

**The European Neighbourhood Policy:
A Flavour of Coherence in the EU's External Relations?¹**

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Introduction

The question of coherence has become one of the main issues of the foreign relations of the European Union (EU) since the creation of the pillar division and the launching of a Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP) at Maastricht in 1992. The academic literature on the European Communities (EC) and the EU external relations has always been rather critical of the EC/EU's capacity to become an international actor. Already in the

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1970s, François Duchêne advocated for an EC with civilian power, while Hedley Bull pointed at the impossibility of the EC being a power without a coherent foreign and security policy (Duchêne, 1973; Bull, 1982). The creation of the CFSP in 1992 and of the European Security and Defence Policy (ESDP) in 1999 revived the debate, in the 1990s, on EC/EU international actorness, i.e. on its capability to lead a coherent external action. It is still debated whether the EU is a “normative power” (Manners, 2002; Sjørnsen, 2006) or a “neo-medieval empire” (Zielonka, 2007) with a policy discourse on “soft power” (Johansson-Nogués, 2007; Tulmets, 2007) or, on the contrary, is becoming a foreign policy actor “with teeth” (Smith, 2000). These various qualifications in fact reflect the difficulty of evaluating the real share and weight of the EU community and its intergovernmental policies abroad. New security challenges (terrorism, environmental threats, transnational crime, etc.) have added to the growing difficulty of keeping separated policies which are increasingly interconnected. For all these reasons, the Treaty of Lisbon of 2007 envisages to abolish the pillar structure and to enhance coherence in the making of external policies within and outside the EU. I will thus take into consideration the whole spectrum of EU external relations – the activities of the first, second and third pillars abroad as well as the foreign policies of the member states – in order to discuss the notion of coherence.

It is crucial to investigate the notion of coherence in the light of the recent changes which occurred since the beginning of the 1990s, especially in the context of the launching of the CFSP / ESDP and of the Eastern enlargement of the EU. In the report of the High Representative for the CFSP Javier Solana of 2000 on the enhancement of coherence and effectiveness in EU external action, the experience of enlargement is quoted as a way to extend the benefits of European integration to a wider circle of European states, but “preserving peace, promoting stability and strengthening international security worldwide” is also considered as “a fundamental objective for the Union, and preventing violent conflict constitutes one of its most important external policy challenges” (Solana, 2000: 3). After the rejection of the Constitutional Treaty by referendum in France and the Netherlands in 2005, the European Council asked the Commission to work further on possibilities to save some of the important innovations of the rejected treaty in the field of foreign relations and thus to reach greater coherence and effectiveness. There is now a need to understand what the notion of coherence refers to

in EU external relations and also in view of a possible ratification of the Lisbon Treaty of 2007.

Empirically, the European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP) represents one of the best case studies for analysing the notion of coherence. This policy was launched in 2003-2004 in the context of enlargement so that the enlarged EU would be able to cope with instability and insecurity in its new neighbourhood. It is one of the main policies quoted in the European Security Strategy of 2003 dealing with CFSP issues (Solana, 2003), and members of the Commission often call it the “newest foreign policy” of the European Union to insist on the fact that it represents a new way of conceiving and implementing foreign policy. As the ENP was born in the context of the EU’s Eastern enlargement, it is thus not surprising that enlargement served as a strong point of reference in the launching of the ENP in order to reach “stability, prosperity and security” in the EU’s neighbourhood. As this policy was evaluated as the “EU’s most successful foreign policy” (European Commission, 2003), methods for reaching institutional coherence in enlargement served as a reference for the ENP. However, the logics of enlargement and the ENP differ in the sense that the ENP does not offer the incentive of accession. Furthermore, the ENP deals with security issues (frozen conflicts) which the EU did not have to deal with in enlargement and which rather concern second pillar issues.

This article explains the extent to which a new method, born in the context of EU enlargement, is currently being tested in the European Neighbourhood Policy to remedy the lack of coherence in EU external relations. It argues that this new method (from here referred to as the ENP method) was created in an incremental way in the larger field of the EU’s external relations in the 1990s and the 2000s in order to improve the coherence of the EU’s external relations. However, after testing the analytical frame presented below to evaluate the impact of this method on coherence in the ENP, it concludes that the ENP method aimed, thus far, at enhancing the internal coherence of the EU’s external action rather than its external coherence.

1. Coherence in the EU’s external relations: an analytical framework

In the fields of European Studies and International Relations, the words “coherence” and “consistency” are generally used as synonyms to indicate the quest for better coordination,

and thus for avoidance of overlaps and mismanagement, in the field of foreign policy². However, the literature was not very fruitful so far in defining these two notions of coherence and consistency in the EU's external relations and in finding criteria to clarify the issue. Very often, scholars focused on the existence of gaps and failures in the external relations of the EU, but only few of them tried to define precise criteria in order to investigate the lack of coherence and consistency. After the failure of the CFSP in the Western Balkans in the early 1990s, Christopher Hill pointed at the EU's capability-expectations gap, i.e. at the difficulties the EU encounters in matching strategies with expectations and in making resources available to allow implementation (Hill, 1993). Among the various attempts to define coherence or consistency, the works of Simon Duke (1999, 2006) and especially of Simon Nuttall (2005) are particularly helpful. For Nuttall, consistency refers to three main issues (Nuttall, 2005: 97):

- institutional consistency between community and intergovernmental processes;
- horizontal consistency between the three EU pillars and EU policies;
- vertical consistency between the EU and the member states' policies.

Within each issue, Nuttall identifies three various ways for the EU to foster consistency: a) legal instruments and practices (provision in the treaty for interaction, combined recourse to separate instruments); b) structures (organisational arrangements); c) obligations (exhortations to practise consistency) (Nuttall, 2005: 98).

These elements of the definition represent ideal-types: This is what the EU should ideally reach in order to have a consistent foreign policy – at least internally. As Nuttall notices (2005: 92), one has to be aware of three mistaken assumptions when looking at consistency: it is not a simple but a complex phenomenon; it does not always have to be normatively seen as positive in the European context; it does not have to highlight only foreign policy issues but can also concern domestic ones. The external relations of the EU are often criticised for their lack of consistency and efforts made towards coherence should avoid the following three gaps: institutional competition, thematic overlaps and

² For a review of the literature in the field of development studies, and possible differences on the way to define coherence in external relations, see Ashoff (2005), see Horký (2008).

duplication between the EU and the member states' activities. Thus, a dissection of the term "coherence" allows for a better understanding of the complexity of the phenomenon. However, Nuttall's analytical frame needs to be complemented with further points regarding the geographical consistency of the policy, in particular if the policy analysed deals with a specific region or with a specific group of countries: Is the policy oriented towards one or several countries or regions? How does it coordinate with further EU and member states initiatives in this region? It is also not clear how one should differentiate internal from external coherence, which I propose to assimilate with the (internal) conception of the policy and its (external) implementation. This distinction is essential, as it will gain importance over the logic of pillars if the Lisbon Treaty of 2007 is to be ratified. This article therefore suggests to complement the above-mentioned analytical frame with these additional elements (see chart below), which allow for a more detailed understanding of coherence in the field of external relations, especially in the case of complex situations.

