p. 8) - “on a geographically concentrated basis” (Ravenhill, 2008, p. 174), “embracing economic, cultural, political and social aspects, thereby extending the understanding of regional activities beyond the creation of free trade agreements or security regimes” (Farrell, 2005b, p. 8). Contemporary regionalism is thus “made up of many different regionalisms” (ibid.).⁹ It is seen “not as an alternative, but a significant complementary layer of governance” (Fawcett, 2005, p. 23) cushioning “the contours of globalisation and state power” (ibid.). Its strategic goal is “region-building” (Farrell, 2005b, p. 8) aimed at increasing political capacity and often bargaining power (Hurrell, 2005, p. 44) of actors involved. “There are many instances where the region may be the most appropriate level of action” (Fawcett, 2005, p. 22): environmental issues; fight against terrorism, illegal migration, drug smuggling and other forms of organized crime; ensuring energy security, etc. Simply put, “regional problems invite regional solutions” (ibid.).

Regions¹⁰ should by no means be perceived as mere geographical or administrative objects, but subjects in the making (or un-making) (Hettne, 2004, p. 10, in Gilson, 2007). Regionalism occurs at three general scales at least (Hettne et al., 1999; cf. Breslin and Hook, 2002; in Söderbaum, 2005, p. 91), depending on the level at which the regional co-operation develops: First, macro-regions (“‘world regions’ or ‘international regions’”) are large territorial units or subsystems, between the ‘state’ and the ‘global’ level” (Söderbaum, 2005, p. 91), for example the EU or Mercosur. “Below macro-regions are sub-regions (or meso-regions) and their ‘sub’ prefix indicates that they...must be understood in relation to macro-regions” (ibid.). Examples of sub-regions include Mano River Union in West Africa, Nordic region within Western

⁹ It should be distinguished from a term *regionalization*, which refers to an emergence or growth of a de facto regional economy, to an economic interdependence within a given geographical area, propelled by cross-border activities of economic actors, particularly firms (Ravenhill, 2008, p. 174; Rosamond, 2003, p. 123).

¹⁰ “The concept of ‘region’ stems from the Latin word for *regio*, which means ‘direction’ (Jönsson et al., 2000, 15). It is also derived from the Latin verb *rego*: ‘to steer’ or ‘to rule’. Subsequently, the concept of region has frequently been used to denote ‘border’ or a delimited space, often a ‘province’.” (Söderbaum, 2005, p. 90)

Europe (ibid.), Visegrad region within Central Europe and, potentially, the Eastern Partnership region within the EU's neighbourhood. "Hitherto, these two levels of regions have been the foci in the field of international relations." (ibid.) Third, micro-regions "exist between the 'national' and the 'local' level, because they consist of 'sub-national' territories" (ibid.). They are labelled for example cantons, counties, Länder, self-governing regions, etc. in Europe; or provinces in Asia, Europe, Canada and South Africa.

"Historically, micro-regions have been seen as sub-national regions within the territorial boundaries of particular nation-states (or before that empires). This is one of the main explanations why the discourse of micro-regions has been sharply separated from the discourse of macro-regionalism. Another reason why the linkages have been overlooked is that scholars have made overly sharp distinctions between the different scales of regionalism. This is at least partly explained by the rigidity of disciplinary boundaries, whereby international relations scholars have been concerned first and foremost with macro- and sub-regions whereas those in regional and urban studies have focused on micro-regions, and until recently often on purely sub-national ones." (ibid. pp. 91-92)

This gap is unfortunate and constitutes one of the missing links in the study of regionalism as carried out so far (ibid. p. 87). Several studies on the micro-macro regional relation, conducted during the last decade, have brought mixed results in this respect.¹¹ As Fredrik Söderbaum argues:

"The links between micro-regionalism and macro-regionalism are not simply under-explored from an 'empirical' point of view. The neglect is also a theoretical and conceptual problem. The coexistence of micro-regionalism and macro-regionalism and above all their intriguing relationships are poorly explained by the traditional theories that dominate the research field, especially realism, liberalism," (2005, p. 88) functionalism, intergovernmentalism, etc.

"A richer and more nuanced conception of context and space" (ibid. p. 90) sees that various scales of action "are related in increasingly complex tangled hierarchies rather than being simply nested one with the other" (Jessop, 2003, p. 182, in Söderbaum, 2005, p. 90). This is best grasped by the scholarly model of multi-level governance (hereinafter MLG) which complements the traditional theoretical concepts of international relations. MLG can be defined as a complex "dispersion of authoritative decision-making across multiple territorial levels" (Hooghe & Marks, 2001, in Rosamond, 2003, p. 120) and among multiple stakeholders (state and non-state policy actors) affecting each other in various directions (Rosamond, 2003, pp. 120-121; Söderbaum, 2005, p. 90), each of them working simultaneously at different, often overlapping levels of interaction based on territorial or functional principle (within the borders of a particular territorial unit but also crossing them).¹²

¹¹ Combined they indicate that micro-regionalism and macro-regionalism can be linked in a number of divergent ways (ibid. p. 95); and there is no general pattern of whether and how they influence one another (see the examples of this relation in Söderbaum, 2005, pp. 95-101).

¹² MLG draws attention especially to a *fluidity* of the devolution of decision-making competences across these levels and across policy areas (Rosamond, 2003, p. 120; Söderbaum, 2005, p. 90).

How do all these types of regions come into existence? What prompts regional co-operation to emerge? With reference to the matter of concern of this paper, is it possible to implant regionalism from the outside? Can regional co-operation be made work due to the conscious (EU-driven) external influence, without its prior cultivation by the target "region" itself, and without "regional identity" being established among the "region's" constituents (six EaP countries)? Are not these shortcomings an impassable obstacle in meeting the EU's expectations of stimulating the development of regional co-operation in its Eastern neighbourhood?

