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WITH/OUT THE EU'S PERSPECTIVE: EUROPEANISATION NARRATIVES IN UKRAINE

Abstract

The Neighbourhood Europeanisation is argued to be instrumental for the diffusion of the European values in Ukraine and increased attachment of the Ukrainian population towards *Europe*. The paper inquires how the *idea of Europe* has evolved and has been perceived in Ukraine since the country's independence. Mixed methods approach combining both qualitative and quantitative methods are employed in this paper in order to draw on the theoretical underpinnings of the Europeanisation process and better explore Europeanisation narratives in Ukraine. Based on survey data, the analysis depicts how the *idea of Europe* has acquired legitimacy in the eyes of Ukrainians.

Keywords: Europeanisation process, European integration, *idea of Europe*, European values, Eastern Neighbourhood, EU, Ukraine.

Introduction

Since proclaiming its independence (1991), Ukraine has been searching for a long term political strategy both at the foreign and domestic levels. Such endeavour has meant a permanent vacillation between the European Union (EU) and Russia which, in turn, has generated cleavages within the Ukrainian political establishment. Moreover, it has left a complicated ground for alterations domestically. The resistance of the local elites to take on necessary reforms has weakened Ukraine which found itself blocked at the decision-making levels for most of its post-independence years. Consequently, the European integration perspectives for the Ukrainian state have been relatively vague, whilst the cooperation initiatives between the EU and the Ukrainian state have been far less consistent than the ones offered to the Central Eastern European countries (CEECs). Finally, the lack of a full-fledged membership perspective has significantly thwarted Ukraine's European aspirations.

All the aforementioned factors have, thus, challenged the EU's transformative agenda in post-Soviet Eastern Europe, the so-called Eastern neighbourhood. In the case of Ukraine, the Europeanisation process has probably been the most contested. The *European* perception and feelings are still nascent among Ukrainians. More than half of the population does not perceive itself *European*. However, the attachment towards the *idea of Europe*¹ is slowly but constantly increasing. This shows that gradually the idea of shared European values, principles and norms is taking root in Ukraine.

The present study inquires how the *idea of Europe* has been evolving in Ukraine. The paper argues that the Europeanisation process has been instrumental for the diffusion of the *European values* in Ukraine and for increased attachment of the Ukrainian population towards *Europe*. By focusing on the case of Ukraine, this paper arguably enables us to derive not only country-specific but also basic findings about the transmission mechanisms of the Europeanisation process beyond the EU's border in a country marred by political and economic instability and divergent societal views. In the same vein, the selected case is relevant since Ukraine has been regarded as one of the most compatible countries among the Eastern neighbours able to adopt parts from the EU's sectoral *acquis*.²

This study employs a mixed methods approach where both qualitative and quantitative methods are integrated. The explanatory methodological phase draws on the theoretical underpinnings of the Europeanisation process, particularly with regards to Neighbourhood Europeanisation. For exploring the Europeanisation narratives in Ukraine, this study centralizes the findings of the most recent surveys (2013-2015) conducted in Ukraine by the University of St. Gallen (Switzerland) within the project "Region, Nation and Beyond: An Interdisciplinary and Transcultural Reconceptualization of Ukraine"³ and by the Razumkov Centre (Ukraine). Additional evidence has also been obtained from the survey conducted in the Romanian – Ukrainian borderland in May – June 2016 within the project "Bukovyna as a Contact Zone".⁴

The paper is structured around a question-based model developed by Olsen: *what? how? and why?*⁵ Hereby, in order to address the *what*-question a definitional explanation towards the complexity of the contested notion of Europeanisation is made. Exploring the Europeanisation patterns and their competing interpretations allows for better discussing the conceptual frames of the research having Ukraine as a case study. It also investigates *how* the norms and values influence the formation

of identities and construct the *idea of Europe* beyond the EU's border. Afterwards the *why*-section further presents with empirical evidence the circumstances under which the Europeanisation process has unfolded in Ukraine. The question-based sections are followed by concluding remarks and summarizing findings.

