THE SEARCH FOR EUROPE
Contrasting Approaches

BBVA

NIEVES PÉREZ-SOLÓRZANO BORRAGÁN is a professor in European Politics at the University of Bristol. She has previously worked at the universities of Exeter and East Anglia. She holds a BA in History and Geography from the University of Salamanca, an MA from the College of Europe (Bruges) and a PhD from the University of Exeter. Her research examines the involvement of civil society in EU governance. She specialises in the ethical dimension of lobbying regulation and the regulation of conflict of interests in the EU. She co-edits with Professor Michelle Cini one of the leading textbooks in EU Politics.

Democracy promotion and support for civil society have been key defining elements of the enlargement policy since the Eastern Enlargement. A working democracy is a political requirement to join the EU, and a vibrant civil society is perceived as evidence of democracy and good governance at work, because it allows citizens to freely associate and engage in civic action. This chapter analyses the EU's transformative role through the lens of the civil society promotion strategy in candidate countries launched by its enlargement policy, and to studies the wider debate about democracy in the EU and the standing of its enlargement policy after the crisis.

CIVIL SOCIETY AND EU ENLARGEMENT

Introduction

The European Union's enlargement policy has traditionally been described as the EU's most successful foreign policy because it has managed to trigger the expansion of the democratic ideal across the European continent. The EU's ability to peacefully spread these ideals derives from the political conditionality that defines the accession of any country to the EU, which requires any candidate[1] to converge towards the EU's principles of democracy, open market and protection of human rights. The extent of the EU's transformative effect became obvious with the so-called Eastern enlargement in 2004-2007 when twelve countries (out of which 10 were new democracies)[2] joined the EU.

A VIBRANT CIVIL SOCIETY IS PERCEIVED AS EVIDENCE OF DEMOCRACY AND GOOD GOVERNANCE

Democracy promotion and support for civil society have been key defining elements of the enlargement policy since the Eastern enlargement. A working democracy is a political requirement to join the European Union and a vibrant civil society is perceived as evidence of democracy and good governance at work, because it allows citizens to freely associate and engage in civic action, whether to shape government policy or to voice the concerns of certain sections of society. This

---

1 A candidate country is a country negotiating accession to the European Union. This status is granted by the European Council on the basis of a recommendation by the European Commission. Candidate country status does not give an automatic right to join the EU.
2 These are Cyprus, Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Malta, Poland, Slovakia, Slovenia, Romania and Bulgaria.

concern for civil society promotion also responds to two challenges affecting the European Union. Firstly, the involvement of civil society actors in the governance of the Union has been presented not just as a mechanism to ensure good governance, but also as an instrument to engage citizens and thus address the Union's perceived democratic deficit and detachment from the lives of average Europeans. Secondly, the EU's territorial expansion has become contested amongst EU citizens. A recent Eurobarometer survey shows that a higher percentage of respondents within the EU is now against further enlargement (49%) than those supporting enlargement (37%) (Eurobarometer, 2014:143). Therefore, the EU has involved civil society to promote public debate about the enlargement process and thus remedy increasing contestation both in the EU and in the candidate countries.

THE EU HAS INVOLVED CIVIL SOCIETY TO PROMOTE PUBLIC DEBATE ABOUT THE ENLARGEMENT PROCESS

   This chapter analyses the European Union's transformative role through the lens of the civil society promotion strategy in candidate countries launched by its enlargement policy, and places this analysis in the wider debate about democracy in the EU, as well as the standing of its enlargement policy in the aftermath of the financial crisis. This is a salient topic for three reasons: firstly, because it allows us to investigate the EU's ability to trigger change beyond its borders in order to achieve a particular model of democracy, and to identify the mechanisms through which this change is promoted and supported. This speaks to the wider academic debate about the EU's normative power, that is, the Union's ability to project its core values through mechanisms of reward (EU membership), support (financial assistance) or punishment (delayed membership or suspension of membership negotiations). Secondly, because it allows us to discuss aspects of the EU's attempts to address its democratic deficit through civil society promotion and citizen participation, thus drawing on the wider debate about democracy and legitimacy in Europe at a time when European integration has become widely contested. Thirdly, the status of enlargement policy within the EU and its resonance across Europe has fundamentally changed, due to three factors: the effects of the EU's redefinition of enlargement as a policy tool, the challenges derived from the absorption

of new members into the Union, and the effects of the 2008 financial crisis. Enlargement is no longer a top policy priority for the EU, but has become subsumed into the wider European Neighbourhood Policy. This fact allows for a reflection on how the EU's policy priorities shift in light of more immediate challenges, such as the economic crisis in the Euro zone, the refugee crisis or the strained EU-Russia relations.

This article starts by summarising the key characteristics of the EU's enlargement policy with a focus on conditionality as an instrument to promote domestic change, and on the capacity-building mechanisms to support such change, as evidence of the EU's transformative-normative power. The second part of the article discusses why civil society promotion has become a concern for the European Union in general, and in the context of enlargement in particular. The third section reviews the European Union's promotion of civil society in candidate countries and its effects on civil society both at the national and European levels. The final section summarises key findings, and places the analysis of enlargement and civil society in the current context of contestation and defiance towards the European integration, as well as of the key challenges facing the Union.