Table 1: Analytical framework of coherence in foreign policy

	Internal coherence	External coherence
Institutional consistency	- legal instruments and practices - structures - obligations	-> check three criteria against implementation
Horizontal consistency	- legal instruments and practices - structures - obligations	-> check three criteria against implementation
Vertical consistency	- legal instruments and practices - structures - obligations	-> check three criteria against implementation
Geographical consistency	- legal instruments and practices - structures - obligations	-> check three criteria against implementation

Source: Own compilation, based on Nuttall's (2005) analytical framework.

In this understanding, there is a slight difference between consistency and coherence: while consistency is checked against criteria defined in advance, coherence reflects the overall result of the policy. I will now turn to the empirical part of this article and verify, with the help of first hand and second hand documents (political speeches, official reports, treaties, semi-direct interviews, academic literature) and the academic approach of triangulation (check-crossing material), how far the method used in the ENP aims to remedy the four cases of a lack of consistency in EU external relations. I will start with an analysis of the overall internal coherence of the policy (parts 2, 3, 4 and 5) and then

check whether implementation is consistent with what is decided and expected within the EU to draw some conclusion on the external coherence of the ENP (part 6).

2. Internal coherence in the ENP (1): a new method to reach institutional consistency

For Nuttall, institutional consistency “denotes the problems which arise because the EU has chosen to handle a single policy sector, that of external relations, by two sets of actors applying two sets of procedures”, the intergovernmental set and the community set (Nuttall, 2005: 92). The ENP highlights perfectly this reality and the attempt to introduce a new method in the EU’s foreign policy able to deal with various policy procedures and modes of decision under a single foreign policy frame. When sticking to Nuttall’s analytical points, this method should aim at a better coordination of the structure of European institutions, include classical and more innovative legal instruments and practices, and manage the whole policy through monitoring and controlling obligations.

2.1. A better coordination between European institutions

In 1992, the Maastricht Treaty incorporated the European Political Cooperation (EPC) into the Union as the CFSP (2nd pillar) and gave the responsibility to ensure the coherence of its external activities as a whole in the context of its external relations, security, economic and development policies to both the Council and the Commission (Nuttall, 2005, Duke, 2006). The academic literature on the EU’s external relations has mainly focused so far on incoherence between European institutions, especially on the difficulties of coordinating intergovernmental and community competences. After the events of 1989, the Commission gained competencies in the field of external relations, especially through the management of foreign aid programmes like PHARE or TACIS. The Council also asked the Commission to draw up a proposal to be discussed among the member states when an agreement was to be found on a foreign policy which would deal more with community policies, as was the case in enlargement. Along this vein, the Commission played a central role in shaping the innovative policy frame of the ENP, although in this context second pillar issues (crisis prevention and management of frozen conflicts) have a

more prominent share than in accession policies. As far as the European Parliament is concerned, it has been particularly active in generating political debates and in using its competencies in budgetary issues, although the EU treaties envisage, only a marginal role for this institution in EU external relations.

2.1.1. The role of the Council and the member states in the making of a policy frame

When the official negotiations for accession were opened in the EU in 1998, various political initiatives regarding Eastern Europe, which primarily came from the United Kingdom, Sweden, Poland and Germany, have been drawn up in the form of a “proximity policy” and more generally in the form of a “Wider Europe” initiative. These propositions, taking the form of articles published in newspapers, letters to the presidency of the EU or non-papers, were mainly addressed to the European Council, and they aimed at creating a sub-regional policy towards the EU’s Eastern neighbours similar to the Northern Dimension or the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership³. From the opening of accession negotiations in 1998 to the launching of the European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP) in 2003-04, the new member states from Eastern Europe – which were still candidates at the time – played a major role in influencing the European agenda and putting pressure on the Council⁴. The speeches and propositions of Polish politicians added to the support of British and Swedish calls for a “Wider Europe” policy and to the early propositions of the Finnish and German governments to enhance the Northern and Eastern dimensions of the EU’s foreign relations. They were showing their concern about the absence of an EU policy in Eastern Europe. The Baltic States were also pro-active in moving the Eastern and the Southern Caucasus into the European agenda, and the Visegrád countries as well showed some motivation in getting engaged in this issue. But countries like France, Spain and Italy began to complain that too much attention and resources had already been given to the EU’s Eastern neighbours and argued that the re-launching of the Barcelona process should take first priority. They also feared that the term “Wider Europe” could be con-

³ The common letter of Chris Patten/Anna Lindh of 2001, Jack Straw’s Letter to the Spanish presidency, speeches from Polish ex-Foreign Minister Cimoszewicz, Polish strategies on Wider Europe, and German-Polish strategies on ENP.

⁴ More on this: Tulmets, 2007; Kratochvíl, Tulmets, 2007.

fused with an accession perspective. To sum up, some countries wanted a policy toward the East, while others preferred a policy toward the South.

To solve this stalemate, the General Affairs and External Relations Council (GAERC) asked the Commissioner, Chris Patten, and the High Representative/Secretary General (HR/SG) for the CFSP, Javier Solana, to prepare a common strategy on Wider Europe able to generate a consensus among the member states, which resulted in a common letter (Patten, Solana, 2002). The Council then asked the Commission to elaborate, on the basis of this letter, a policy proposal, which the Council endorsed almost entirely in 2004. To underline the importance of the policy and its security aspects, Javier Solana also included the ENP in the European Security Strategy of 2003 (Solana, 2003). Two ESDP missions were launched in the Eastern neighbourhood (the EUJUST Themis mission related to the Rule of Law in Georgia and the EUBAM border assistance mission to Moldova and Ukraine) and EU Special Representatives were appointed abroad (to Moldova and to the South Caucasus). At various occasions, the GAERC asked the Commission to define the ENP in more detail and to add coherence to the various actions undertaken towards the EU's neighbours (EC, 2003b, 2004a,b, 2006, 2007). Therefore, the Commission also had an active share in launching the ENP and might be considered as the main tailor of the operational frame of the policy. As a matter of fact, the main policy documents were elaborated within the task force "Wider Europe", situated, at that time, at DG Enlargement.