Theoretical Reference towards Europeanisation: How European Values and Norms “Cross” the Border

The notion of Europeanisation has become gradually salient in both academic and policy-making circles dealing with EU-related integration processes. Scholars have sought to find superior explanatory ways to understand the impact of the EU's “transformative power” both in the EU member and non-member states. Among the first attempts to delineate the meaning of Europeanisation were made by Ladrech who understood it as “a process reorienting 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”.⁶ Ladrech was interested in analysing to what extent state actors are able to restructure the patterns of their internal behaviour to coincide with the EU's norms. Therefore, Europeanisation can be defined as the “domestic impact of Europe and the EU” in the sense that EU members and non-members adapt and change domestic institutions in response to the EU rules and regulations.⁷

According to Featherstone and Radaelli, the notion of Europeanisation can be understood from a multiple perspective: as a historical process; as cultural diffusion; as a process of institutional adaptation; and as adaptation of policy and policy processes to the European norms and standards⁸. Moreover, “it can range over history, culture, politics, society, and economics. It is a process of structural change, variously affecting actors and institutions, ideas and interests. In a maximalist sense, the structural change that it entails must fundamentally be of a phenomenon exhibiting similar attributes to those that predominate in, or are closely identified with, ‘Europe’”.⁹ By and large, the Europeanisation process considers the domestic impact of *Europe* and/or the European integration on subject countries and the degree to which European practices and norms could be adapted and further incorporated into a certain national environment.

Concurrently, Europeanisation is often regarded as a process influencing and constructing identities, both at the national and supranational level.¹⁰

Accordingly, Risse argues that “one would expect different interpretations with regard to what is understood as “European” in the various national contexts”; consequently, *Europe* is incorporated in the national identities in several ways, depending on “how much ideational space there is for “Europe” in given collective identity constructions”.¹¹ Therefore, the process of Europeanisation is regarded as “ideational diffusion and identity construction based on ideas of different origins”.¹²

According to the constructivist approach, the existing of the “other” is an essential prerequisite for any identity construction. In addition, it largely depends on the available boundary.¹³ While traditionally Europeanisation is considered primarily as a process which ranges across space and time,¹⁴ it considerably affects boundaries of values. A “boundary” classifies and demarcates who remains *within* a certain community and who is located *out*. For this reason, boundaries are often used to identify group membership and to regard the ones from the outside as the “other”, therefore, enhancing the feelings of emotional belonging within the given group. According to the literature, “the clearer the boundaries of the communities are, the more “real” its psychological existence becomes in peoples’ self-concepts”.¹⁵ Moreover, the existence of the “other” behind the boundary facilitates a common sense in the “we” group internally and strengthens self-perception within the community. The main differentiation between those who belong to the *in*-group and *out*-group is based on the value judgments and common rights.

The diffusion of values, norms and ideas from one community to another usually makes the boundary porous and less accurate. Moreover, neither borders nor identities are completely stable.¹⁶ They are often fluid and can be characterized as “intermediate spaces of interaction and exchange”.¹⁷ Therefore, whilst the “self” and “other” components can be congruent, the boundaries between them can become less obvious or they can even be further removed. To achieve this, one community (the projector) develops highly attractive norms and values which will be further exported and shared by the other (the recipient).¹⁸ Likewise, the “recipient” should articulate aspiration and be able to adopt certain norms and values of the “projector” who represents “highly developed groups [which]¹⁹ promote unity over large distances through an objectified and standardized culture”.²⁰ It can be embedded in the patterns of behaviour, lifestyle, norms and principles. Provided that the value patterns are attractive to the “recipient” (“outsider”) and the “recipient” is interested in their further implementation into domestic practices, the boundaries

can be gradually eliminated as a result of the integration to “inside”. Afterwards “self” and “other” are acquiring a new semantic system focus and new symbols, and the hierarchy of identities is changing. The line “we – they” / “self – other” is becoming less articulated. Moreover, the “we”-component is becoming more inclusive. The shift in the perceptions vis-à-vis former “other” is enhanced by myths, symbols and institutions which allow developments of “psychological existence” and strengthen the “imagined community”.²¹ According to Hansen, there is a variety of “others” – so-called “degrees of otherness”; divergence can contrast from positive to negative.²² The identities of the “others” can be also comprised as contending or complementary.²³ Therefore, the shift from “we” and “they” is not always possible and depends on a range of initial relationships between two groups/two communities and their advancing.

The boundary line is salient for the literature on the Europeanisation process, which distinguishes between Membership, Accession and Neighbourhood Europeanisation.²⁴ Each new layer of analysis is complementing the theoretical framework of the previous with regard to the developments *on the ground*.