Derived from the constructivist thinking and confirmed by regionalism in practice, it is now a widely accepted argument that regions "come to life as we talk and think about them" (Hettne, 2003, p. 27, in Söderbaum, 2005, p. 91) and "can be created both from 'above' and from 'below' (Söderbaum, 2005, p. 88). In fact, it is one of the issues on which writers on regionalism agree that there is no such thing as a 'natural' region; and that regions as well as regional identities are social constructions (Farrell, 2005b, p. 8; Hettne, 2003, p. 27, in Söderbaum, 2005, p. 91; Slocum & Van Langenhove, 2005, p. 140; Ravenhill, 2008, pp. 174-175). They are what politicians, scholars, ordinary people, states and other actors make of it by means of interpretation (Bechev, 2004; Fawcett, 2005, p. 25) – employing (constructing, deconstructing and reconstructing) them in discourse, intentionally or unintentionally, from the outside or from within (Söderbaum, 2005, p. 91; Slocum & Van Langenhove, 2005, pp. 140, 143; Fligstein, 2009, p. 135). "Consider political constructs like 'Eastern Europe', for instance. For the historian Larry Wolff, it does not go further back in time than the 18th century. The east-west division was yet another brainchild of the Enlightenment thinkers ..." (Wolff, 1994, in Bechev, 2004)

Especially in the case macro- and meso-regional initiatives such as the Eastern Partnership, "[w]hat ultimately matters is how space and belonging is interpreted in the political process" (Bechev, 2004), forasmuch as "regions are invented by political actors as a political programme" (Neumann, in Bechev, 2004). Region-building is thus a "politically programmatic" process (Hurrell, 2005, p. 53). Yet the question is, whether "an external programmer" such as the EU is able to do the trick when there is no prior regional identity built up and perceived among the "supposed-to-be region's constituents".¹³ Is missing regional identity among the EaP countries a preclusion in the programmatic process of region-building pursued by the EU? From the rationalist point of view, we-ness and shared notions of belonging have a secondary

¹³ "Collective identities refer to the idea that a group of people accepts a fundamental and consequential sameness that causes them to feel solidarity amongst themselves (Brubaker and Cooper 2000; Therborn 1995, ch. 12)." (Fligstein, 2009, pp. 134-135) They "involve worldviews about who we are, what we want, what we think, and most important, how we interpret the actions and intentions of others" (ibid. pp. 137-138). However, it is not only as we share a set of common views, values and principles recognized to be ours that "we feel like 'we'" (Cerutti & Enno, 2001, p. 4, in Slocum & Van Langenhove, 2005, p. 138). "Collective identity is also by definition about the construction of an 'other'. Our idea of who we are is usually framed as a response to some 'other' group (Barth, 1969)." (Fligstein, 2009, p. 135) All in all, collective identities (including the regional ones) "are anchored in sets of conscious and unconscious meanings that people share" (ibid.).

significance with regard to regionalism; and geographical proximity (translated into intertwined political and security interests, both in hard and soft terms) accounts for more than regional identity (reflecting set of commonalities related to familiar structures, language, worldviews, etc.) (Bechev, 2004). Yet this holds true when one looks at some concrete instances of interplay between region-building and constructing a regional identity corresponding to that region. Let's take the macro-case of the EU and an issue of to what extent an EU's regional identity is necessary in the process of building the region of the EU - "[s]o far, it appears not to have been an essential prerequisite for regionalism, nor a condition for moving forward towards deeper integration" (Farrell, 2005b, p. 12). Initially, the EU emerged and has been widening and deepening without any common identity – the rationale behind has been a result of rational considerations of actors involved.¹⁴ The build-up of an EU's identity "has not been keeping pace with the institutional processes" (Cerutti & Enno, 2001, in Slocum & Van Langenhove, 2005, p. 148) accompanying the deepening of the EU's regionalism. Moreover, constructing identity is a long-term process which means that rapid changes - especially successive waves of enlargement of the EU's community and continuous modifications of rules and policies in the EU - have not favoured creation of any single identity. Hence, despite the development of a sense of European (meaning EU's) identity being widely seen as an important prerequisite for the success of the European project these days (Slocum & Van Langenhove, 2005, p. 140); it is a matter of fact that "[i]nstead of one strong European identity, we encounter a multiplicity of European identities" (Checkel & Katzenstein (Eds.), 2009, p. 216).¹⁵ "[P]eople can choose what kind of group memberships they want to put forward. ...Identity has an element of choice and as such a region does not 'produce' a clear-cut and well-defined identity." (Slocum & Van Langenhove, 2005, p. 151) To put another example, regional identity does not seem to be crucial at all either in the case of another viable political project of regional-co-operation – the Visegrad meso-region. During the press conference on the occasion of the meeting of Foreign Ministers of the Visegrad countries, Germany, countries of the Eastern Partnership (attended also by the High Representative Catherine Ashton and the EU commissioner for enlargement and the ENP Štefan Füle) held in Bratislava on 3 March 2011; the Czech Foreign Minister Karel Schwarzenberg admitted on behalf of the founders of the Visegrad Group, including the former President of the Czech and Slovak Federal Republic Václav Havel: "We have never expected that it [the Visegrad co-operation] would endure for so long and that it would acquit itself so well. At the beginning, we understood it as a tool of the common effort in entering the EU..." [my translation]. There had not been any specific sense of a "Visegrad identity" (if ever existent) shared by societies of the Visegrad countries which would have drawn their leaders to "kick off" the region, keeping its co-operation alive and strengthening it. Obviously then, one can find enough evidence for the above-mentioned rationalist assertion that we-ness and shared notions of belonging have a secondary, if any, significance with regard to" regionalism (in Bechev, 2004), in other words; that lacking tradition of regional co-

¹⁴ Norway has not stood aside because it has perceived itself as an "other" or because it has been comprehended so by its EU partners.

¹⁵ These multiple overlapping identities across Europe include not only nationality or ethnicity but a number of other identities possessed by Europeans - professional background, sexual orientation, etc.

operation, to say nothing of any regional identity, is not an impassable obstacle in an attempt “to program” region-building by political actors, from within or from the outside.

When looking at Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine, one can see that “[n]ot all actors are interested in promoting the order-inducing properties of regionalism” (Fawcett, 2005, p. 21) and such a disinterest or unwillingness conditions success or failure of regionalism. However, in a world “where established states are regionally organised” (ibid. p. 31), a lesson for states “that may yet have only poorly developed institutions, or those who have traditionally relied on the politics of power, is that they cannot afford to ignore the potential of regionalism” (ibid. p. 30). Like many examples of regionalism from the past have shown, it is just a matter of time when they realize it.