The European Union's Enlargement Policy

The European Union has been involved in several rounds of territorial expansion[3] that have seen the Union expand from the original six member states to its current twenty-eight. The process of enlargement has transformed the European Union by making it more diverse; it has had far-reaching implications for the shape and definition of Europe, and for the institutional set-up and the major policies of the Union. This section summarises the key characteristics of EU enlargement as a process and a policy by focusing specifically on the use of conditionality as an

---

3 The Northern enlargement in 1973 included Denmark, Ireland and the UK. The Mediterranean enlargement had two phases: in 1981 Greece became a member while Portugal and Spain joined in 1986. The EFTA enlargement in 1995 included three previous members of the European Free Trade Agreement, namely Austria, Finland and Sweden. The Eastern enlargement took place in two phases: Cyprus, Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Malta, Poland, Slovakia and Slovenia joined the EU in 2004; and Bulgaria and Romania joined in 2007. The Balkan enlargement started in 2013 with the accession of Croatia to the EU.

instrument to promote change in candidate countries. It also focuses on capacity building as a mechanism to strengthen domestic structures in the candidate countries, including civil society organisations. This section of the chapter provides a necessary background to understand what EU enlargement tells us about European integration in general, but also to introduce the relevance of civil society as a concern for the EU, which will be discussed in more detail in section two.

EU enlargement is best understood as both a process and a policy (see Juncos and Pérez-Solórzano 2015). As a policy, enlargement refers to the principles, goals, and instruments defined by the EU with the aim of incorporating new member states; it is also part of the Union's wider European Neighbourhood Policy. In this typical intergovernmental policy under which member states retain the monopoly over decision-making, the European Commission plays a delegated role monitoring the suitability to join the EU of each country, and acting as a key point of contact. A detailed set of chapters, each of which covers a policy area of the acquis, frames the accession negotiations between the Commission in representation of the EU and each candidate country. Once all aspects of accession have been negotiated, the accession treaty must be approved by the European Parliament and needs to be ratified by each member state, as well as by the candidate country in accordance with their respective constitutional requirements. In most cases, candidate countries have held a referendum prior to joining the EU.

As a process, EU enlargement involves the gradual and incremental adaptation of the countries wishing to join the EU to its membership criteria. In the academic literature, this process is traditionally called Europeanisation: a one-way and asymmetric process through which domestic actors adopt EU norms and values, and institutional and policy changes take place. The European Union acts as a normative actor embarked in the diffusion of democratic norms within its immediate neighbourhood (Sedelmeier and Schimmelfennig 2005). This is not a static process; domestic actors are empowered or weakened by European integration, and domestic environments will present different degrees of resistance to EU-driven policy and institutional change while new identities will develop. This process became more complicated after the end of the Cold War, when the Union had to respond to the accession applications of the newly democratizing countries from Central and Eastern Europe (CEE). With time, the EU's membership requirements have been expanded, and the number and diversity of countries wanting

to join the Union have increased. Originally, Article 237 of the Rome Treaty only required the applicant country Treaty to be a "European state".[4] The 1993 Copenhagen European Council adopted a set of more specific political and economic conditions with which countries willing to become EU members had to comply. According to the so-called "Copenhagen criteria", applicant countries must have stable institutions guaranteeing democracy, the rule of law, respect for human rights and the protection of minorities, a functioning market economy capable of coping with the competitive pressures and market forces within the Union, and the ability to take on the obligations of membership, including adherence to the aims of political, economic, and monetary union. Applicants also had to adopt the *acquis communautaire*.[5]

EU ENLARGEMENT INVOLVES THE GRADUAL AND INCREMENTAL ADAPTATION UNDERTAKEN BY CANDIDATE COUNTRIES IN ORDER TO MEET ITS MEMBERSHIP CRITERIA

The key principle driving EU enlargement has been that of political conditionality, in other words, applicant states must meet certain conditions (i.e., the Copenhagen criteria as outlined above) before they can become EU member states. The identification of this set of criteria led to the establishment of a complex monitoring mechanism managed by what at the time was the Commission's Enlargement Directorate-General (DG Enlargement),[6] which would act as a "gatekeeper", deciding when countries have fulfilled these criteria and whether they are ready to move to the next stage (Grabbe 2001:1020). This monitoring process takes place following the benchmarks set by the Commission in different documents—in the case of the Western Balkans, the stabilization

---

4 For example, Morocco applied for EU membership in 1987, but its application was turned down because it was not considered to be a European country. By contrast, Turkey, which had applied for membership in the same year as Morocco, was officially recognized as a candidate country by the Helsinki European Council in December 1999, despite the fact that Turkey's European identity had been questioned by some member states.

5   This is a French term that refers literally to the Community patrimony. It is the cumulative body of the objectives, substantive rules, policies, and, in particular, the primary and secondary legislation and case law—all of which form part of the legal order of the EU. It includes the content of the treaties, legislation, judgements by the Court of Justice of the European Union, and international agreements. All member states are bound to comply with the *acquis communautaire*.

6 Now renamed the DG Neighbourhood and Enlargement Negotiations (NEAR)

and association agreements (SAAs) and the European partnership agreements (EPAs), and the Europe agreements in the case of the Eastern enlargement. Compliance is also monitored in the annual Progress reports produced by the Commission, which presents an assessment of what each candidate and potential candidate has achieved over the last year. This monitoring means that the enlargement process follows a merit-based approach (Vachudova 2005:112–13). But is also reflects the ability of the European Union to exercise pressure over the candidate countries to implement reforms to ensure compliance with the EU's norms in return for EU membership, market access, financial and technical assistance and international recognition for their progress towards democracy. This is not a linear process, however, and when candidate countries fail to meet their commitments, they face either delayed accession (as in the case of Bulgaria or Romania due to problems with corruption and judicial independence) or a halt in the negotiations, as in the case of Turkey over the Cyprus issue. In words of Schimmelfennig and Sedelmeier (2004:664), the effectiveness of EU conditionality depends on the "credibility of the threats and rewards". Conditionality is being increasingly challenged as the credibility of the main reward, which is EU membership, is becoming less definite for candidate countries. As will be discussed in more detail below, the difficulties derived from the absorption of new member states after the Eastern enlargement have provoked a limited enthusiasm for further enlargement within the EU.