Membership Europeanisation studies the impact of the EU integration process on the EU member-states. It embraces “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 making of EU public policy and politics and then incorporated in the logic of domestic discourse, identities, political structures, and public policies”.²⁵ Such understanding is compatible with the one offered by Risse, Cowles, and Caporaso, according to whom Europeanisation is interpreted as “emergence and development structures of governance, that is, of political, legal, and social institutions associated with political problem-solving that formalize interactions among the actors, and of policy networks specializing in the creation of authoritative European rules”.²⁶ Furthermore, it can be defined as an institution-building process at the European level²⁷ or as change in the domestic institutions of the member-states.²⁸

Whereas the EU is certainly the most significant actor in the region, the *idea of Europe* “spreads much further than the membership of the EU; and non-European neighbours are in varying ways appended to, or pressures on, these various European arrangements”.²⁹ Therefore, the Europeanisation process is not limited to the countries within the EU’s

borders. The diffusion of policies, values and norms sparked off by the Europeanisation process fosters in the EU's proximity shifts in the narratives and practices of national politics, discourses and identities.

Accession Europeanisation mainly concerns the transfer of the EU's norms, rules and values to the countries outside the EU's borders which are subject to the EU's enlargement policy.³⁰ By and large, Accession Europeanisation discusses to what extent the candidate-countries manage to adjust to the existing European model. For instance, the EU enlargement has significantly influenced the EU's boundary construction in the case of CEECs by bringing them "inside" from the "outside". As Risse argues, when the membership negotiations with the CEECs were launched, the European policy-makers have adopted new identity discourse vis-à-vis CEECs.³¹ Such adoption enabled the CEECs' "return to Europe" as their boundaries have been "(re)drawn" according to the new historical and geopolitical context.³²

Neighbourhood Europeanisation stems from the previous two dimensions, since it has the EU's values and norms at its core. However, it concerns those countries from the EU's vicinity which are neither part of the EU nor subject to the EU enlargement and explores how and under which circumstances the European values and norms are transmitted beyond the EU's border.

Despite not being subject to the EU's enlargement strategy, countries from the Eastern neighbourhood have been offered, instead, different working frameworks premised on enhanced cooperation and closer relations (e.g. the European Neighbourhood Policy launched in 2004 and two initiatives subsequently developed – the Eastern Partnership, in 2009, and the Black Sea Synergy, in 2008). These neighbourhood initiatives have been designed to make the fault lines between EU and non-EU members blurred, since the bordering process can "erase territorial ambiguity and ambivalent identities in order to shape a unique and cohesive order".³³

Unlike the CEECs, however, where the Europeanisation process has been strengthened by the enlargement mechanisms of conditionality, in the neighbourhood countries the changes are induced into the domestic affairs mainly through a process of *socialization*. Primarily based on constructivist approach, *social learning* assumes the adoption of norms and values by the actors and makes them converge towards *Europe*. Schimmelfennig believes that "socialization from the outside" envisages "all EU efforts to "teach" EU policies – as well as the ideas and norms behind them – to outsiders, to persuade outsiders that these policies are appropriate and,

as a consequence, to motivate them to adopt EU policies".³⁴ In this regard, the process of socialisation is likely to take place through "social learning", "constructive impact" and "communication".³⁵ Moreover, it comprises "teaching methods"³⁶ aimed at transferring principles and rules undergirding European governance beyond the EU's border in the neighbouring countries (figure 1).

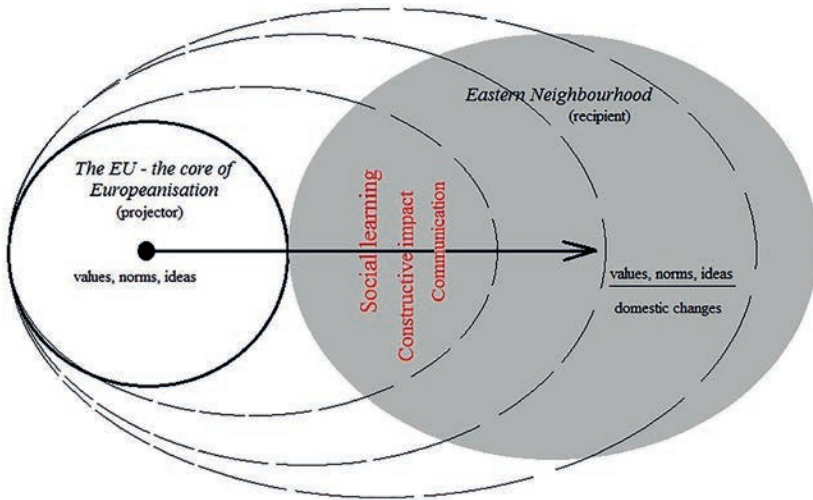


Figure 1. Basic model of Europeanisation process in the Neighbourhood.