“[t]he relative newness or fragility of states may be an important factor; in an unstable system cooperation is likely to be sporadic and superficial, limited to one or two functions, and driven by powerful insiders and outsiders. However from such unpromising beginnings a stable system can emerge showing how an appreciation of the time frame is important in judging regionalism’s prospects: conditions change and with them the prospects for further cooperation. Perhaps a good analogy, again, is that of the early experience of developing countries whose initial attempts at cooperation took place in conditions that are not so dissimilar to those of the Soviet successor states.” (Fawcett, 2005, p. 34)

Even the existing divergences in perspectives, interests and overall country profiles (in terms of regime type, degree of economic development, ethnicity, quality of human rights protection, attitude towards and ties with Russia, etc.) do not have to prevent region-building among the six necessarily, considering that “regions are seldom unitary, homogeneous or discrete units” (Söderbaum, 2005, p. 91).¹⁶ Nevertheless, it is important to take other complicated factors into account which doubt efficiency and effectiveness of the multilateral dimension of the Eastern Partnership and thus of the EU’s external region-building experiment as well. (Therefore, the two other seeming cons named in the introduction - overall design of the EaP multilateral track as proposed by the EU, and simultaneously running bilateral track of the EaP - should be subjected to a more detailed analysis likewise.)

As already mentioned, by means of the Eastern Partnership initiative, the EU aspires to “Europeanize” the six neighbouring target countries. Accordingly, the next part of the paper elucidates the phenomenon of Europeanization and sheds light on what is the relationship between regionalism and Europeanization, i.e. on the question whether promoting regionalism (within the multilateral EaP framework), something which the EU consciously strives for in its Eastern neighbourhood, can be attributed to Europeanization at all (as its distinctive tool/ element/ feature).

¹⁶ “[I]t would be unwise to discount regions because of regime type or state instability. Regionalism may thrive better in a democratic environment where civil society is relatively advanced, but it is not only the preserve of democracies, as examples from Southeast Asia also show.” (Fawcett, 2005, p. 26)

Europeanization “beyond Europe”¹⁷

Literature on Europeanization beyond the group of EU member, “quasi-member” and candidate states has been reviewed by Frank Schimmelfennig (2009). Based on the review, it seems that literature on Europeanization beyond the EU member states in general dates no earlier than from the beginning of the 21st century. Obviously then, it represents a relatively new matter of concern in European studies and IR, hence related theoretical debates are in no way closed (Graziano & Vink (Eds.), 2007, p. 7)¹⁸. This topical phenomenon should be further studied and opened to a discussion and argumentation for the sake of its clear understanding. Important to point out, some authors suggest distinguishing between the expressions EU-ization and Europeanization, in order to avoid unnecessary misunderstandings stemming from the fact that discussing European transformations (characteristics, processes and effects of Europe) is far from being the same as discussing those of the EU (Wallace, 2000, Schmidt & Wiener 2005, in Graziano and Vink (Eds.), 2007, p. 12; Solioz, 2009). Within the Europe’s framework, “other organisations and players must be borne in mind” (Emerson & Noutcheva, 2004). For example, “[f]or democracy and human rights the Council of Europe is important as a norm setting organisation and codifier of law. ...The OSCE and UN also complement the Council of Europe with their norm setting roles and security mandates” (ibid.). Nevertheless, I employ “European” in the sense of the EU’s, and the expression “Europeanization” in the sense of and instead of “EU-ization”; because of the popular and familiar usage of the former, in other words, as a reflection on the practice in the current Europeanization literature and the EU dominating the Europeanization research (Graziano & Vink (Eds.), 2007, p. 11).

There have been numerous definitions of *Europeanization* developed. Well-elaborated, widely applicable definition of this phenomenon is offered by Radaelli (drawing upon J. P. Olsen’s work): “Europeanization consists of processes of a) construction, b) diffusion, and c) institutionalization of formal and informal rules, procedures, policy paradigms, styles, ‘ways of doing things’, and shared beliefs and norms which are first defined and consolidated in the EU policy process and then incorporated in the logic of domestic (national and subnational) discourse, identities, political structures, and public policies.” (In Featherstone & Radaelli (Eds.), 2003, p. 309) *Europeanization beyond Europe* composes one of the (five) basic understandings of Europeanization suggested by J. P. Olsen (2002) in the sense of “exporting forms of

¹⁷ Europeanization “beyond Europe” is a label attached by F. Schimmelfennig (2009) to Europeanization beyond the group of EU member, “quasi-member” and candidate states. I deem it reasonable to subsume countries which have been officially awarded with the “potential candidate” status by the EU under this term as well. It should not be understood literally, though. “Beyond Europe” does not carry any connotation of designating respective countries as not being European or not belonging to Europe. Some authors rather distinguish between membership, enlargement and neighbourhood/ ENP Europeanization which is characterized by a weak conditionality (Gawrych, Melnykovska & Schweickert, 2009).

¹⁸ “There is no single grand theory of ‘Europeanization’.” (Olsen, 2002, p. 944) “As Bulmer notes,...Europeanization as such is not a theory, but rather a phenomenon that needs to be explained. ...Theory thus comes in where we need to answer how European policies, rules and norms are affecting domestic political systems. Here Europeanization scholars have reverted almost without exception to the broad spectrum of theories that fall under the umbrella of the so-called ‘new institutionalism’.” (Graziano & Vink (Eds.), 2007, p. 13)

political organization and governance” that are typical for the EU, beyond its territory¹⁹. The focus here is on *direct (intentional/ conscious) multilateral Europeanization beyond Europe* specifically.

When studying Europeanization processes, it is necessary to distinguish them from those launched and provided by other-than-EU agencies, IOs, states and other stakeholders, likewise interested in democratization, stabilization and modernization of target countries. Europeanization consists of “the external projection of internal solutions” (Lavenex, 2004, p. 695, in Schimmelfennig, 2009). Thus, it should be elucidated as much as possible what these internal EU’s solutions are. The question here is *whether regionalism can be attributed to the EU not only as a constitutive but also its distinctive feature; and implicitly, whether promoting regionalism, something which the EU strives for in its Eastern neighbourhood, is not only defining but also distinguishing element of Europeanization*. One might argue that certain forms of regionalism are recognizable in other parts of the world as well. Hence, he/ she might ask, whether promoting regionalism among the six EaP countries can be labelled as Europeanization and whether it is not just a part of a broader phenomenon, be it westernization or globalization.