The "enlargement fatigue" is being mirrored in the candidate countries by an "accession fatigue". In other words, without the tangible promise of membership, political elites do not engage in the transposition and implementation of EU-driven reforms but rather "produce rhetoric statements of intent that are not followed through in any substantive way" (O'Brennan 2013:42). Bridging the gap between rhetoric and implementation is a key challenge. The EU has become increasingly aware of the need to rigorously apply conditionality and of the difficulties and weaknesses displayed by candidate countries in meeting the accession criteria. Thus, these criteria have been extensively defined by the EU to include conditions "partially designed to address transformation problems and weaknesses of the candidates" (Dimitrova 2002:175). In practice, this has translated into the development over time of an "administrative *acquis*", that is, a set of institutions and administrative structures needed to successfully implement

TV debate on TF1 channel during the French referendum
on European Constitution, on 29 May 2005.

the legal acquis before accession.[7] To address this gap between actual candidate countries' ability and requirements of EU membership, the EU has actively engaged in capacity building initiatives to support both public administrations and civil society actors. Capacity building has been widely used as a policy instrument by international organisations since the 1990s in order to enable domestic systemic change, to reduce poverty and to promote sustainable development (Black 2003). As a policy tool, it has some specific characteristics, such as being highly technical, lacking direct pressure mechanisms and assuming that those being targeted do not have sufficient resources, skills and information (Papadimitriou and Stensaker: 3). While intended to create long-term

---

7 The 1995 Madrid European Council stressed that it is not enough that the candidate member states transpose European legislation into national laws, they need also to ensure the administrative and judicial infrastructure to implement the *acquis communautaire*. The administrative capacity condition for accession means that a candidate country must bring its institutions, management capacity and administrative and judicial systems to Union standards with a view to implementing the acquis effectively in good time before accession. The administrative acquis (also termed "institutional and administrative *acquis*" since 1997) (European Commission (1997) has been characterized by a lack of clarity regarding its specific implications and measurement criteria. It is also marked by the need to develop new horizontal instruments to reinforce the institutional capacities of the candidate countries, given the absence of specific legal or institutional templates that would allow for tighter top-down enforcement.

effects, capacity building does not necessarily provoke an automatic change in regulation, standards or policy content. The policy discourse surrounding capacity building is strongly aspirational in terms of its language of inclusiveness and cooperation and democracy, but the actual practice is more results-oriented and heavily influenced by the donor's or the international organisation's priorities. (Black 2003:117). As will be discussed below, some of these characteristics and discrepancies feature in the EU's capacity building initiatives for enlargement and civil society promotion.

THE EU IS ABLE TO DIFFUSE ITS NORMS OF DEMOCRACY WITHOUT THE USE OF COERCIVE MILITARY POWER; IT HAS BUT TO WIELD THE CARROT OF EU MEMBERSHIP

In the context of enlargement, the EU's main capacity building initiatives take the form of financial assistance through the Instrument for Pre-accession Assistance (IPA) and the Technical Assistance and Information Exchange instrument of the European Commission (TAIEX). Typically, these instruments incorporate mechanisms to educate, socialise and transfer expertise in order to help countries in the application and enforcement of EU legislation, as well as enabling the distribution of EU best practices. For example, TAIEX incorporates the use of workshops, expert visits and twinning initiatives. In the case of IPA, its current programme running until 2020 incorporates performance indicators aimed to assess whether the expected results have been achieved (European Commission 2015a). In this manner, the EU has been able to exercise a substantial influence over the socio-economic and political systems of the countries of CEE, as the attractiveness of membership has allowed the Union "to pursue broader political goals through its enlargement policy" (Sedelmeier 2011). This offers an excellent illustration of the EU's role as a normative soft power: it is able to diffuse its norms of democracy, open market and defence of human rights by submitting them to membership, but also making explicit requirements about what kind of institutions or actors may be best placed to implement such norms (Manners 2002). Unlike traditional powers, the EU is able to do so without the use of coercive military power; it has but to wield the carrot of EU membership.

The queue of countries wishing to join the Union reveals that membership continues to be a very attractive option for countries surrounding

the EU.[8] However, a number of problems are challenging the ability of the EU to exercise influence in its neighbouring countries, and call into question the relevance of enlargement as a policy. Firstly, the Eurozone crisis, especially the situation in Greece, as well as the absence of a substantive believe in the likelihood of EU membership, is affecting the perception amongst the candidate countries of the EU as an anchor of economic prosperity and as a driver of reform. This accession fatigue is accompanied by a remarkably diminished support to EU membership in the candidate countries. For example, while Macedonian citizens are still pro-EU membership (56% approved of EU membership), support for membership has continued to decline in Turkey, where only 38% considered accession to the EU a "good thing" (Eurobarometer, 2013:67-8). Secondly, the refugee crisis highlights the Union's limits to act purposefully and in unison in the face of the plight of refugees seeking asylum in the member states and, critically, it highlights the divisions between old and new member states. Thirdly, the so-called enlargement fatigue has been felt since 2004. It refers to a general post-accession reticence within the EU towards further widening, in benefit of a greater focus on deepening integration across member states. This is reflected in the steadily decline in support for EU enlargement amongst EU citizens, with a slight majority against further enlargement (49%) versus those supporting enlargement (37%) (Eurobarometer, 2014:143). It is also reflected in the increasing support to populist Eurosceptic parties in the majority of EU member states (as illustrated by the results of the 2014 European elections), who see enlargement as a source of insecurity, further pressure on migration and of crippled welfare systems across the EU. Fourthly, this gives context to the new Commission's approach to enlargement under President Jean-Claude Juncker. In his opening speech to the European Parliament in July 2014, President Juncker stated that "the EU needs to take a break from enlargement" and that "no further enlargement will take place over the next five years" (Juncker 2014:11). For the countries wishing to join the EU, these developments call into