Source: Own representation according to Schimmelfennig, F., "Europeanization beyond Europe" in *Living Reviews in European Governance*, 7 (1), 2012, pp. 1–31.

The efficiency of Neighbourhood Europeanisation is not only given by the EU's impact (namely, external influence), but also by the domestic support for reforms in the neighbouring countries (e.g. positive perception vis-à-vis *Europe* in the subject country).³⁷ The efficiency of transformational changes is influenced by several factors. First, the domestic support for changes is likely higher if the EU's principles and rules are closer to domestic rules of governing. Second, the process of adaptation is stronger if recipient countries find themselves "in a novel and uncertain environment, identify with and aspire to belong to "Europe".³⁸ Accordingly, the local actors are likely more committed to the adoption of the EU's norms –

good governance, democracy, rule of law, human rights and fundamental freedoms.

Constructing Europeanisation Narratives in Ukraine: Main Discourses and Perceptions

Since the first years of its independence, Ukraine has sought to enhance cooperation with the EU. While the EU recognized the Ukrainian state in December 1991, in the first Ukrainian foreign policy document – the Verkhovna Rada Decree “On the Main Directions of Ukraine’s Foreign Policy” – adopted in 1993, increased political, economic, military, cultural, scientific and humanitarian ties with the EU member-states were ranked among the main national strategic priorities. The text mentioned that “strengthening relations with the Western European countries will create conditions for the restoration of Ukraine’s ancient political, economic, cultural, spiritual ties with the European civilization, enhancing democracy, market reforms and national economy”.³⁹ This framework for cooperation has been the core foundation for expanding Ukraine’s engagement with the European structures and institutions. Similarly, the 1993 document expressed Ukraine’s intentions to sign the Partnership and Cooperation Agreement (PCA)⁴⁰ with the EU aiming at further anchoring Ukraine in *Europe*.

The 1993 Decree was followed by the Strategy and Programme of Ukraine’s integration to the EU signed in 1998 and 2000 respectively. In the 2002 address to Verkhovna Rada, President Kuchma described the European integration as the key national project for the next decade. The need to reform in line with the EU’s principles and norms was again ranked among the top strategic national priorities.

The support for European integration has constantly been offered by the Ukrainian Parliament, for instance while approving the 2002 Decision “On Parliamentary Hearings on the Cooperation of Ukraine and the EU” or the 2007 Declaration “On the Beginning of Negotiations on the New Agreement between Ukraine and the EU”. Before signing the new agreement, the PCA was automatically prolonged based on the mutual decision of both Ukraine and the EU. “Ukraine’s integration in the European political, economic and legal space aiming at obtaining the membership in the European Union” was also defined as national priority in the 2003 Law of Ukraine “On the Foundations of National Security of

Ukraine".⁴¹ Later on the Ukraine's integration aspirations were emphasized in article 11 of the 2010 Law of Ukraine "On the Foundations of Internal and Foreign Policy".

All in all, the development of harmonious relations with the EU has always been in the Ukrainian national political agenda, whilst the declarative aspirations towards *Europe* have always been present in the official discourse of the Ukrainian political establishment. However, the continuous aspiration towards the EU membership has not been always positively correlated with the pace of reforms.

The 2004 "Orange revolution" represented an impetus for domestic reforms. It was expected to conclude Kuchma's era of "integration by declaration".⁴² However, due to the political instability which unfolded in the post-2004 period, reforms have been insufficiently comprehensive and only selectively implemented. According to Melnykovska, "engaged in power struggles, the Ukrainian leadership has little room for implementation of the EU-related reforms"⁴³ as its representatives were more engaged in the strong competition among political groups. Pro-European consensus among Ukrainian politicians could not balance the disagreements upon domestic affairs. Hence, declarative integration was doubled by what Langbein and Wolczuk called "declarative Europeanisation" – regardless of the constant declared support for Ukraine's European integration, the political elite has not sufficiently contributed to advancing it beyond declarations.⁴⁴

Concurrently, Ukraine's expectations did not fully correspond to the EU's vision towards the Eastern neighbourhood. The European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP) envisaged the enhancement of political cooperation and economic integration between the EU and the countries from its proximity.⁴⁵ Since the ENP did not pledge a full-fledged membership to the neighbouring countries, it has not managed to sufficiently incentivize political elites to carry out real EU-oriented reforms. The ENP was subsequently complemented by other regional and multilateral cooperation initiatives: Black Sea Synergy and Eastern Partnership. Despite their ambitious goals, their success has been also limited.