2.1.2. The Commission as the tailor of institutional consistency in the ENP

In 2003, the Council gave the Commission the difficult task of proposing a framework for a policy of "Wider Europe" able to create institutional consistency. The Commission came up with a proposition entitled "Wider Europe – Neighbourhood", which included a method drawing on the experience of enlargement as a new way to do foreign policy, which had been complemented with the experience in the Western Balkans as a way to manage crisis. An important restructuring partly explains why the original policy ideas and instruments of the ENP were adapted from the experience of enlargement (Tulmets, 2005, 2006; Del Sarto, Schumacher, 2005; Kelley, 2006). In 2003, the Task Force "Wider Europe", composed of civil servants from the DG Enlargement and DG Relex, was created

to deal with the EU's relations towards its Eastern neighbours. In 2004, when the ENP was officially launched with the larger aim of integrating both Eastern and Southern neighbour countries, the officials working in the Task Force from the DG Enlargement were moved to DG Relex (Interviews DG Enlargement, 2003-2004, DG Relex, 2006). This allowed for what one may term "policy transfer" or, more precisely, "policy adaptation" from enlargement in the ENP⁵.

Institutionally, the ENP method establishes a bilateral dialogue with each ENP country on the basis of already existing economic agreements, which are a pre-condition for the negotiation of bilateral Action Plans (European Commission, 2003). Thus, the negotiation, screening and monitoring process takes place in the framework of the committees and sub-committees of the Association Agreements (AA, for the Southern neighbours) and the Partnership and Cooperation Agreements (PCA, for the Eastern neighbours) or Enhanced Agreements (e.g. Ukraine). This allows for a differentiated approach and for the creation of a bilateral partnership in the ENP.

2.1.3. The role of the European Parliament

Although the European Parliament has no major role to play in the EU's external relations, the issues of a "Wider Europe" and the European Neighbourhood Policy have been intensively discussed in 2002-2005 (Goujon, 2005). The Committee on Foreign Affairs took the lead in organising the debates and in publishing various reports on the ENP and its instruments⁶. Its composition – old member states interested by the issue and representatives of almost all the new member states – partly explains why the issue was regularly on the agenda of discussions of the Committee. The debates at the European Parliament were followed with great interest by the members of the Commission, in particular at DG Relex. Finally, for some analysts, the Parliament played a crucial role because it was le-

⁵ Richard Rose defines policy adaptation as occurring "when a program in effect elsewhere is the starting point for the design of a new program allowing for differences in institutions, culture, and historical specifics. Adaptation rejects copying every detail of a program; instead, it uses particular measure as a guide to what can be done" (Rose, 1993: 31).

⁶ The European Parliament issued several reports on the propositions of the Commission and the decisions taken in the ENP, available online at: http://ec.europa.eu/world/enp/index_en.htm.

gally able to vote the necessary budget for the ENP. Traditionally, the European Parliament is also pro-active on issues linked to the respect of human rights and democracy. It also has a say in the ratification of the economic agreements negotiated by the Commission with each ENP country.

Table 2: Institutional structure of the ENP

	Formation	Functions	Involved in:
Council	European Council GAERC, HR/SG on CFSP, COREPER, Political and Security Committee (PSC), Political directors, Working groups (COEST, COMEM, COMAG, EUROMED...)	- Decides on the overall policy objectives - Decisions on CFSP / ESDP issues - Policy management	Political dialogue AA and PCA Committees
European Commission	DG Relex AidCo	- Prepares policy propositions, conducts negotiations and monitoring in AA/PCA committees, prepares evaluations and reports - Manages policy assistance	AA and PCA committees AA and PCA sub-committees Programme management committees
European Parliament	Committee on Foreign Affairs	- Debates and reports on the policy - Co-decision on EU budget - Ratification of AA, PCA	

Source: Own compilation on the basis of European Commission (2003a,b) and interviews, 2004-2007.

2.2. Legal instruments as a way to improve coordination between Community and inter-

governmental issues

The method mentioned above was not created out of the blue. It draws on legal means and practices in order to manage the general policy frame of the ENP. More concretely, it relies partly on the experience of enlargement and of the signature of new types of economic agreements in the 1990s (first pillar oriented issues) as well as on new procedures introduced in the field of CFSP, e.g. the Common Strategies (second pillar issues), which were already typical of a growing thematic overlap. Given the complexity of international relations and the importance of economic issues in the EU's foreign policies, economic and political aspects – first and second pillar issues – cannot be kept separate from each other.

This was already true during the period of European Political Cooperation (EPC). However, although the EC treaties officially mentioned the necessity of achieving consistency since the Single European Act, there were no legal instruments to allow for a better coordination of the first and second pillar issues, not to mention those of the third pillar. The Maastricht treaty, in keeping the pillar structure, did not meet the expectations of the integrationists but insisted on the necessity for the Council and the Commission to ensure the consistency of the EU's external relations, security, economic and development policies. From a legal point of view, the use of some instruments, like the economic agreements or the common positions and joint actions, has built the first real bridges between these pillars. The Association Agreements (AA) and the Partnerships and Cooperation Agreements (PCA) launched respectively with the candidate countries as well as with Russia and Ukraine between 1993 and 1994 mainly dealt with first pillar issues but also contained a chapter on political dialogue typical for second pillar issues. For this reason, most of them have been concluded as mixed agreements. The CFSP and the EC, in fact, pursue similar goals – the consolidation of democracy, the rule of law and the respect of fundamental rights. One component of the CFSP is to promote international cooperation, which offers potential intersections “with virtually all external Community activities, ranging from purely commercial relations to all other kinds of cooperation” (Weidel, 2002: 50). The issue of thematic overlaps has gained particular relevance with regard to the Common Strategies as introduced in the Treaty of Amsterdam (art. 13 TEU). This instrument covers areas of common interest in which the member states should make

their means available to the Union⁷. Before launching the ENP in 2004, the Council made use of this instrument three times by adopting Common Strategies for Russia⁸, the Ukraine⁹ and the Mediterranean region¹⁰. The Common Strategies were perceived as a response to the need of more consistent policy-making coverage which would extend to all of the Union pillars (Spencer, 2001: 36). They were thus ascribed a “cross-pillar nature” able to coordinate the full range of Community and Union external policies and instruments (Hillion, 2000: 295). Nevertheless, the Common Strategies could not overcome the problems arising from the different organisational structures of the three Union pillars (Ojanen, 2000: 374).

Although the Common Strategies have been interpreted as an innovation in the EU treaties, they have also been heavily criticised, among others by the High Representative for the CFSP Javier Solana at the end of 2000 for their imperfections and for the large role given to the Commission in foreign policy issues. Therefore, a new approach was needed in order to go beyond the legal tool of Common Strategies. The Action Plans, proposed by the European Commission, represent the new document launched in 2003 to deal with cross-pillar issues. Interestingly, it was inspired by the Accession Partnerships, which contained around 30 chapters for negotiation on the European policies and *acquis*. The Action Plans are not as detailed as the Accession Partnerships, but as the very first ones were almost copied and pasted from the Accession Partnerships, they entailed many similarities in their structure (interviews, DG Enlargement, 2004). In practice, the Action Plans are negotiated between the Commission and the third countries and then agreed by the Council in consultation with the European Parliament.

⁷ “The Union commits itself to make appropriate use of *all relevant instruments and means available to the Union, the Community and the Member States* in order to contribute to the objectives of the CS” (Weidel, 2002: 53).