---

8 Accession negotiations were opened with Turkey in 2005, Montenegro in 2012, and Serbia in 2013. FYR Macedonia and Albania are also candidate countries, although no date has been set for the start of accession negotiations. Bosnia and Herzegovina and Kosovo have the status of "potential candidate countries". Furthermore, Ukraine, Moldova, and Georgia have repeatedly expressed their desire to become members of the EU one day

question the EU's long-standing commitment to enlargement. Fifthly, Russia's annexation of Crimea and the civil war in Ukraine have strained EU-Russia relations, as evidenced by the EU's imposition of economic sanctions on Russia, and the latter's retaliation by limiting food imports from the EU member states. In the medium term, and despite Angela Merkel's warning that Moscow cannot veto EU expansion. The EU's approach to enlargement in the Balkans and to its Eastern neighbours will be shaped by an increasingly belligerent Russian Federation that regards Serbia, Moldova and Georgia as part of its sphere of influence. Finally, and critical to the role of conditionality as a defining principle, we are witnessing democratic backsliding in some new member states such as Hungary. While conditionality worked as a principle to shape the meritocratic accession of countries from Central and Eastern Europe, once in the EU not all of them have maintained such standards; conditionality has thus ceased to have any real teeth to redress the situation. The case of Hungary's new constitutional challenge to key fundamental rights and the way in which the Fidesz government is dealing with the refugee crisis are two illustrative examples of how EU membership does not necessarily lock in democracy in former communist countries. The EU has been unable to tackle this democratic backsliding and, crucially, has refrained from applying Article 7 TEU that allows the Council to withdraw certain membership rights for serious and persistent breaches of democratic principles (Sedelmeier 2014:106). In words of Juncos and Whitman (2015:213): "Ten years after the 'big bang' enlargement to Central and Eastern Europe, there are significant lessons learned as to the challenges faced by EU conditionality to promote deeper political and economic domestic reforms." Given that the EU considers civil society a building block of democracy, it is not surprising that the Union has turned its attention to promoting its development and policy engagement, both in EU governance mechanisms and in the context of enlargement. The next section unpacks why civil society promotion is a general concern for the EU, and specifically a dimension of the EU's enlargement strategy.

Civil Society Promotion as Concern for the European Union

Civil society is a contested concept that has a long tradition in the history of political thought. In this chapter, civil society is understood as a

mediating sphere of society, distinct and independent from the market and the state, which is populated by more or less organised groups that claim to represent, speak for and participate in policy-making on behalf of diverse constituencies. Civil society is typically regarded as a crucial building block of democracy, because it is the space between the public and private spheres where civic action takes place (Grugel 2002:93, Kaldor 2003, Putnam 1993). This enthusiasm for civil society (particularly since the 1990s) amongst governments and international organisations can be explained by three interrelated phenomena, namely, the perceived

CIVIL SOCIETY IS THE SPACE BETWEEN THE PUBLIC AND PRIVATE SPHERES WHERE CIVIC ACTION TAKES PLACE

failure of traditional forms of political representation, such as political parties; the demise of communism; and the need to democratise international organisations, such as the European Union. In practice, the outcome of this enthusiasm was reflected in the expansion of programmes for civil society promotion in developing countries since the 1980s, used as an instrument to strengthen transition to democracy after the fall of the Berlin Wall. In this context, strengthening civil society was viewed as an end in itself, as well as a means of furthering the other elements (such as human rights and free and fair elections) within the democracy promotion agenda (Ishkanian 2007:3). The European Union echoes this enthusiasm for civil society in its enlargement policy by affirming that "when it comes to democratic governance and the rule of law and fundamental rights, including freedom of expression and association and minority rights, [civil society] can create demand for enhanced transparency, accountability and effectiveness from public institutions and facilitate a greater focus on the needs of citizens in policy-making" (European Commission 2013:1)

   In the academic debate, the revival of civil society after the revolutions in Central and Eastern Europe gave voice to more critical views that challenged the benign understanding of the term (Kopecky and Mudde 2003) and highlighted the dangers of an active civil society, not necessarily supporting ideas and goals of democracy, freedom and the rule of law (Berman 1997). Empirical studies showed evidence of how the civic space opened up by democratisation processes had been filled not only by liberal and benign civil society actors, but also by actors, who are ideologically radical, populist, intolerant and often involved in

The President and the Prime Minister of Croatia at their
arrival to sign the EU Accession Treaty, on 9 October 2011.

contentious state politics (Glenn 2001:31). Bringing the "dark side of
civil society" to the fore, Kostovicova (2006:21, 25-26) uses the example
of post-Milosevic Serbia as evidence of how civil society is weakened
by the processes of democratisation and nation building. Similarly, the
analysis of this situation where an international donor intervenes in
domestic promotion of civil society has given rise to critical voices.
These opinions draw attention on how external actors, such as the EU,
promote a specific type of civil society group, which is constrained,
dependent on, and co-opted by the priorities of international donors
(Gershman and Allen 2006; Fagan, A. 2005). Mindful of this, the Eu-
ropean Union has been more forthcoming recently about the fact that
outside influence is not sufficient to strengthen civil society, while warn-
ing that "external donors may over influence civil society activities. Or-
ganisations that are excessively dependent on international or domestic
public funding can in some instances hardly be considered genuine civil
society and risk de-legitimising their activities in the eyes of the public"
(European Commission 2013:3).