F. Schimmelfennig is one of the few who explicitly designates regionalism as “a unique feature of EU external relations” (2009) while “democracy, human rights and market economy are Western principles propagated by non-EU Western countries (such as the United States) and other international organizations (e.g. the Council of Europe or the OECD) as well” (ibid.). As to the economic model, some points out “that the EU does not stand for free-market policies as such but for a multilaterally managed ‘regulatory framework for liberal markets’ according to its own model” (Grugel, 2004, p. 616, Woolcock, 2005, p. 396, in Schimmelfennig, 2009). Regarding the realm of human rights protection, in addition to the commitment to apply the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union and making it legally binding; in the Treaty of Lisbon, the EU itself acceded to the European Convention on Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms, thus making the relationship or overlap between the human rights codes of the two guarantors – the EU and the Council of Europe – official (Emerson & Noutcheva, 2004)²⁰. Last but not least, one of the mostly articulated composing processes of Europeanization is democracy promotion. But the EU’s position as a distinct or unique promoter of democracy in external relations, in comparison to other promoters such as the US, Norway, IOs, etc., is at least disputable. Rather, it seems to be “a general feature of EU democracy promotion that it has been, as several authors have put it, ‘high on rhetoric and low on policy’ (Crawford 2005 on Ghana; Warkotsch 2006 on Central Asia)” (Schimmelfennig, 2009)²¹. There is a broad agreement in the literature on the overall inconsistency of EU strategy on

¹⁹ The other four (complementary, not exclusionist) conceptions include: changes in external boundaries of the EU, centre-building or a development of institutions at the EU level, central penetration of national systems of governance to a European political centre, and a political unification project (Olsen, 2002).

²⁰ In addition to the EU 27, other 20 non-EU countries are members of the Council of Europe, including Russia and the EaP countries except Belarus.

²¹ “In a comparative analysis of EU responses to violations of democratic norms in the post-Soviet area, Alexander Warkotsch ...shows that, while the existence of a democracy clause in EU-third country agreements significantly

democracy and human rights in non-candidate third countries (ibid.). "Comparisons of ENP Action Plans confirm the absence of a coherent democracy promotion policy and the overriding importance of the EU's geostrategic and partner countries' political interests (Bosse 2007; Baracani 2009)." (Ibid.) Furthermore, in the aftermath of unrests across North Africa early in 2011, an EU commissioner in charge of enlargement and ENP, Štefan Füle, has put his regret into words: "Too many of us fell prey to the assumption that authoritarian regimes were a guarantee of stability in the region," (in Phillips, 2011), adding that the EU "must show humility about the past" (ibid.) forasmuch as it has not been "vocal enough in defending human rights and local democratic forces" (ibid.) in its southern neighbourhood.²² It thus comes as no surprise that some scholars "find it difficult to see the emphasis on values and norms as something that is particular to the EU" (Jørgensen & Laatikainen, 2004, in Sjursen, 2006, p. 240), rather, the EU "has been characterised by a technocratic style of governance with only indirect legitimacy" (Gavin, 2005, p. 230). What is striking and somehow paradoxical, however, is the fact that democracy promotion is the most widely studied area of Europeanization in the European neighbourhood, whereas studying external projection of other EU specifics (including regionalism) is relatively scarce and neglected (Schimmelfennig, 2009).

Nevertheless, although convincing in some respects, neither F. Schimmelfennig's substantiation of his claim regarding regionalism as a "unique feature of the EU external relations" seems to be sufficient. Cogently, he sees its evidence "in the tendency of the EU to design its policies for, and conclude agreements with, regional groupings of countries rather than with individual states" (2009) and backs his argument by a rationalist perspective - "an international environment that mirrors the EU is likely to be in the best interest of the EU and its member states. It is an environment that they are familiar with – and know to use to their benefit" (ibid.). Europeanization thus "includes promoting of regionally integrated liberal democracies beyond its borders" (ibid.). However, the relationship between the EU/ Europeanization and regionalism is much tighter. The two phenomena are yet more complexly intertwined. Frank Schimmelfennig handles the EU's regionalism only from the perspective of macro-regions, in a global outlook of (macro-)region-to-(macro-)region relations (i.e. in terms of a so-called "inter-regionalism"). So do some others elaborating the interface between Europeanization and promoting regionalism beyond Europe (see, for example Telò (Ed.), 2007)²³. There are also studies relating Europeanization and sub-regionalism but within the EU (e.g. Wagstaff (Ed.); 1999; Börzel 2000, 2009; Scully & Jones (Eds.), 2010). Then there is a literature on meso-regions/ sub-regions such as Belenux, Nordic, Baltic trio or the V4, analyzing, inter alia, impact of their membership or close relation to the EU.

increases the likelihood of an EU response to anti-democratic policies, it is not significantly correlated with responses that go beyond verbal denunciation." (Ibid.)

²² The argument here is not to say at all that practising and promotion of democracy, and protection of human rights, both internally as well as externally, is not one of the fundamentals the EU is based upon. This is just to say that democratization should not be "privatized" by academics, officials and analysts on behalf of the EU and Europeanization, if not specifying a distinctiveness of the EU's democracy (its norms, implementation strategies and other markers) at the same time, in case anything which could be called an EU's/ European democracy exists at all.

²³ These conceptions are often related to broader discussions on changing world order.

That is why there is a need to grasp the distinctiveness of the EU's regionalism in all its complexity, take all its levels into account as a part of one and the same picture, examine the relationship between Europeanization of countries without the EU membership perspective and regionalism into more detail, and thus complement the substantiation of the argument that promoting regionalism is indeed an EU's "domaine réservé", one of those specific "internal solutions" projected externally only by the EU.

Is regionalism a distinctive feature of the EU and its promotion a distinguishing element of Europeanization?