The basic principles of the EU policy towards Ukraine have been determined by the provisions of the Association Agreement (AA) based on the principles of political association and economic integration. The text of the AA was initiated in March 2012 after bilateral negotiations between the EU and Ukraine were completed in December 2011. Since 2012

completing the AA has been Ukraine's main political objective. This step has been regarded not only as a decisive step towards Ukraine's European integration but also as a commitment towards *Europe*. More than half of Ukrainian population has rated the AA primarily as an instrument meant to bring about economic development (52.5%), democracy (51.9%), education, science and technologies (51.4%). In addition, the AA was also perceived as a tool for enhancing infrastructure (49.4%), food quality (46.8%), better administration (41%), anti-corruption mechanisms (38%), employment (37.2%) and environment protection (35.6%).⁴⁶

When the then president of Ukraine V. Yanukovich announced on the eve of the EaP summit in Vilnius the suspension of the preparations for signing the AA, this decision sparked off a wave of massive protests (the events entitled Euromaidan or the Revolution of Dignity). After November 29-30, 2013 when during the night peaceful protestors were dispersed by police from the Square of Independence, the core of the Euromaidan, the focus of the protests was partially shifted. While the call for European integration has become less vocal, what obtained greater salience was the demand for internal political changes and reforms. According to the survey conducted in 2015, the events of EuroMaidan were depicted as "conscious fight of citizens who united to protect their rights" by 46.5% of population, whereas 13.6% of respondents characterized EuroMaidan as spontaneous protests. Concurrently public support towards this movement was expressed by 43.1%.⁴⁷

In March 13, 2014 the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine adopted the Resolution "On Confirmation of Ukraine's Course towards Integration into the European Union and Priority Measures in this Direction" aimed at keeping Ukraine's European integration aspiration on track. The resolution also stated that Ukraine is a European state which "shares a common history and values with the countries of the European Union, has the right to apply for a membership in the European Union" according to Article 49 of the Treaty on European Union.⁴⁸ The 2014 Resolution of the Verkhovna Rada recommended the acting President and the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine to implement all the necessary steps to meet the European integration aspirations of Ukraine. The process of signing and ratifying of the AA in 2014 launched a new form of relationships between Ukraine and the EU as a result of massive support of Ukrainians manifested during Euromaidan movement. At the ceremony of signing of the AA, president Petro Poroshenko announced that "economic integration and political association with the EU is our [Ukrainian] understanding of

successful development”.⁴⁹ He also underlined that Ukraine as a European state shares the same values and “the EU is not just some countries in the union, it is the idea, the answer towards the requirements of today”.⁵⁰ The preamble of the AA also affirmed that “Ukraine as a European country shares a common history and common values with the Member States of the European Union (EU) and is committed to promoting those values”,⁵¹ while the EU “acknowledges the European aspirations of Ukraine and welcomes its European choice”.⁵²

Furthermore, the European Reform Agenda for Ukraine jointly elaborated by the Government of Ukraine, the European Commission and the European External Action Service has included a set of tasks regarding the implementation of fundamental reforms for Ukraine’s development. Accordingly, the AA is a strategic benchmark for systemic political and socio-economic reforms in Ukraine, comprehensive adaptation of Ukrainian legislation towards the EU norms and rules.

Alongside with the AA negotiations, the visa-free regime negotiations have been running in parallel. These negotiations have been aimed at facilitating “people to people” contact between Ukraine and the EU. The possibility to travel “visa free” has always been perceived by Ukrainian citizens among the main priorities that could be gained from the association with the EU.⁵³ Visa free regime has been ranked as very important by 22.9%, whereas 33.7% of Ukrainians consider it important.⁵⁴ According to the collected data from the survey visa-facilitation is among the key indicators of *belonging to Europe* in people’s perception (figure 4).

It is interesting to notice that public perceptions towards *Europe* have varied during the years. They have often been interrelated with the preferences for the alternative direction of the foreign policy (namely, cooperation with Russia; see figure 2). For instance, according to data provided by Razumkov Centre, in 2006 the cooperation with the EU was mentioned as the most desirable by less than 30% of population (27.2%), whereas relations with Russia scored 43.4%. The reason mainly laid in the public disappointment towards the pro-European “orange” coalition which did not manage to bring about economic development and reforms. Concurrently, the lowest level of the EU support in 2006 coincided with the EU’s enlargement that left Ukraine “behind the boundary” in public perception. The decline of Ukrainians’ preferences towards the EU in 2003 in comparison with 2002 by more than 5% during one year can be explained by the introducing of so-called “paper wall” – visa requirements for Ukrainian citizens from the countries – candidates for

the EU enlargement. On the contrary, the highest degree of support for the EU perspective of Ukraine appeared in post-EuroMaidan. 52.5% of respondents considered Ukraine's relations with the EU member-states a priority for the country's foreign policy (and only 16.6% opted for cooperation with Russia). However, such preferences were not evenly distributed across the country. The Western regions of Ukraine appeared to be more pro-European than the Eastern ones.⁵⁵