For the European Union, civil society promotion is a priority, firstly
as a policy mechanism to address its perceived democratic deficit, and
secondly as an instrument for democracy promotion in its enlargement
strategy. These two concerns are tightly interlinked and reflect two of
the wider phenomena identified above, namely, the need to democratise

international organisations due to their detachment from individual citizens, and the legacy of communism in the form of weak civil societies across Central and Eastern Europe. As will be argued below, the European Union's internal discourse on it as a remedy to its own democratic shortcomings has influenced how the Union has conceptualised civil society and designed mechanisms for its promotion in candidate countries. Equally, civil society has influenced the policy instruments designed by the EU to challenge the increasing contestation of enlargement and legitimise the accession of new member states amongst the citizens of the EU, and those of the candidate countries.

Civil Society and the EU's Democratic Deficit

The EU's democratic deficit typically refers to the conceptualisation of the Union as an elitist, international organisation where decisions are reached by unelected policy experts who are not accountable to elected representatives, while laws are passed with little transparency and publicity. The public questioning of the EU's democratic credentials was already evident in the 1990s with the difficult ratification of the Maastricht Treaty in France and Denmark.[9] Over the years, European citizens have expressed their discontent with the European Union through their negative votes in several Europe-wide referenda, but also by increasingly supporting Eurosceptic parties, both in domestic and European elections. Initially, the EU tried to address this challenge by enhancing the powers of the European Parliament and thus strengthening the representative dimension of democracy in the Union. Such an approach proved insufficient, given that the European Parliament lacks the power of legislative initiative, does not have the same influence as legislatures in the member states, and participation in European elections is markedly lower than in national elections. The 2001 *White Paper on European Governance*, which was designed "to open up policy-making to make it more inclusive and accountable" (European Commission 2001: 5), develops a further two-pronged legitimatisation strategy that expands beyond the representative democracy realm, by focusing on enhanced citizen participation via civil society organisations, and a

_____

9   French citizens ratified the Treaty with a minimal majority of 51% and the Danes were made to vote in two subsequent referenda to finally ratify the Treaty.

more active communication with the general public on European issues. Each dimension is discussed in turn below, as more civil society participation and better communication with citizens are strategies that have been transferred to the EU's enlargement policy.

The White Paper consolidates the role of civil society organisations as "giving voice to the concerns of citizens and delivering services that meet people's needs" (Commission of the European Communities 2001:11); and it regards participation as "a chance to get citizens more actively involved in achieving the Union's objectives and to offer them a structured channel for feedback, criticism and protest" (Commission of the European Communities 2001:12). Participation as a democratic principle which defined governance in the EU was incorporated in the Lisbon Treaty.[10] This fact constitutionalises the Union's attempt to strengthen its legitimacy by incorporating civil society participation and direct citizen engagement with its day-to-day functioning. The second aspect of the EU's legitimating strategy consists in a better communication and dialogue with citizens. It speaks to another dimension of democracy, deliberation and its promise to deliver better informed citizens who ideally are more supportive of the integration process. The European Commission developed a number of initiatives which follwed in the footsteps of the White Paper and which were a reaction to the non-ratification of the Constitutional Treaty, and to the public contestation towards the European integration evidenced in the referenda for the ratification of the Lisbon Treaty. These initiatives aimed at "listening better", "explaining better" and "going local" in the context of the *Plan D for Democracy, Dialogue and Debate and the White Paper on Communication Strategy and Democracy*. The Plan D intended to reinvigorate European democracy and help the emergence of a European public sphere, where citizens are given the information and the tools

---

10   Article 11 TEU establishes that: 1. The institutions shall, by appropriate means, give citizens and representative associations the opportunity to make known and publicly exchange their views in all areas of Union action; 2. The institutions shall maintain an open, transparent and regular dialogue with representative associations and civil society; 3. The European Commission shall carry out broad consultations with parties concerned in order to ensure that the Union's actions are coherent and transparent; 4. Not less than one million citizens who are nationals of a significant number of Member States may take the initiative of inviting the European Commission, within the framework of its powers, to submit any appropriate proposal on matters where citizens consider that a legal act of the Union is required for the purpose of implementing the Treaties.

to actively participate in the decision making process and gain owner-ship of the European project (European Commission 2005a). In other words, a wider and more inclusive public debate would help build a new consensus on the future direction of the Union. These initiatives

THE WHITE PAPER WAS DESIGNED "TO OPEN UP POLICY-MAKING TO MAKE IT MORE INCLUSIVE AND ACCOUNTABLE"

are continued today through the Citizen's Dialogues, which give people across Europe a chance to talk directly with members of the European Commission and of the Europe for Citizens Programme, which includes amongst its priorities debating the future of Europe to deepen further into the discussion on the future of Europe and what kind of Europe do citizens want (European Commission 2015b).

Drawing on the lessons learnt from its domestic approach to civil society, the EU actively tries to address the weakness of civil society in the candidate countries, while at the same time improving the direct di-alogue with citizens in order to enhance public support for enlargement.