⁸ Decision 1999/414/CFSP, Common Strategy of the European Union on Russia, OJ L 157, 24.6.1999, 1.

⁹ Decision 1999/877/CFSP, European Council Common Strategy on Ukraine, OJ L 331, 23.12.1999, 1.

¹⁰ Decision 2000/458/CFSP, Common Strategy of the European Council on the Mediterranean region, OJ L 183, 24.7.2000, 5.

Table 3: Main legal instruments of the ENP

	Status
Association Agreement (AA), Partnership and Cooperation Agreement (PCA) or Enhanced Agreement	International (economic) agreement
Action Plan	Political agreement

Source: Own compilation on the basis of European Commission (2003a,b).

2.3. A new method to generate obligations for institutional coherence

The EU treaties contain an obligation (or exhortation) to ensure (institutional) consistency in the field of external relations. But further difficulties emerged from the new structures created in EU external relations with the Maastricht and the Amsterdam Treaties, and, to some extent, institutional consistency was easier to manage before the reforms introduced by these two treaties (Nuttall, 2005: 98, 102): “The links between member states in the first and second pillars were scanty to the point of non-existence. The Commission almost alone provided a link between the two pillars, and was able (...) to translate a political consensus in EPC [European Political Community] into action on the Community side, while at the same time warning EPC of potential difficulties in the Community. This was embodied in the fact that the same official represented the Commission in the Political Committee and in Coreper” (Nuttall, 2005: 102). Furthermore, the creation of the office of High Representative for the CFSP only added to competition between the structures of the Council and those of the Commission: “What has previously been a fairly obscure institutional difficulty has now been mediated as a personal duel, Solana versus Patten” (Nuttall, 2005: 103). Many analysts also consider that the institutional innovations of the Lisbon Treaty will not reduce competition between the various foreign policy actors if the Treaty is ratified, as competences will have to be shared at least between the President of the European Union nominated for two years and a half, the High Representative for External and Foreign Affairs (also President of the Commission) and the Commissioner for Foreign Trade.

In the case of the ENP, the first political initiatives came from some member states and candidate countries, as explained above. The common letter of Solana and Patten of 2002 not only aimed at generating consensus among the member states, but also at smoothing

cooperation between Community and intergovernmental measures. The making of a cross-pillar policy may appear as something new. However, it relies on the experience of a growing interface between the EU pillars in the 1990s and the experience of the Common Strategies. After the Common Strategies were criticised, a growing role was given to objectives, goals or guidelines defined at the level of the Council and generally proposed by the Commission. The ENP method, which mainly aims at governing through guidelines, might therefore be perceived as a way for the EU to overcome the “pillarisation” of its external relations (Winn, Lord, 2001), i.e. to avoid tensions between the logics of integration and sovereignty. This approach also sets up a more procedural way of dealing with foreign policy and thus allows the Council and the member states to keep an eye on the Commission to avoid mismanagement and to ensure transparency, especially after the mismanagement of EU external assistance denounced by the European Parliament and the European Court of Auditors in 1997 as well as after the demission of the Commission’s *collège* in 1999.

In this context, the Commission had to elaborate a more transparent method, which was already defined in the “Agenda 2000” (European Commission, 1997). The economic agreements, country reports, and Action Plans – which particularly resemble the European agreements, the accession “avis” and the Accession Partnerships – represent the legal ground for a benchmarked approach employed to pressure and monitor the neighbour countries. As in enlargement, the Commission is in charge of the monitoring and the evaluation of the reforms and the political engagements of the ENP partners with the EU as well as of the management of the assistance policy which supports the reforms through the diffusion of best practices from the member states and the adaptation of EU norms abroad (Tulmets, 2005).

Table 4: Main components of the method of governing per objectives

Policy objectives (e.g. respect EU values, conditionality)
Country reports
Action Plans / Economic agreements
Lists of <i>acquis communautaire</i> , benchmarks and best practices
Monitoring, peer reviews
Regular evaluations
→ Redefinition of objectives

Source: Own compilation on the basis of European Commission (2003a,b).

The ENP method, in mobilising various innovative tools, thus aims at enhancing institutional coherence between the Council representing the member states, the Commission and the European Parliament. The documents and management tools adopted serve as a common point of reference but also to avoiding thematic overlaps and thus to improve horizontal consistency as well.

3. Internal coherence (2): avoiding thematic overlaps to reach horizontal consistency

Horizontal consistency “refers to EU policies in general, adopted in pursuit of different objectives but with external implications which are not always taken into account. This applies to many important areas of EU activity”, like agriculture, the environment, transport, competition policy, consumer protection, etc. “All these policies, domestic in origin, can have significant impact for the world outside the EU” (Nuttall, 2005: 104). In enlargement, the externalisation of internal policies is considered as a “normal” process as the candidates aim at entering the EU one day. However, this is not as evident for the neighbour countries, especially for those which have no right, according to the EU treaties, to apply for candidacy.

3.1. The introduction of conditions in EU's external relations

The definition of conditionality at the end of the 1980s and in the 1990s in the enlargement and the development policies of the EC/EU (Smith, 1998) helps one to understand its presence as a fundament of the Neighbourhood Policy. Lacking of “hard” military

power, the European Community developed until 1992 a foreign policy mainly based on elements like economy and finance in the framework of its external economic relations. After 1992, political speeches clearly state the central role of European values and norms of democracy, human rights and the rule of law in the EU's external relations. In 1993, the EU member states agreed on the necessity to enlarge to Central and Eastern European countries, but only under certain conditions. The Council of Copenhagen stated that candidates should have: 1) stable institutions guaranteeing democracy, the rule of law, human rights and minority rights ; 2) a functioning market economy and the capacity to cope with competitive pressures inside the EC ; 3) the ability to adopt the *acquis* and to accept the aims of the political, economic, and monetary union. At the Council of Madrid in 1995, the member states also insisted on the necessity for candidates to have the administrative and judicial capacity to implement the *acquis communautaire*, i.e. the whole range of European treaties, directives, regulations and case law defined by the European Court of Justice. These conditions in fact represented a way for the EU to export its own norms and values abroad in developing an external dimension to its internal policies (Lavenex, 2004; Tulmets, 2006). A similar logic was applied in the ENP as the Commission particularly values the international dimension of the EU's internal policies:

“If we are to preserve an international order based on the rule of law and respect for those values we hold dear – human rights, democracy, good governance – we need to be using all means at our disposal to persuade emerging powers to sign up to it now. (...) We already have an impressive range of policy instruments, including development aid, diplomacy, trade policy, civilian and military crisis management, and humanitarian assistance. We also need to do more to recognize and utilise the external dimension of the EU's internal policies. Thanks to globalization, most internal policies now have an international element” (Ferrero-Waldner, 2006)

However, the ENP does not propose any perspective of accession. Therefore, ENP countries are not politically committed to respect all these conditions but only those which they agreed upon in the Action Plans negotiated with the EU. As official speeches show, the EU can only insist on the ENP countries' will to cooperate on certain issues. Despite the fact that the Copenhagen criteria have been defined for candidate countries, they have also inspired the Commission's rhetoric on the ENP. In his investiture speech before the European Parliament in 1999, Romano Prodi pointed out the necessity of

reinforcing stability in Europe through efforts on both sides and an acceptance of the common values of security and stability (Prodi, 1999). Later on, the Commission gave a more precise definition of the ENP conditionality, taking over some elements of the enlargement conditionality and of the negotiation chapters created for the candidate states. In the Commission's documents, the neighbour countries have to respect their "commitments to shared or common values":

"(...) that is respect for human rights, including minority rights, the rule of law, good governance, the promotion of good neighbourly relations, and the principles of a market economy and sustainable development as well as to certain key foreign policy goals" (European Commission, 2004a).