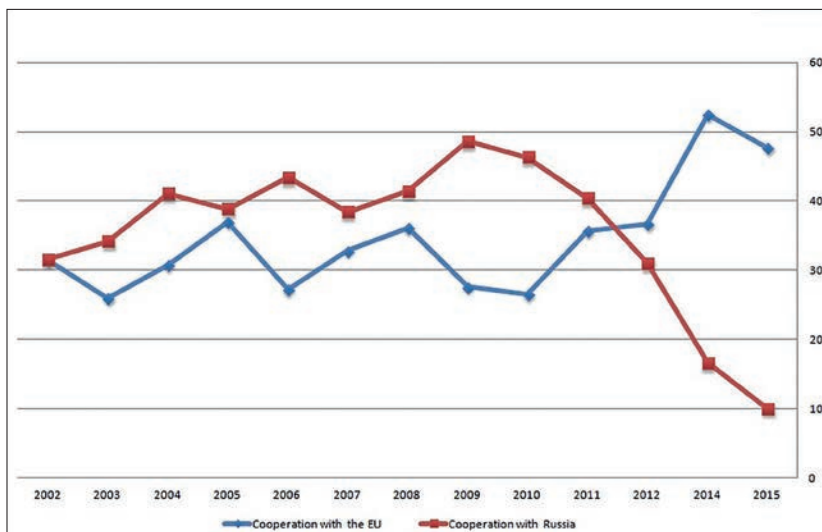


Figure 2. Relations with the EU member-states and Russia as a priority for foreign policy of Ukraine, public perceptions, 2002-2015.

Source: Own representation according to data provided by Razumkov Centre, 2015.⁵⁶

Despite the gradual dynamic of increasing support for the European integration during the recent years, such aspirations can be negatively influenced by the insufficient pace of reforms. In response to the question whether the reforms have progressed well and the authorities have implemented what they were supposed to do, about half of respondents indicated that nothing has been actually done (48.4%). 24.6% believe that only 10% of reforms are progressing well, while only less than 1% of Ukrainian population is satisfied with the progress of reforms.⁵⁷ Not surprisingly, Ukrainians are not optimistic regarding the success of the

reforms referring to the previous experience of their explicitly declarative character (figure 3). However, regardless of all the challenges in the enhancement of domestic reforms, almost 40% of Ukrainian citizens still believe in the EU membership of Ukraine in the future.⁵⁸

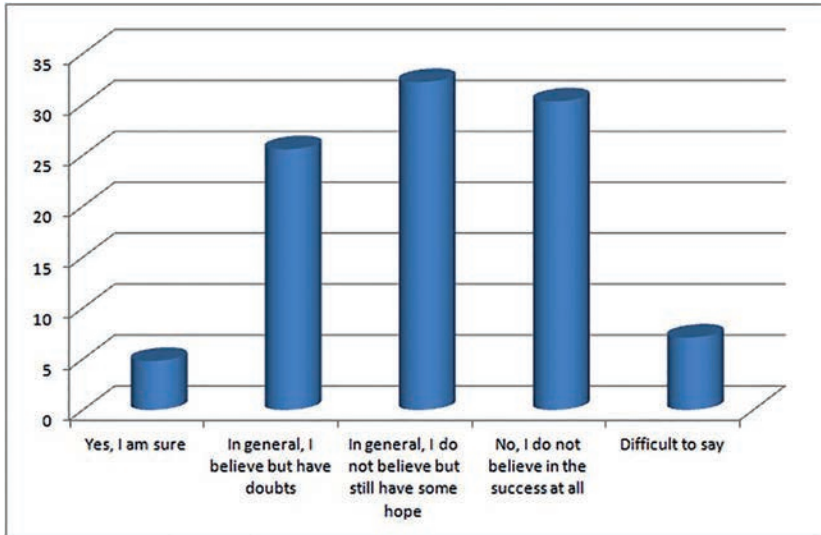


Figure 3. Do you believe in the success of the reforms in Ukraine? 2015.