The Challenge of a Weak Civil Society in the Candidate Countries

The promotion and support for civil society organisations (CSOs) has been at the core of the EU's enlargement strategy since the 1990s. Such an approach was not evident or really necessary in earlier rounds of en-largement, because civil society was not yet a concern for the European Union as a legitimising mechanism, the accession of new member states was not contested, and the countries joining the EU before 2004 were not regarded as requiring support in this respect. However, with the fall of the Berlin Wall and the move towards regime change in the countries previously under the Soviet sphere of influence, political scientists and international organisations found themselves having to account for how the so-called democratisation process had taken place, and also seeking to identify evidence of democratic practice in these new democracies. The early literature on democratisation in post-communist Europe defined civ-il society as a vibrant force energised by the popular support for the 1989 revolutions (see Cohen and Arato 1992). The relative success in the democ-ratisation process of countries such as Poland, Hungary or the former

Czechoslovakia, where civil society had stronger roots, provided validating empirical evidence. The comparative reading of accounts on the successful civil society experience in post-authoritarian regimes such as those in Mediterranean Europe and Latin America, and the typical post-Cold War language of a common wave of democratisation provided ample evidence to foreshadow similar dynamics in post-communist Europe.[11]

WITH THE FALL OF THE BERLIN WALL THE DEMOCRATISATION PROCESS UNDERTAKEN HAD TO BE ACCOUNTED FOR HOW

These optimistic accounts were soon followed by more cautious evaluations of civil society dynamism in the new democracies. In fact, the actual evidence pointed towards a relatively weak civil society (compared not just with that of established democracies, but also and most importantly with that of post-authoritarian regimes) and an inadequate associational life (Howard 2003, Bernhard 1996, Ost 1993). The defining features of this weak civil society are low levels of organisational membership, low levels of participation in associational life, low levels of trust in organised civil society organisations and limited de facto consultative procedures. The factors explaining the apparent paradox of weak civil societies in the region are to be found in the communist legacy and the mismatch between a disenchanting citizens' experience of post-communist democracies and their high expectations (Howard 2003, Pérez-Solórzano Borragán 2006:135). A different interpretation of this absence of a vibrant civil society points towards the impact of globalisation, which prevents the societal sphere in post-communist Europe from developing in a vacuum, to a certain extent. Thus the new democracies of Central and Eastern Europe are converging towards, or being infected by, the pathology of citizen demobilisation that affects established democracies.

Faced with such weak civil society, the EU's focus on strengthening its structures in candidate countries does not come as a surprise. Additionally, to ensure that civil society from the new member states actively participates in the consultation mechanisms that have emerged at the European level, the European Union has been active in supporting the Europeanisation of civil society organisations in the candidate countries. The EU's key initiatives and instruments are discussed in the next section.

---

11 For a critique of this view see Collier and Levitsky 1997.

Enlargement and Public Contestation

As discussed earlier, the European Union faces the challenge of the increasing public contestation towards further territorial expansion of the Union. While citizens' support for EU enlargement might not have been an issue previously, the Eastern and Balkan rounds forced the European Union to seek mechanisms to address increasing public reluctance and declining support for further enlargement in the member states. The accession of new member states has become a politicised issue both in the EU and in the candidate countries. Within the EU the accession of new member states has given rise to expectations, as well as to fears regarding mass migration and concerns about the accession of countries such as Turkey, which is regarded as being less European and geopolitically more problematic than other candidate countries. In the new member states, the costs of adapting to EU membership, coupled with general public misunderstanding of the process of accession to the EU did not match the initial public expectation of a prosperous return to Europe. Enlargement fatigue and disillusionment with the European Union explain the EU's attempt "to dispel misapprehensions about the enlargement process" (European Commission 2000). The next section discusses the EU's civil society promotion strategy and the attempts to address the challenges of a weak civil society in candidate countries and of contestation.

EU Enlargement and Civil Society Promotion. An Assessment

The EU supports civil society in candidate countries during the pre-accession period. In supporting the development of a vibrant civil society, the Union conceives of these organisations as actors who will help candidate countries to meet political conditionality demands such as human dignity, freedom, equality, the rule of law and respect for human rights. At the same time, the involvement of civil society in the pre-accession process is regarded as a means "to deepen citizens'" understanding of the reforms a country needs to complete in order to qualify for EU membership. This can help ensure EU accession is not just a government exercise and stimulate a balanced public debate, which is crucial to achieving a well-informed decision on EU membership at the end of the pre-accession process" (European Commission 2013:1). In this context,

the EU's civil society promotion strategy has two main goals: achieving an environment that is conducive to civil society activities and building the capacity of CSOs to be effective and accountable, independent actors. In addition to this domestic agenda, the European Union is also committed to ensure that civil society organisations in the candidate countries are able to aggregate key societal interests and channel them to decision-makers at the EU level, in order to facilitate the involvement of civil society actors in the EU consultative mechanisms,[12] such as the European Economic and Social Committee, the European Commission's consultations or the European Social Dialogue:

> Social partners play an important role in promoting the right to association and should therefore also be supported to improve their action. The perspective of social partners and professional and business associations also needs to be reflected in the Commission's work, and partnerships between these organisations, particularly from disadvantaged regions, and their counterparts in the EU should be strengthened (European Commission 2013:3).