Thematic conditions thus represent a way to achieve coherence across sectors in the internal definition of the ENP. In its economic agreements and Action Plans with the ENP countries, the EU not only defined conditions, but it also insisted on conditionality, i.e. on the causal relationship between the progress of the partners in their reforms and the evolution of their relations with the EU. Like in the European agreements with the candidates, respect of democratic principles and human rights is a condition for delivering of assistance. It means that the economic agreement and assistance can be suspended if the conditions are not respected (negative conditionality). However, in the ENP, as in its external relations in general, the EU clearly favours positive conditionality over negative conditionality. It means that the scope of assistance is linked with the realisation of internal reforms: the more reforms are introduced along EU norms, the more assistance is allocated to the partner country.

3.2. The structures of horizontal consistency: intergovernmental formations and working groups

Horizontal consistency aims at coordinating the various sectors of the EU's activity abroad. Given the growing interconnection of these sectors, cooperation within the EU works on the thematic basis of the conditions or common values defined in the bilateral partnership between the EU and the partner countries.

As indicated in the chart on “Institutional structure in the ENP”, they are various intergovernmental formations and working groups concerned with the internal coordination and discussion on the issues linked to the ENP. Technical questions and issues of less political importance are dealt with in the geographical working groups like COEST (dealing with Eastern Europe), COMAG, COMAM (Maghreb and Middle-East) as well as EUROMED (Euro-Mediterranean Partnership) and other groups related with the ENP framework. The more political issues are discussed at the level of the political directors of the Ministries of Foreign Affairs of the member states. The main political decisions are prepared at the Committee of Permanent Representatives (COREPER) and taken at the General Affairs and External Relations Council (GAERC). These represent the various institutional frames allowing for more horizontal and cross-pillar consistency within the EU on the ENP.

3.3. Exhortations to practice horizontal consistency

The EU treaty and especially the ENP documents present many exhortations to practice horizontal consistency, for example, in regard to transversal issues like human rights and the rule of law but also in civilian crisis management. Very often, these issues concern the three EU pillars: they require the decisional framework of CFSP/ESDP but generally mobilise the civilian resources from the first and the third pillars.

In the ENP, crisis prevention was dealt with so far in the framework of CFSP/ESDP missions, like the ESDP mission on border management between Ukraine and Moldova or the Rule of Law mission in Georgia, and complemented institution-building projects led by the Commission. As some ENP partners expect the EU to play a growing role in crisis prevention in its neighbourhood, horizontal consistency will need to improve to avoid duplications in the definition and the implementation of the projects.

Furthermore, horizontal consistency implies that EU policies do not contradict with each other. One example is a strict visa policy on the side of the member states which hampers innovations promoted by the Commission like the development of people-to-people projects or the participation of ENP partners in EU committees.

To conclude on horizontal consistency, the ENP method has made possible the definition of conditions and values on the basis of which the differentiated partnership between the EU and each ENP country is defined. Interestingly, what could be seen as the military component of the ENP (because it was linked to ESDP missions) in practice mobilises civilian means (for example, the Rule of law mission in Georgia, the ESDP mission on border management in Ukraine/Moldova). One therefore needs to recognise that the ENP method aims at inducing change in the neighbourhood in the long term not through coercion but through the cumulative mobilisation of civilian means (Tulmets, 2007). The content of the Actions Plans constitutes the common ground for negotiations and dialogue; it also represents a useful document for avoiding duplication of actions between the EU and its member states.

4. Internal coherence (3): vertical consistency as a way to avoid duplication

Vertical consistency “comes into play when one or more member states pursue national policies which are out of kilter with policies agreed in the EU” (Nuttall, 2005: 98). Exhortations in the EU treaties towards more vertical consistency and the introduction of the ENP method have, however, led to changes that one might refer to as “a process of Europeanisation”¹¹ of the member states’ foreign policies.

4.1. National policies towards the neighbours

In the field of assistance, the EU treaties allow for one EU policy and then for as many assistance policies as there are member states. However, in the recent treaty reforms (Amsterdam, Nice) and policy reforms (reform of the development policy in 2005), member states were exhorted to coordinate their policies with those of the EU. Therefore, organisational structures were created to enhance the consistency between Community and national measures.

¹¹ Europeanization is generally defined as a top-down and “incremental process re-orienting the direction and shape of politics to the degree that EC political and economic dynamics become part of the organizational logic of national politics and policy-making” (Ladrech, 1994:69). See also the work of Radaelli and that of Risse and Börzel.

After the political changes of 1989, several member states of the European Communities had formulated various initiatives to assist the transformations in Eastern Europe in parallel to the European assistance (the PHARE and TACIS programmes). These were national programmes financed by national budgets aiming at transferring national norms to the East. The Germans, for example, set up in 1992 the Transform programme, which lasted until the beginning of the 2000s (Tulmets, 2003); the French launched the “Mission interministérielle pour la coopération avec l’Europe centrale et orientale” (Miceco) at the beginning of the 1990s to promote economic and cultural cooperation, especially with Poland, Czechoslovakia, Hungary and Romania; the United Kingdom supported a programme called the Know-How Fund in all the candidate countries as well as in Ukraine and Russia; the Swedes were also very active through their Swedish International Development and Cooperation Agency (SIDA), and the Dutch were active through their programme MATRA. All these programmes came to an end or were reduced after accession was politically agreed in 1998. The reforms introduced in 1997-98 by the Commission, which created, among others, the ISPA (Structural Fund), SAPARD (agriculture) and Twinning (institution-building) programmes, also offered, as consequence, new financial means as an alternative to the national ones. At that time, national experts and institutions all became strongly involved in EU projects. The Commission, which was lacking technical and regional expertise on the candidates, partly relied on the expertise of the member states to check if the accession criteria were fulfilled. In practice, this resulted in what one might call the Europeanisation of the assistance policies of the member states at the level of the norms and values promoted abroad as well as at the level of the institutions used to implement the policies (Tulmets, 2003). As most of the national programmes still concern countries like Belarus, Ukraine, Moldova and the countries of the South Caucasus, the launch of the ENP extended the adaptation process of national means to European priorities and a greater involvement in EU projects in the East.