Speaking in terms of macro-regionalism, although regional (international) organizations such as the Organization of African Unity (now called the African Union), Organizations of American States, the League of Arab States have proliferated in the post-war period (Fawcett, 2005, p. 27); it was particularly the decade of the 1990s that witnessed a resurgence of interest in and intensification of regionalism across the world (Farrell, Hettne & Van Langenhove (Eds.), 2005, vii; Farrell, 2005b, pp. 1- 2). Largely due to the "decentralization of the international system" (Fawcett, 2005, p. 30), "the momentum generated by regional integration processes in Asia, Africa and the Americas suggested that the phenomenon was not confined to the European Union" (Farrell, Hettne & Van Langenhove (Eds.), 2005, vii).²⁴ "[D]istinct patterns and forms of regionalism have emerged and continue to develop their own particular rhythm" (Farrell, 2005b, pp. 1- 2) and "there is, at least so far, no dominant model of regionalism" (ibid. pp. 15-16). Nevertheless, when arguing for recognizing regionalism as a distinctive feature of the EU and thus its external promotion as a distinguishing element of Europeanization "beyond Europe"; the question to be addressed is not of identifying a dominant or the most prevalent mode of regionalism in the world, neither it is a question of where regionalism emerged for the very first time²⁵. Rather, it is a question of the most advanced form of regionalism, a search for the regional entity which has embraced and furthered the phenomenon of regionalism in practice in the most elaborated fashion, upgraded it (widened it in scope of issues dealt with at the regional level; and deepened it in a level of interdependence of region's constituents and their commitment to regionalism), which itself has perhaps gotten the most out of this multidimensional formal process of co-operation; and, very importantly, which has been intentionally, actively and permanently (i.e. not on a rare or exceptional ad hoc basis) engaged in promoting regionalism beyond its borders through its external relations. This is what I consider making regionalism and its external emanation and propagation a distinctive feature of such entity distinguishing it from other regionally-organized or regionalism-promoting systems. Only the EU appears to be this kind of a unique entity. In the following paragraphs, by summarizing main arguments mostly drawn from the existing

²⁴ "Since the world has been unable to construct a truly global governance system, one that is comprehensive in scope and with the capacity to manage and regulate (including the possession of a legal enforcement capability underpinned by political legitimacy), the states have turned to other forms of cooperation at the regional level in order to deal with common problems and shared interests." (Farrell, 2005b, p. 4)

²⁵ Among the first (formal) regionalisms, one could find for example "Zollverein" established in 1834; or the International Union of American Republics, initiated at the First International Conference of American States in 1890-1891.

literature on Europeanization and regionalism, I aspire to complement the substantiation of the claim that promoting regionalism is an EU's "domaine réservé" and can be rightfully attributed to Europeanization (as its distinctive tool/ element/ feature).

First of all, the first wave of academic studies on regionalism emerged in the 1950s, coinciding with the founding of European Communities (Farrell, 2005b, p. 7). From the very beginning, the heartland of the theory of regionalism has been focused on the impact of rising levels of regional exchange and the links between economic integration institutions, and identity (Hurrell, 2005, p. 46). "As is well known, it grew out of the European experience." (Ibid.) Yet today, "[t]he most prominent regional developments are of course seen to be within Europe" (Gilson, 2007). Nevertheless, as already mentioned above, other regional initiatives elsewhere in the world have come into existence since the end of the WWII. Regionalism and regionalization are clearly global phenomena, but a cursory review of the literature reveals an enormous bias in analysing and explaining their progress and prospects in terms of the European experience anyway (Fawcett, 2005, p. 26). In other words, "[t]here is a tendency...in comparative regionalism of being tempted to use 'the European model' as a benchmark against which all other forms of regionalism are judged" (Farrell, 2005b, p. 13) Accordingly, this Euro-centrism evident in the literature analyzing various regionalisms all around the world (especially in comparative politics), is an illustration of a general perception of an unprecedented success of the EU's regionalism by the regionalists' and European Studies expert community.

Secondly, despite undergoing profound transformations, the EU itself - an expression and outcome of regional co-operation - has lived up to the "regionalist code" ever since its establishment, and has represented "the regional initiative that probably went the furthest in exploring the frontiers of regionalism" (Foqué & Steenbergen, 2005, p. 54) at all its levels²⁶. The EU has developed into a renowned macro-region, embracing (but in no way swallowing up!) several meso-regions (for example Benelux, Nordic Council of Ministers, Baltic trio or the Visegrad Group) and plenty of micro-regions (provinces, self-governing regions, etc.), all of them interacting in various ways and working simultaneously at a number of, often overlapping levels (based on territorial or functional principle). Nowhere has been the relationship between micro- and macro-regionalism more evident (and perhaps also more dynamic) than in the EU (Söderbaum, 2005, p. 101). "A micro-regional policy was stipulated already in the Rome Treaty" (ibid. p. 96) but "the decisive phase that brought micro-regionalism and macro-regionalism closer together, both in theory and practice (Bourne, 2003, 278)" (ibid.), is related to the deepening of the EU since the mid-1980s (ibid. p. 101). "The Single European Act and then the Maastricht Treaty made the EU take micro-regional development more seriously, and also prompted a significant increase in the structural funds and

²⁶ "There are many goals which we cannot achieve on our own, but only in concert. Tasks are shared between the European Union, the Member States and their regions and local authorities" (Declaration on the occasion of the fiftieth anniversary of the signature of the Treaties of Rome, Berlin, 25 March 2007, in The Committee of the Regions' White Paper on Multilevel Governance, 2009, p. 3).

community funds for poorer regions in the EU.” (ibid. p. 96)²⁷ The EU has become more region-friendly towards micro-regions (ibid. p. 101) which have gained more autonomy and have been turned into both lobbyists and stakeholders in EU politics (ibid. p. 96).²⁸ Last but not least, “[c]ross-border micro-regionalism in Europe...can be seen as a consequence of higher levels of regionalism in the EU” (Ibid. p. 97).