Source: Own representation according to data provided by Razumkov Centre, 2015.⁵⁹

Furthermore, according to Ukrainian citizens, Ukraine's membership in the EU would enhance the domestic reforms (24%), whereas 22% believe that the EU membership would not bring any advantages. Among the main benefits from the EU membership for Ukraine would be the free movement abroad (38.6%), the improvement of life standards (36.8%), and the free access to the education in the European universities for the youth (33.7%). For 20.8% of the population the EU membership is associated with enhanced security, while for 19.3% it facilitates access towards the European markets. 18.8% of respondents perceived the EU membership of Ukraine as a movement towards the modern European civilization.⁶⁰

When asked about what makes them feel *European*, Ukrainians associated the *idea of Europe* with the following preferences: high life

standards, protection by law, democratic values, freedoms and human rights (figure 4).

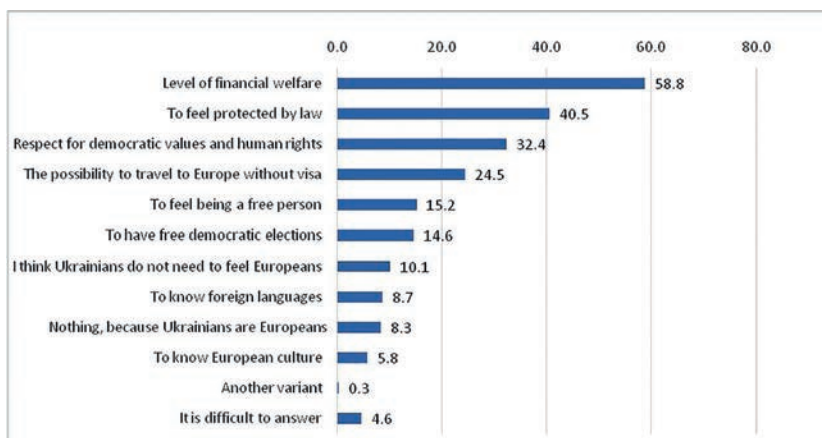


Figure 4. What do you need to feel *European*? 2013.

Source: Own representation according to data provided by Razumkov Centre, 2013.⁶¹

Despite the aforementioned data, more than half of Ukrainians does not have a clear feeling of *being European*. According to the data, the *European feeling* is strongly correlated with the success of domestic reforms, the standard of living and the political (in)stability in the country. While asked whether Ukraine is a European state, Ukrainians consider their country to be *European* in a geographical (76.6%), historical (58.3%) and to a large extent cultural (41.9%) sense, whereas, politically (23.6%), socially (17.1%) and economically (12.7%) Ukraine's *Europeanness* is still minor.⁶²

According to the Razumkov Centre in 2014 only 37.6% of population expressed their European identity⁶³, whereas around 10% of respondents were hesitating about their answer. Similar results were obtained in 2015 during the implementation of the project "Region, Nation and Beyond: An Interdisciplinary and Transcultural Reconceptualization of Ukraine": almost 40% expressed their European self-identification. About 20% of respondents said they did not feel European at all. For almost 25% of Ukrainians it was difficult to decide upon their European attachment.⁶⁴ However, the attachment towards *Europe* is slowly but gradually gaining salience (figure 5). Moreover, the increase of Ukrainians' self-identification

as Europeans is more obvious in comparison to 2008 when *Europeanness* remained even more contested and European identity was exhibited only by 25% of respondents.⁶⁵

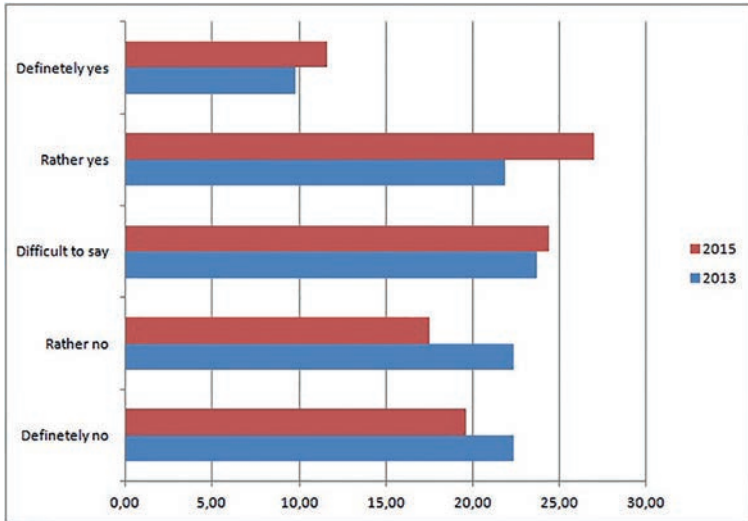


Figure 5. To what extent do you feel *European*? 2013, 2015.