As far as the national policies to the South are concerned, they follow a similar pathway of Europeanisation since the ENP was created as a complementary instrument to the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership and its MEDA programme, launched in 1995. Claire Visier, for example, showed how far France’s assistance towards its Southern neighbours has evolved since 1995 in defining its policy more and more within the European frame (Visier, 2003). The French proposition of a Union of the Mediterranean, which was

accepted this year in a modified version at the European level, confirms this analysis. In the framework of the ENP, the national instruments continue to “europeanise” in order to make use of the European frame for the implementation of projects. As a consequence, national expertise is made available at the EU level.

In both cases (those of the East and the South), committees were created to manage the EU assistance policy (the PHARE, ISPA, SAPARD, TACIS, MEDA committees) and to make sure that the preferences of the member states would be respected. The management of the Twinning and TAIEX projects also necessitated the creation of National Contact Points at the level of the EU member states to liaise between the national experts and the Commission. These structures therefore contributed to enhancing the coordination between the EU and the national activities of implementation. On this basis, it became possible to introduce a more encompassing assistance policy for the neighbours of the enlarged European Union.

4.2. The European Neighbourhood and Partnership Instrument (ENPI)

In 2007, the “European Neighbourhood and Partnership Instrument” (ENPI) replaced the TACIS and MEDA programmes for the financial perspective of 2007-2013 (European Commission, 2003b) and, on the insistence of the European Parliament, the European Initiative for Democracy and Human Rights (EIDHR) was kept and renamed into European Instrument for Democracy and Human Rights. The ENPI also applies to Russia, which is not officially part of the ENP. Like the pre-accession strategy, the ENPI supports progress towards democracy and reforms towards harmonisation with EU laws. Interestingly, at least four instruments created for the pre-accession strategy have been introduced in the ENPI, in which experts from the member states participate: a) Twinning (medium-term projects to improve institutional capacities, good governance and the rule of law), b) TAIEX (short-term projects to improve institutional capacities, good governance and the rule of law), c) Cross-Border Cooperation (CBC) (security and border management), d) opening of EU programmes and agencies (people-to-people cooperation).

The first instrument was, in fact, mobilised very quickly after the launch of the ENP. *Twinning* was introduced in 1997 in the enlargement policy to support capacity-building in candidate countries through institutional transfers and adaptation (Tulmets, 2006). Its primary aim is to make available the expertise of member state practitioners in foreign administrations on a specific issue – administrative and judicial capacities – where the EU has almost no *acquis* (promotion of good or best practices). Since 2003, *Twinning* was introduced in Jordan, Morocco, Lebanon, Tunisia, Egypt, Ukraine, and in the countries of the Southern Caucasus. The political character of some projects implies that implementation in neighbour countries depends mainly on the political will of the governments to cooperate with the EU on their national reforms. *Twinning* projects cover the sectoral priorities defined in the Action Plans and provide advice, for example, in the fields of internal market, justice and home affairs, energy, transport, communication, environment, research and innovation, and social policies (for more on this, see Königová, Tomalová, Tulmets, 2006). The experts are provided by the member states' administrations and institutions dealing with the implementation of the *acquis*.

The decision was taken in June 2006 to include TAIEX into the ENPI as a complement to *Twinning*, as difficulties were encountered in the first *Twinning* projects due to bureaucratic procedures, weak administration in almost all neighbour countries, a high turnover of civil servants, and a lack of resources on the partner's side. The Technical Assistance Information Exchange Office (TAIEX) was created in 1995 to assist candidate countries in adopting and implementing the chapters of the *acquis* most directly connected with the integration into the European Internal Market. It did so by providing information from a database on the *acquis* and by sending independent experts on short-term missions to the candidate countries. Since one of the aims of the ENP is to offer neighbour countries “a stake in the EU's internal market” (European Commission, 2003a), DG AidCo introduced TAIEX in its unit that deals with *Twinning* on the model of the Institution-Building Unit of the DG Enlargement. In the ENP, TAIEX is conceived as an instrument which can allow for the preparation of or serve as follow-up to *Twinning* projects (Königová, Tomalová, Tulmets, 2006).

The Commission also proposed in 2003 to improve cross-border cooperation (CBC) with specific projects in order to “prevent new dividing lines” in Europe. Cross-border projects between member states and neighbour countries mainly promote sustainable eco-

conomic, social, and environmental development in the border regions of the EU. CBC in the ENPI mainly draws on the experience of the PHARE and TACIS cross-border projects. However, difficulties in clarifying procedures on the EU's side and the lack of administrative capacities at the local level have added some delays to the launching of the first projects, which should start in 2008 (European Commission, 2007).

Finally, the ENPI also intends to increase "people to people" activities through the building of sectoral networks and the participation of neighbouring countries in EU programmes and agencies in areas like education, training and youth, health, research, environment, and culture (European Commission, 2003a, 2004a). Some experience of including citizens from non-member states in EU programmes was gained from the Mediterranean cooperation (e.g. the Anna Lindh Foundation), the Northern Dimension, and especially enlargement, which brought a larger opening of EU programmes to non-member countries. In 2006, the Commission has listed the agencies able to welcome closer sectoral cooperation (European Commission, 2006). The proposition to enhance direct contacts between people was accepted by the Council and, on the suggestion of the German Presidency's report of 2007, the Commission began to negotiate with Israel, Morocco and Ukraine protocols allowing for participation in Community programmes and agencies (European Commission, 2007: 9).

The budget of the ENPI has been discussed in a lively manner by the Council, the Commission and the European Parliament. While the Commission proposed a budget of about Euro15 billion, the Council accepted the decision to allocate Euro12 billion, which had to be split among sixteen countries plus Russia for a period of seven years (2007-13). Various specialists and analysts were sceptical about the EU's capacity to implement such costly instruments with this budget, and the offer was constantly downsized when compared to the last European enlargement. Thus, the Council accepted in 2007 the proposition of the Commission to introduce two new facilities: The Governance Facility would provide additional support (about Euro 50 million a year) for 2007-10 to partner countries that have made progress in implementing the governance priorities in their Action Plans, and the Neighbourhood Investment Facility (NIF) would support lending to ENP countries from 2008 on (European Commission, 2007).

To summarise, the experience gained in the past twenty years of assistance to transition countries and the new organisational structures have allowed for a better coordination between EU and national measures and for a greater amount of consultation between EU partners. Competition still takes place between EU member states to exert influence abroad, but it happens more within the European framework.