By the same token, the existence and interplay of different regional scales within the EU is a practical confirmation of the MLG premises taking into account multiplicity of levels and directions of action and multiplicity of actors participating in the EU policy making. The fundamental nature of the EU polity is its multilevel character, and the relationship is alike with neighbouring partners, since extending the European governance to the state and non-state actors, and to state and micro-regional and local levels, presupposes a MLG structure as well (Ágh, 2009). Europeanization beyond the EU thus seems to entail, inter alia, promoting of a certain model of multi-tier democratic governance (Emerson & Noutcheva, 2004):

“Convincing examples of the relevance of multilevel governance can also be found in the regional approach to the European neighbourhood policy (e.g. the Mediterranean Dimension, the Eastern Partnership, the Black Sea Synergy initiative and the Northern Dimension), ...which is intended to be supported by effective cooperation at local and regional level. It is in this way that the Euro-Mediterranean Local and Regional Assembly (ARLEM), part of the governance of the Union for the Mediterranean, a Local and Regional Assembly for Eastern Europe and the Southern Caucasus for the Eastern Partnership proposed by the European Commission...could add an integrated and operational dynamic to the neighbourhood policy.” (The Committee of the Regions’ White Paper on Multilevel Governance, 2009, p. 13)

Indeed, in the Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament and the Council devoted to the Eastern Partnership (3 December 2008), the Commission proposed to arrange (non-binding) Memoranda of Understanding on regional policy with the six EaP countries (targeted at building up their administrative capacities with the assistance of the EU expertise and networks); to extend ENPI-funded

²⁷ “The Maastricht Treaty provided for setting up a Committee of the Regions (CoR), which began operating in 1994... The CoR has the right to initiate and make recommendations on the EU’s regional policy. Although it is an advisory body with weak formal powers, there is evidence that the Commission is taking its opinions seriously. As Bourne points out: the very creation of such a body in the EU was a significant breakthrough. It recognized regional authorities as legitimate participants in EU decision making and represented an important departure from the hitherto prevalent idea that only central governments ought to represent their state in the EU. (Bourne, 2003, 281)” (Ibid. p. 97) (The Maastricht Treaty, among other things, also established the Cohesion Fund.)

²⁸ Micro-regions make an effort to gain information and lobby in the process of EU decision-making, for example through their representation offices in Brussels (ibid. p. 101). “Especially peripheral micro-regions seek to bypass central governments or transcend the inefficiencies of national space and instead directly link into macro-regional...spaces.” (Ibid.) “In general, there are all kinds of functions and roles that are attributed to regions in EU discourses; Downs (2002, 175) summarizes some of the most prominent ones: regions are considered as ‘agents of efficiency, watchdogs of EU policy, guardians of cultural diversity, cultivators of commerce, and agents of democratisation.’” (Weiss, 2006)

cross-border co-operation to the borders between the EaP countries; and to open up to direct co-operation between their (micro-)regions and those of the EU.

“The Commission invites the participation of the **Committee of the Regions** and the **European Economic and Social Committee**, particularly in the work under thematic platforms on *Democracy, good governance and stability* and on *Contacts between people*. The Commission further invites the Committee of the Regions to establish an Eastern Europe and South Caucasus Local and Regional Assembly and the European Economic and Social Committee to participate in the Civil Society Forum.” (Communication from the Commission, 2008)²⁹

“The strong focus of the EU on regions and regional policies” (Weiss, 2006) has been reflecting the Community’s self-interpretation from the very beginning in which ideas of economic, social and territorial cohesion (one of the guiding principles not only of EU regional policies but of the Union as such), solidarity and partnership have been prominent so far (ibid.). “Already in the preamble of the Treaty of Rome, 1957, cohesion is referred to as the way of ‘reducing the differences existing among the various regions and the backwardness of the less-favoured regions’.” (ibid.) At the same time, the EU’s focus on regions in general “may also be interpreted as a strategy” (ibid.), already significant “in the ideas of the ‘founding fathers’, to give less importance to the nation states by introducing a new level and also *label* in the political system” (ibid.).

In addition to cohesion, solidarity and partnership, as well as inseparable respect for human rights, freedom, democracy, pluralism and equality, of course; the key principles of a “political culture” in the EU strongly articulated (said to be worth promoting preserving) in the Union’s official releases and *acquis* include subsidiarity and proportionality, respect for diversity, mutual loyalty and the rule of law – undeniably further supporting peaceful co-existence, viability and smooth interaction of a spectrum of scales of action within the EU’s macro-region, including sub-regions, micro-regional and local authorities. In the EU’s own discourse on its fundamentals and external relations, these scales (present not only in the EU but all around the world) are being clearly distinguished.³⁰

Understandably, there is a more or less consensus on the EU as an embodiment of regionalism in the scholarly literature as well. “Definitions” of the EU has occurred portraying it “as an advanced instance of regional co-operation (Moravcsik 1998:4-5; cf. Caporaso 1999:161)” (Moravcsik, 1998, pp. 4-5, cf. Caporaso, 1999, p. 161, in Graziano & Vink (Eds.), 2007, p. 12); “in terms of regionness, so far the only example of ‘an institutionalized regional polity’” (Hettne, 2007, p. 120); or “a mature regional community, combining a form of regional governance that is both complex and comprehensive with a legal order that is distinguishable by its rejection of national sovereignty, the founding principle that is at the heart of

²⁹ Both Committees are advisory bodies to the European Parliament and the Council.

³⁰ See for example “A secure Europe in a better world: European Security Strategy”, 2003; the Treaty of Lisbon, 2007; or the Committee of the Regions’ White Paper on Multilevel Governance, 2009.

international law" (Farrell, 2005b, p. 11)³¹. Related to this are other EU's specifics – the concept of a (voluntarily) pooled sovereignty³² and the level of commitment of region's constituents to their regional project, mirrored in the supremacy of European over national law which "had been recognized as far back as 1964 so European law was a constitutionally higher law with direct effect at national level so far as it related to the Community sphere of activities" (Gavin, 2005, p. 228)³³. (However, designating these two as further distinctive features of the EU and their external projection as a distinctive element of Europeanization would require much more attention.³⁴)

Consequently, the third argument is an observable dissonance between the EU-experienced and -promoted regionalism and other regionalisms making the EU unique in this respect. When looking at the whole picture of the EU's regionalism, one can notice it is characterized by an extraordinary institutionalization. Indeed, at all its levels, it is more institutionalized than any other existing form of regionalism. Although "changes in doctrine and institutional capacity have also been a characteristic of African, American and Asian institutions, which have moved into fields like democratisation, human rights protection, as well as upgrading security capacity and provision for peacekeeping" (Fawcett, 2005, p. 32); it is commonly and reasonably argued that so much networked and institutionalized regionalism "was developed primarily in Europe through the formation of the EU and thus adopted in Asia, South and Central America, North America and Africa" (Telò, in Fabbrini, 2009, p. 443). In other words, profound institutionalization of regional co-operation has appeared and continuously developed in the EU for the very first time; and it might have served as an inspirational model to regions elsewhere in the world willing to upgrade their regionalisms. In addition to the above-mentioned level of commitment or approach of region's constituents to regionalism³⁵, to the level of institutionalization and density of interconnectedness; the EU's regionalism differs from others in time span and a scope of activity. Most of them have not moved itself, neither have actively promoted other region-building projects externally, beyond co-operation enhancing economic regionalism, and if, it has happened so only recently or on an ad hoc basis. In

³¹ No other existing regional complex "has gone so far in overcoming the Westphalian principle of sovereignty" (Fabbrini, 2009, p. 455).