The increasing contestation of enlargement policy is being addressed by the European Union through dialogue mechanisms that mirror the instruments deployed, in order to address its democratic deficit (see earlier discussion). To improve citizens' knowledge about EU enlargement, the European Commission has developed a so-called civil society dialogue[13] "to generate a dialogue with Europe's citizens and to ensure broad support for the enlargement process both within the EU member states and the candidate countries" (DG Enlargement 2002:18). With this strategy the European Commission expected to generate dialogue

---

12 This commitment to enhancing the participative capacity of civil society at the European level is present in the European Union's rhetoric since 2008 (see Commission of the European Communities 2008).

13 The civil society dialogue is further developed in the 2005 Communication "Civil Society Dialogue between the EU and Candidate Countries". In this document, the dialogue with civil society is framed as an overarching communication instrument with a very wide remit in terms of objectives, areas of concern, actors involved and territory as the initiative is extended to Croatia. The 2006 Communication "The Western Balkans on the Road to the EU: Consolidating Stability and Raising Prosperity" expands the civil society dialogue to include all the countries of the Western Balkans, with an additional focus on enhancing dialogue between Western Balkan societies. The European Commission's 2008 "New Civil Society Dialogue Programme" re-labels the civil society dialogue as the "People 2 People – P2P Programme".

with public opinion in the candidate countries and in what then was the EU-15 to "help ensure that the negotiations are concluded with public support and the resulting Treaties of Accession are signed and ratified on the basis of well-informed and realistic public expectations" (European Commission 2000b:1). Civil society dialogue is concerned with the top-down engineering of a public sphere that is debating enlargement, where the exchange of information and opinions would result not just

TO IMPROVE CITIZENS' KNOWLEDGE ABOUT EU ENLARGEMENT, THE EUROPEAN COMMISSION HAS DEVELOPED A SO-CALLED CIVIL SOCIETY DIALOGUE

in better-informed citizens, but ones supportive of the enlargement process. Also, the civil society dialogue would "support the further development of a lively and vibrant civil society in the candidate countries, which is key to the consolidation of human rights and democracy, in line with the political criteria for accession"(European Commission 2005b:3). Thus civil society appears to be conceived of as a party in the dialogue, a facilitator of citizen engagement and an outcome of the process. As Commissioner Rhen (2008) put it at the time: "Communicating the success story of enlargement is a common challenge for us all. As civil society representatives, you are the bridge between the EU institutions, national authorities and citizens. You can raise awareness of the successes and challenges of EU enlargement. You can strengthen confidence between citizens in the EU and the aspirant members".

The European Union has two sets of instruments, namely, political and financial, to implement its civil society strategy. Regarding political support, the European Union commits to encourage enlargement countries to make legislation more conducive for civil society and to promote the involvement of civil society in the pre-accession process. There is crucial rhetoric support derived from the regular reviews of the state of civil society in each candidate country's annual Progression report. Regarding financial support, while funding is available through the Instrument for Pre-accession Assistance (IPA) the main instrument is the Civil Society Facility (CSF[14]), created in 2008 by the European Commission to

---

14 For the period 2011-12 the CSF had a budget of EUR 40 million.

provide financial support for the development of civil society. The CSF incorporates three strategies that reflect both domestic and transnational initiatives, namely: support for national and local civic initiatives and capacity-building to strengthen the role of civil society in the candidate countries; support for partnerships between civil society organisations in the candidate countries and from EU Member States to develop networks and promote transfer of knowledge and experience; and a "People 2 People" programme supporting visits to EU institutions and exchange of experience, know-how and good practice between local civil society, the EU and civil society in Member States (European Commission 2015c).

Over the years, the European Union has become more prescriptive in terms of the monitoring and evaluation of its initiatives in the candidate countries. This strategy, more oriented to results, responds to the EU's focus on addressing the candidate countries' implementation deficits and ensuring funding invested in truly addressing the Union's priorities regarding civil society development. For this purpose the European Commission, in consultation with stakeholders, has developed a monitoring and evaluation framework that involves a clear set of objectives, results and indicators (European Commission 2013:6-11). For example, when assessing whether the objective of achieving a more conducive environment for the activities of civil society organisations the following results will be expected:

> All individuals and legal entities can express themselves freely, assemble peacefully and establish, join and participate in non-formal and/or registered organisations
> The policies and legal environment stimulate and facilitate volunteering and employment in CSOs;
> National and/or local authorities have enabling policies and rules for grassroots organisations.
> (European Commission 2013:6-7)

However, the European Union has not developed a systematic review of its civil society promotion strategies in the context of enlargement. The official evidence of whether the goals outlined above have been met is fragmented and can be drawn mainly from the European Commission's Progress reports on each candidate country,[15] and from its own Strategy papers on enlargement. This evidence reveals that in the most

---

15 These reports are publicly available online at http://ec.europa.eu/enlargement/countries/strategy-and-progress-report/index_en.htm

A group of visitors observes a plenary session of the European Parliament.

recent Commission's Strategy Paper on enlargement of 2014, the need to do more to support civil society is recognised (European Commission 2014:2). In this same document, the limits to civil society development in Serbia and Bosnia Herzegovina are acknowledged, while in the case of Turkey there is specific mention to how "several pieces of legislation proposed by the ruling majority, including on fundamental issues for the Turkish democracy, were adopted without proper parliamentary debate or adequate consultation of stakeholders and civil society" (European Commission 2014:46). The political science literature has been more forthcoming by providing country-study and sectoral analysis of the state of civil society in candidate countries during the pre- and post-accession periods. A review of this literature shows that the achievements derived from these initiatives remain modest and that there is evidence of variation across countries, as the EU's influence has had a differentiated impact on diverse national environments. Moreover, there is evidence that in certain circumstances the EU's intervention may have perpetuated the weakness of civil society through financial dependencies and the demanding criteria established by EU institutions in order to engage civil society organisations in regular consultation. The selected examples below offer an illustration of the EU's impact on civil society development in the candidate countries, the EU's impact on the ability of civil society groups from candidate countries to participate

in consultations at the European Union level, and the "People 2 People" initiative in addressing public contestation.