4.3. Exhortations for better coordination: the example of crisis prevention and management

Nowadays, member states recognise that crisis prevention and conflict management can be dealt with better within the European frame rather than the national one. However, conflict management is an issue where exhortations to practice consistency are important, given the fact that the Council and the Commission do not always share the same approach in this field. Member states tend to favour ESDP missions, where they can pursue their national preferences (and sometimes their more military perspective), while the Commission defends an approach based on the experience of cooperation with development countries and almost twenty years of democratisation and stabilisation processes in transition countries. Interestingly, the ESDP missions conducted so far in the EU's neighbourhood were decided before or during the launching of the ENP strategy and pushed forward by certain member countries and even by some countries which were not EU members yet. The benefits of these missions were included *a posteriori* in the ENP framework and in the evaluations of the Commission. Therefore, vertical consistency still needs to be improved in these fields (e.g. Nowak, 2006).

5. Internal coherence (4): the ENP, a policy able to link various geographical regions?

In order to complement Nuttall's analytical framework, one also has to look at the consistency of the geographical region(s) targeted by the analysed policy. In the case of policies reaching a group of countries, the definition of sub-regions and the linking of these various regions represent a real challenge, as the ENP shows.

5.1. Legal acceptance of the geographical scope of the ENP

The geographical scope of the ENP was at the centre of political and academic discussions since the first political proposals on a Wider Europe policy. It was first referred to in the context of discussions of the necessity to launch a policy towards the EU's Eastern neighbours, especially towards possible candidates like Ukraine, Moldova and, to a certain extent, Belarus. As France, Spain and Italy were more interested in reinforcing their co-operation with the South and in launching the Euro-Mediterranean partnership again, propositions then also included ones related to the Mediterranean countries. After the Rose Revolution in Georgia, the countries of the South Caucasus were also included among the beneficiaries of the policy. In 2003, Russia refused to participate in the ENP and negotiated a policy based on four common spaces with the EU.

The geographical scope of the ENP thus evolved over time and gained its legal acceptance only when the Council approved the communication of the Commission in 2004. As a matter of fact, the Commissioner, Chris Patten, and the Special Representative for the CFSP, Javier Solana, identified in their common letter of 2002 various regions towards which the EU should clarify its policy (Patten, Solana, 2002). The Commission had the task to give a more precise view on how the EU should deal with these bordering countries: the countries of the Western Balkans and Turkey were clearly given a perspective for accession; the countries of the Community of Independent States bordering the EU, those of the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership and those of the Southern Caucasus were included in the ENP strategy. The definition of the EU's policy targets in sub-groups of countries thus justified the development of two different processes, one including the Western Balkans and Turkey, managed by DG Enlargement, and a second one with the other groups of countries, managed by DG Relex and EuropeAid.

5.2. Structures to deal with the geographical scope of the ENP

Geographical diversity was dealt with in a common policy frame: the ENP and its assistance policy in the form of the ENPI include all the beneficiary countries, even those which refused to be included into this frame. Thus, the geographical coherence of the ENP is still undermined by structures inherited from past EU policies. The ENP, in fact,

represents a supplementary layer to already existing policies in the North and in the South, a substitute to enlargement and to an absent regional approach in the East. In terms of decisions, the main work is done in the working groups, which are organised on a geographical basis (COEST, COMAG, COMAM). However, common meetings between geographical working groups are organised to favour discussions on horizontal issues and to increase coordination within the EU. But they remain the exception rather than the rule (interviews at Permanent representations of the member states, Brussels, 2005-06).

5.3. Obligations to maintain geographical consistency

In fact, the debate on geographical coherence is still a lively one. This is reflected by the fact that some countries want to focus on the Eastern dimension of the ENP (e.g. Poland, Germany, Finland), others on its Southern dimension (Spain, France, Italy), and some on the South Caucasus (Baltic States) and the Black Sea region (Romania, Bulgaria). However, the presidency of the Council of the European Union was so far used as a place to promote one or another geographical dimension of the ENP, may it be towards the North (Finland), the East (Germany) or the South (Portugal). The EU member states are exhorted to maintain in this way a certain balance between the various geographical groupings concerned by this policy.

This also has some consequences on the external legitimacy (Beetham, Lord, 1998) and acceptance of the policy abroad and thus on its efficiency, an aspect to which I will now turn.

6. Checking external coherence: Legitimacy and effectiveness of implementation

A foreign policy which is not coherent is rarely legitimate and, without support from the various stakeholders, is rarely effective. One may recognise the importance of dealing with the policy strategies as well as with the policy implementation as foreign policy, like every public policy, has two sides: a conceptual and an operational side. The question of inadequacy between both of these elements and expectations from abroad has been characterised as a “capability-expectations gap” in the EU’s foreign relations (Hill, 1993). However, the question of implementation was rarely tackled in the field of foreign policy

analysis, although it may give useful information on how a policy may gain coherence and legitimacy over time. External coherence will be checked in this part against the elements used to identify internal coherence.

6.1. Institutional consistency and its external effects

Even if a policy was decided unanimously and under a single legal framework, it does not mean that implementation will be or appear to be coherent. The EU has created institutional frames to structure the partnerships, the political dialogue (more linked to the Council), and the political and thematic committees (more linked to the Commission). It builds on the experience of the negotiations within the committees of the economic agreements between the EU and third countries and the innovative elements on political dialogue added during the last accession process.

The AA and PCA Committees, led by the Commission, represent the institutional frame of discussion and negotiations on thematic issues. They mobilise an expertise which ranges from economic issues linked with the EU's internal market to environmental and social issues. Interestingly, the Commission managed to propose more political committees based on the same model, like the sub-committees on human rights with Tunisia and Morocco, which represent an innovation in the EU's external relations as the committees managed by the Commission no longer deal only with technical issues in their relations with third states (interviews, DG Relex, 2006).

The political dialogue was an important element introduced at the Summit of Essen in 1994 in the context of enlargement. It has spread to cooperation with development countries and now to cooperation with the ENP countries. Situated at the level of the Council, it consists in discussing issues at the level of Ministers of Foreign Affairs and their representatives on sensitive political issues in relation with the EU and with (potential) regional conflicts. It is now conceived as an important tool of crisis prevention as it is used to discuss cross-sectoral issues and to negotiate situations of crisis.

Given this dual institutional setting, the Council (representing the member states) and the Commission are steadily in competition, especially in regard to issues related to the second pillar, and so are the various DGs of the Commission responsible for external affairs (DG Enlargement, DG Relex, EuropeAid, DG Development, etc.). Despite the exis-

tence of a new method defining common objectives and benchmarks, competition over the definition and the management of the ENP still undermines the institutional coherence of the policy. Competition between the HR/SG for CFSP and the Commissioner for External Relations did not end with the publication of the common letter of 2002. Officials interviewed at the DG Relex of the Commission reported that J. Solana was keen on taking the Wider Europe initiative out of the hands of the Commission: the ENP was, indeed, one of the key policies quoted in the European Security Strategy of 2003 (interviews, DG Relex, April 2006). The Council and the Commission were not always on the same line as far as the definition of the policy, its budget and its implementation were concerned. In practice, there have been various actions undertaken in different legal frameworks. However, they sometimes took place in similar policy fields, on the same issues or in the same country (for example, the TACIS projects and the ESDP mission on the Rule of Law in Georgia). The measures might be seen as complementary, but they entail a more competitive aspect. The European Parliament was also very proactive in the ENP. It indicated its positions on various issues through lively debates and the publication of reports and would as well welcome the intensification of inter-parliamentary dialogue. It is thus not surprising to observe signs of incoherence in the EU's action abroad, as institutional competition is still present within the EU. Empirical findings on the ENP teach us so far that despite the new method identified, institutional consistency is still difficult to reach in the EU's external relations. However, efforts are made to growingly improve horizontal consistency in the field of external relations.