³² See Keohane, R.O. (2002). Ironies of Sovereignty: The European Union and the United States. *Journal of Common Market Studies*, Vol. 40, No. 4, pp. 743-765.

³³ "Faith in the rule of international law, and in the potential of international institutions, runs deep in the DNA of Europe's political elite" (Grant & Valášek, 2007). "Together with the European Economic Area (EEA), the EU is the most articulated example of a regional organisation that systematically uses the rule of law for the governance of its own structure and to achieve its goals within the community of its members." (Foqué & Steenbergen, 2005, p. 55) "In respect of enforcement, regionalism can facilitate the enforcement of global rules. This is illustrated by the [significant] extent to which EU law can help to give effect to international public law (Wouters and van Eeckhoutte, 2002)" (Ibid. p. 65).

³⁴ These two principles are echoed in the academic writings conceptualizing the EU as a normative, soft or civilian power. Such a conceptualization has its significant limits, though, and has already been subjected to critique and reconsiderations, implying that it is not so straightforward to attribute it as a whole to the EU, neither only to the EU (See for example Duchêne, 1972, 1973; Bull, 1983; Nye, 2004; Matlary, 2006; Manners, 2002, 2006; Sjursen, 2006; Schimmelfennig, 2010; and others).

³⁵ For example, "the EU and the US approaches to regionalism differ a lot" (Hettne, 2007, p. 117): "For the EU regionalism is a preferred form of political organization, for the US regionalism has simply an instrumental value. This difference is one important dimension of the emerging transatlantic rift..." (Ibid. pp.107-108)

general, the scope of regionalism has been usually limited to one or a very few target areas or aims but the EU, gradually (sooner than other regional complexes) taking over more and more competences and interfering into more and more policies, is a remarkable exception. Most importantly, though initially the macro-region of the European Communities was forged rather *by necessity*, the EU has become the very first entity – a regional actor - in the international system which has furthered its regionness so much *by choice*³⁶.

Last but not least, regionalism is a preferred and characteristic way of managing EU's external relations which also means that the framework of co-operation as proposed by the EU for the EaP countries is not accidental. "Since the 1990s, EU external relations policy includes support for and promotion of regional integration and cooperation in other parts of the world. A series of regional strategy papers produced by the European Commission set down the framework for cooperation between the EU and other regions." (Farrell, 2005a)³⁷ "According to Federica Bicchì the EU has consistently promoted regionalism and followed a regional approach in its agreements and relations with non-European third countries around the world – with the exception of EU-US bilateral relations" (2006, pp. 287-288, in Schimmelfennig, 2009) and EU-Russia relations. "This rather consistent approach across time and space and in spite of regional divergences" (ibid.) indicates that the EU follows an organizational rather than functional norms (ibid.) or any ideational considerations. "This is particularly evident with regard to regional policies addressing 'regions' that have few objective regional characteristics (such as high density of transactions) and do not perceive themselves as regional communities – such as the 'Mediterranean' or the African, Caribbean, and Pacific (ACP) countries. Rather, they constitute 'regions' mainly according to EU policy." (Ibid.) There are more authors who see the EU as "the archetype region and a leading proponent of utilising inter-regionalism precisely as a management tool for relations with other regions" (Gilson, 2007)³⁸, devising new forms of co-operation and promoting (all sorts of but first and foremost macro-) regionalism in a normative way as a prescription, political programme or a doctrine as to how international relations ought to be organised (Hurrell, 2005, p. 52). Hurrell explicitly argues that EU's influence "rests on its provision of a model - ...above all, as a model of governance beyond the state" (ibid. p. 44). "To sum up, interregionalism, as practiced by the EU, has the purpose of building and consolidating regional orders... Interregionalism thus forms part of the EU's foreign policy, the EU being the hub of a global pattern of interregional relations." (Hettne, 2007, pp. 120, 122)

³⁶ Some international actors involved in regional co-operation, for instance the US, as Hettne argues, do "not value regional relations as such, but cannot but operate in an increasingly regionalized world" (ibid. p. 118).

³⁷ Supporting Central and East European (CEE) regional co-operation projects had also been part of the EU's answer to the question of how to reunite Europe after the fall of the Iron Curtain. "Since these poor, fragile new democracies could not immediately be brought within the Union, the existing EU members decided to encourage CEE countries to pursue their own...groupings as a means to promote stability and cooperation in the interim" (Aggarwal & Fogarty, 2003, p. 36).

³⁸ In a narrow way, inter-regionalism is defined as "a formal relationship between organised regions" (Hettne, 2007, p. 107). With such a definition, only the EU has an authentic inter-regionalist policy (ibid.).