Source: Own representation according to data provided by 2013 and 2015 surveys within the project “Region, Nation and Beyond: An Interdisciplinary and Transcultural Reconceptualization of Ukraine”.

Finally, interesting observations were revealed concerning the “we-Europeans / they-Europeans” dichotomy across the EU border. It is not surprisingly that the survey conducted in the Ukrainian – Romanian borderland showed different perceptions regarding *European* feelings among the population. The non-EU respondents from Ukraine while speaking about Europeans use the word “they” much more often than “we”; whereas respondents from Romanian side of the borderland have a stronger *European* self-perception (for comparison see figure 6).

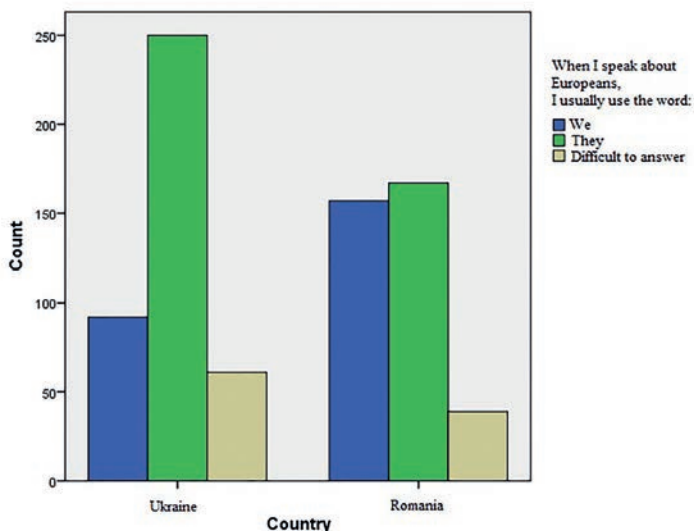


Figure 6. “We – they” component of *Europeanness* across the EU border (case of Romanian – Ukrainian borderland).

Source: Own representation according to data provided by 2016 survey within the project “Bukovyna as a contact zone”.

Conclusions

This paper inquired how the *idea of Europe* has been impacting Ukraine. The findings have signalled that Neighbourhood Europeanisation has generally fostered a significant *European* perception among Ukrainian population. In spite of a nascent *European* feeling among Ukrainians, when perceived as a driver for enhanced democratic values, human rights and reforms, the *idea of Europe* acquires legitimacy in the eyes of Ukrainians with the potential to continuously grow. For instance, Ukrainians often rate positively *Europeanness* of Ukraine from a geographical, historical and cultural perspective, whereas in the economic, political and social fields there is a general feeling that the country is still lagging behind *Europe* in terms of norms, values and standards.

Despite being among the key national strategic priorities emphasized at the official level and actively promoted by political leaders, the *European*

integration efforts have always been confronted with political, economic and social unrest across the country. Accordingly, the declarative character of the domestic support for the implementation of reforms in line with the European *acquis communautaire* without Ukrainian politicians' sufficient contribution to reforms *on the ground* has limited the efficiency of the Europeanisation process. Ultimately, it is not striking that in people's perception the *Europeanness* of the country largely depends on the progress of domestic transformational changes, since the *idea of Europe* is perceived as the main engine for economic development and for the enhancement of democracy and human rights.

Concurrently, the absence of a clear EU membership perspective from cooperation frameworks envisaged by the EU for Ukraine has also affected the Europeanisation efforts and weakened the leverage of its "transformative power". Therefore, Ukraine's capacity and motivation to comply with the EU model, to transfer parts from the *acquis* into the national legislation, to absorb European norms, values and principles are still lagging behind.

NOTES

- ¹ In the present paper “the idea of Europe” is understood as set of common values – democracy, market economy, respect for the rule of law and human rights – upon which the EU is positioning itself.
- ² More on that in: FREYBURG, T., LAVENEX, S., SCHIMMELFENNIG, F., SKRIPKA, T., WETZEL, A., *Democracy Promotion by Functional Cooperation. The European Union and its Neighbourhood*, Palgrave Macmillan, 2015.
- ³ The project is coordinated by the Centre for Governance and Culture in Europe, University of St. Gallen and funded by Swiss State Secretariat for Education, Research and Innovation. 6000 respondents from all the regions of Ukraine participated in the survey.
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