6.2. Horizontal consistency in the EU's neighbourhood

The legal aspects of horizontal consistency are not always clear and thus easy to deal with. Although some decisions are taken in the second EU pillar (ESDP missions, for example), their implementation often mobilises resources from the first or the third pillar. This occasions small conflicts and competition in the phase of implementation.

Negotiations undertaken in the AA and PCA committees teach us that the content of the norms and values promoted by the EU is not always well defined and is thus subject to various interpretations and definitions. The conditions of the cooperation evolve through time as the internal integration of the EU evolves as well.

The ENP method relies on documents elaborated to coordinate the EU policies around specific topics, like the country reports and the Action Plans. However, some decisions and policies decided at the EU level can also contradict with each other. In such cases, the Commission is often asked to find a solution. For example, the member states traditionally defend a rather strict visa policy, which hampers the development of people-to-people measures (cooperation in EU programmes) and sometimes renders the implementation of the ENP contradictory. On this specific issue, efforts on the side of the member states were made in 2007 to lower the costs of visas, at least for Ukraine and Moldova.

6.3. Vertical consistency abroad

Although exhortations towards better vertical consistency are inscribed in the EU Treaties, better coordination between the policies of the EU and the member states is not always easy to ensure in practice. It is challenged by contradictions emerging between community priorities and the member states' preferences and by difficulties occurring mainly at the level of implementation. The creation of the ENPI does not prevent the fact that according to the EU treaties, EU member states can keep on defining and implementing their own assistance policies to enhance their special relationships with some ENP countries.

The Commission regularly asks the member states to practice more consistency in the field of assistance to avoid a duplication of actions. It tries to be kept informed of the policies undertaken by the member states abroad, but there is no obligation for the member states to inform the Commission about this. Furthermore, the very nature of the EU implies that many kinds of actors are involved in the implementation of the EU policies. The TAIEX and Twinning projects as well as the CBC and people-to-people cooperation involve experts, civil servants, companies, universities from the member states and local actors. An ESDP mission, for example, can be implemented with means from the first and the third pillars. The Commission often tries to give coherence to the EU actions on the ground through the country reports, which represent a common frame of evaluation of EU actions towards one specific country.

6.4. *External geographical coherence*

Despite the will to create one single policy frame with a method able to take into consideration the specific context of each partner country, the coherence of the policy is undermined by the fact that, since the beginning, the ENP does not entail any geographical consistency. It was first created as a response to the lack of an EU policy towards the “Wider” Eastern Europe, but politicians have decided to enlarge it to other sub-regions like the Mediterranean countries and the South Caucasus. As a result, differences in priorities towards the East or the South persist. Recent examples are the German and Czech accents placed on the ENP towards the East during their respective EU presidencies or the French proposition of a Mediterranean Union to reinforce the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership. Institutionally, the management of geographical coherence is difficult to achieve due to the institutional organisation of the political and technical groupings dealing with policy decisions (Council, working groups) and those dealing with policy management and implementation (AA and PCA committees) along geographical regions. As far as implementation is concerned, the ENP relies on the already existing structures of the Association Agreements in the South and the Partnership and Cooperation Agreements in the East. Despite the fact that the various institutional frameworks of the assistance policy (the MEDA and TACIS programmes) were merged to create a single framework of implementation, the ENPI, policy management still works on a geographical basis between East and South.

One might explain this reality through the chain of political decisions taken within the ENP that have led to the creation of geographical groupings which geographers do not really agree with. As a matter of fact, the policy involves several groups of countries with very different political, economic and cultural backgrounds without any consideration of long time historical issues. The EU member states are now exhorted to maintain consistency between groups of countries which have no geographical definition in common except for the fact that these countries are all (more or less) geographical neighbours of the EU. The term “neighbour” is in fact used as a substitute to a coherent geographical definition of this policy, and it can also be questioned in relation to the way it is perceived and understood in the ENP countries (Meloni, 2007).

Finally, the fact that some countries, like Russia, have refused the EU offer and that others are not ready to negotiate Action Plans (Belarus, Algeria) reinforces the conviction that this policy works on the basis of inclusive and exclusive circles which overlap with other circles of cooperation defined in the EU framework. The ENP created various expectations in the neighbour countries, especially in Ukraine and Moldova, which have the right to become candidates to the EU. But the question remains whether the EU will be able to deal with these various expectations and to avoid a “clash of interpretations” (Kratohvil, 2006).

To conclude on external coherence, the EU has made important efforts in the last few years to better coordinate its various actions in its external relations. The ENP is a good test case for showing this, but empirical findings also indicate that the EU’s ability to become a coherent international actor is still open. While a large part of the answers mainly lies within the EU, it is not certain that the institutional changes proposed in the Lisbon Treaty of 2007 will simplify the issue. One has to take into account the ability of the EU to stay consistent in the phase of implementation with what was decided within the EU. However, the reasons for inconsistency do not all lie on the EU’s side. The will and the ability of the partner countries to welcome and implement the policy is also another important parameter to take into consideration, an argument which could not be elaborated here.

Conclusion

Coherence is not easy to find in the field of external foreign policies. But the innovations which occurred in the last few years in the field of the external relations of the European Union indicate that, at least, the political will is there to improve the EU’s actions and image abroad. The example of one of the EU’s latest foreign policies, the European Neighbourhood Policy, indicates that the experience of enlargement was an important source of inspiration in creating a coherent legal, institutional and political framework able to coordinate the EU actions in an institutional, horizontal, vertical and geographical way. This analysis on the ENP tends to conclude that the EU resembles more a civilian power in the sense of Duchêne (see also Johansson-Nogués, 2007; Tulmets, 2007). However, on paper, the ENP already has the flavour of *internal* coherence, as it roughly fulfils

the criteria defined in the analytical framework presented above. But as far as *external coherence* is concerned, a lot still needs to be done so that, in practice, the implementation of the policy would be consistent with what has been decided within the EU and meets the expectations of the neighbour countries. To conclude, the ENP method aimed so far at enhancing – even if imperfectly – the internal coherence of EU's external action rather than its external one. The improvement of the latter remains one of the difficult tasks which the EU will have to deal with in the upcoming years.

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