Conclusion

The aim of the paper was to answer the question of whether regionalism can be "implanted" by the EU beyond Europe (beyond the EU-member, "quasi-member", candidate and potential candidate states), and used as a tool of direct multilateral Europeanization of the "non-existing region" of the six (Eastern Partnership) target countries, from a theoretical perspective. In order to achieve the aspiration, firstly, I went through elucidating the two crucial terms in this debate – regionalism and Europeanization (largely drawing on the scholarly literature by S. Fabbrini, L. Fawcett, M. Farrell, A. Hurrell, B. Hettne, J.A. Gilson, F. Söderbaum, G. Weiss and others in the former; and by J.P. Olsen, C.M. Radaelli, F. Schimmelfennig, M. Emerson, etc. in the latter case). What is more, I strived to meet the challenge of a grasp on the distinctiveness of the EU's regionalism in all its complexity, of taking all its levels into account as a part of one and the same picture, examine the relationship between Europeanization of countries without the EU membership perspective and regionalism into more detail, and complement the substantiation of the argument that promoting regionalism (within the multilateral EaP framework), something which the EU strives for in its Eastern neighbourhood, is indeed an EU's "domaine réservé". Direct Europeanization beyond Europe consists of intentional "external projection of internal solutions" (Lavenex, 2004, p. 695, in Schimmelfennig, 2009).³⁹ Based on the arguments summarized and elaborated in the paper, I concluded that regionalism has definitely been one of those internal EU's "solutions" - being not just one of the intrinsic characteristics but also a distinctive feature of the EU. In sum, the promotion of regionalism (as a specific model of governance) has indeed been "an EU-specific goal" (Schimmelfennig, 2009)⁴⁰, and a consistent and distinguishing element of Europeanization and EU's external relations in general (ibid.). Taking this into account, as well as the fact that region-building is a "politically programmatic" process (Hurrell, 2005, p. 53), from the outside or from within (Söderbaum, 2005, p. 91); implies that in theory, the EU has the potential to promote regionalism in "a non-existing region" in its Eastern neighbourhood within its Europeanization endeavour.⁴¹

I deem it reasonable to assume that just as the global extension of the territorial state system has been an outstanding example of European models of polity and society spreading throughout the globe (Geyer, 1989, p. 339, in Olsen, 2002, p. 937), "making European development a key to understanding the rest of the world" (ibid.); so regionalism, the EU's masterpiece, has become a new template of the EU's political organization and governance spilling into other parts of the world, *potentially* making the European development a key to understanding the rest of the world once again in the future.⁴²

³⁹ The view of Europeanization beyond Europe presented in the paper is not exclusionist, neither exhausting.

⁴⁰ As argued in the paper, "other core goals such as stability and security or democracy and human rights are clearly...less specific to the EU's external relations" (ibid.).

⁴¹ "The EU's conception of regionalism at its periphery seems to represent the hope that the Europeanisation process may spill over its frontiers into the wider neighbourhood – at least to some degree even where the prospect of accession is not on the horizon." (Emerson, 2008)

⁴² "Of course, a successful diffusion of European forms of organization and governance, such as the territorial state, has, over time, made Europe less unique." (Olsen, 2002, p. 938) Accordingly, the less regionalism is observed as a

Nevertheless, it is important to examine further complicated factors which can doubt efficiency and effectiveness of the multilateral dimension of the Eastern Partnership and thus of the EU's external region-building experiment as well⁴³. (Therefore, the two other seeming cons mentioned in the introduction - overall design of the EaP multilateral track as proposed by the EU, and simultaneously running bilateral track of the EaP⁴⁴ - should be subjected to a more detailed analysis likewise.) Yet more important is to complement theoretical considerations by simultaneous well-grounded empirical inquiries.

unique feature of the EU and its external relations, the more the diffusion of this European form of organization and governance may be considered successful.

⁴³ For instance, a frequently articulated obstacle in case of the EaP countries is the missing membership perspective. It is commonly argued that “[o]nly those countries that harbor hopes of eventual accession are, on the whole, willing to adopt EU rules. This is why they perceive EU rules as legitimate. Otherwise, third countries will only orient themselves to EU rules if interdependence with the EU and EU bargaining power are high” (Schimmelfennig, 2009), which is not the case of the six at the moment. At the GLOBSEC conference in Bratislava, on 3 March 2011, an EU Commissioner in charge of enlargement and ENP, Štefan Füle expressed his thoughts on how the ENP could be described: “It is a set of instruments to get from the point A to the point B. To get Eastern partners as close as possible - how would you define it? We have never defined the point B – the end point.” [not literal quotation] Therefore, Europeanization should be viewed as an open-ended and voluntary process. Another concern is that “major incentives designed to induce Europeanization in ENP countries – a liberalized access of goods and persons to the EU – [are] likely to be undermined by protectionist interest groups in the EU, the exclusion of sectors such as agriculture in which the ENP partners have a competitive edge and fears of crime and uncontrolled immigration in the EU (Occhipinti 2007; Sedelmeier 2007: 201–205; Vachudová 2007).” (Schimmelfennig, 2009).

⁴⁴ On the one hand, while the EU is intentionally promoting regionalism in its Eastern neighbourhood, it seems that it is, on the other hand, unintentionally undermining it by pursuing the bilateral track.

Appendix 1

“Direct mechanisms are those in which the EU takes a pro-active stance and intentionally seeks to disseminate its model and rules of governance beyond its borders. By contrast, indirect ones are those in which either non-EU actors have the active part or the mere presence of the EU generates unintended external effects. According to the logic of consequences, Europeanization proceeds through the manipulation of incentives and the change of cost-benefit calculations in third countries. By contrast, according to the logic of appropriateness, Europeanization is an effect of the perceived authority and legitimacy of the EU, its model of governance, or its norms and rules.” (Schimmelfennig, 2010)

Europeanization beyond the EU member states				
		mechanisms and conditions		
Logics followed:		<i>direct</i>	<i>indirect</i>	
<i>logic of consequences</i>		<u>conditionality</u>	<u>externalization</u>	
		(size and credibility of incentives, costs of compliance)	(market size, legalization and centralization of rules)	
<i>logic of appropriateness</i>		<u>socialization</u>	<u>imitation</u>	
		(uncertainty, legitimacy and authority of the EU, identification, resonance with EU, frequency and density of contacts)		
Concentric circles:	contents	mechanisms and conditions		impact
<i>quasi-members</i>	market regulation, Schengen co-operation, environment, research	conditionality	externalization	strong, partial
<i>candidate and potential candidate countries</i>	all	conditionality (strong dependence, strong incentives)		strong, general
<i>Eastern Partnership countries (a subgroup of countries “beyond Europe”)</i>	all	conditionality (medium dependence, weak incentives) & socialization		medium, partial

Inspired by Frank Schimmelfennig’s classification of mechanisms and conditions of Europeanization beyond the EU member states, and “concentric circles” of target countries and regions (2010); however, adjusted to the needs of this paper. (For more details on conditionality, socialization, externalization and imitation, see Schimmelfennig, 2009 & 2010.)

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