The EU's Domestic Influence

Firstly, looking at the creation of better domestic environment for civil society development, the evidence points towards a slow and gradual change. For example, the European Economic and Social Committee has been active in trying to help civil society organisations operate efficiently at the national level, providing know-how and supporting their participation in European activities (see Pérez-Solórzano Borragán and Smismans 2008). Such initiatives include the organisation of training seminars, fact-finding missions to the candidate countries, hearings with civil society and discussions with European Commission delegations. The EESC also sought to build adequate administrative capacity to promote and enhance stakeholder participation in policy making in the new member states. It equally encouraged the creation of national economic

THE EU HAS BECOME A REFERENCE TO IMPROVE CONSULTATION STRUCTURES, BUT CIVIL SOCIETY ORGANISATIONS ARE STILL CONSTRAINED BY THEIR DOMESTIC ENVIRONMENTS

and social committees. Whether the EESC initiatives had any impact at the national level remains difficult to assess. A 2002 study undertaken on behalf of the Committee shows that the national economic and social committees promoted by the Committee often operate informally, rather than as strongly institutionalised advisory bodies for their government, and questions remain as to their representativeness (Drauss 2002:169).

On the other hand, the EU has become a discursive reference to seek legitimacy and improved consultation structures, as well as to justify organizational change, but civil society organisations are still constrained by their domestic environments, the dominance of national level identities and a lack of sufficient resources to engage in transnational activities. For example, in the case of the Czech Republic, Forest's study (Forest 2006) is a clear illustration of how the EU's support has contributed to a re-conceptualisation of gender concerns by women's organisations. The transfer of new concepts, such as equal opportunities

and gender mainstreaming, coupled with capacity building, training and monitoring, has shaped women's organisation mobilisation repertoires. The EU's influence prompted the creation of new mediating institutions such as the Council for Equal Opportunities, a new domestic opportunity structure that formalises the relationship between the state and civil society organisations and thus establishing formal relationships between non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and the state. Both sets of actors are empowered by this development: by engaging in the Council, women's organisations gain in recognition and can expect long-term influence on policy-making. The state has enhanced its deliberative stand while limiting public protest and moving gender issues out of the political debate (Forest 2006).

Continuing with the example of the Eastern enlargement, despite the EU's expectation of stakeholder involvement in national consultations, the pre-accession strategy did not empower sectoral organisations. A 2003 survey of business interests[16] shows communication between national governments and the business sector on enlargement-related issues was limited during the accession process. Only 4.9% of the companies surveyed were regularly consulted; 68.5% only received general information about the accession process through the media and felt that they did not influence their government's negotiating position at all. This limited consultation on EU accession caused concern amongst business umbrella organisations based in Brussels who called on "the political leaders and the Commission to introduce new awareness programmes and to consult much more with the business community in the accession countries on economic issues" (Eurochambres 2003).

A comparative study of environmental actors in Hungary, Poland and Romania shows that civil society organisations were too weak and often unwilling to exploit the opportunities offered by EU accession. Moreover, civil society organisations were reluctant to collaborate with state actors and saw themselves more as watchdogs scrutinising the government's implementation of environmental regulations. In addition, the availability and distribution of resources favoured those civil society organisations that were already better established and resourced (Börzel and Buzogány 2010:158-182). In her comparative survey

---

16 The CAPE surveys were undertaken by EUROCHAMBRES between 2001 and 2003 and involved 1658 companies from Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Romania, Slovakia and Slovenia

of environmental NGOs in the Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland and Slovakia, Carmin found more evidence of how the pre-accession experience helped the development of two clusters of NGOs: "The first cluster consists of a small cadre of highly professionalized and internationalized organizations that engage in policymaking in the international and national arenas. The second cluster of NGOs tends to sponsor activities and take action on behalf of their members and provide environmental and government support services at the local level [...] NGOs in the latter group often are overlooked by agencies, governments and foundations, even though they make important contributions to environmental governance (Carmin 2010:183). In the case of environmental NGOs in Bosnia-Herzegovina and Serbia, Fagan identifies an increasing professionalization of NGOs as result of EU intervention. In practice this translates into limited policy-making access to "less contentious policy areas where they are encouraged to deliver expertise and assistance rather than to act as advocates for community interests or to express political opposition to contentious developments" (Fagan 2010:203).

In sum, the evidence to date regarding domestic influence points towards a Europeanisation of the discourses of some civil society organisations; the differentiated impact of the EU has empowered and weakened certain actors, while new dependencies have been established due to the structural weakness of both civil society and state mechanisms for consultation.

The EU's Influence on the European Dimension

Regarding the European dimension of civil society development, recent research shows that the participation of civil society organisations in the EU's consultation procedures post-accession is less dynamic and evident than that of similar organisations in older member states. While the domestic weakness of civil society in candidate countries may offer some evidence explaining the difficulty to mobilise at the EU level, the consultation conditions are also an additional hurdle to negotiate in terms of resources, capacity, expertise and internal good governance (Quitkatt 2011, Pérez-Solórzano Borragán and Smismans 2012, Kohler-Koch and Quittkat 2013). Recent data shows that, compared to other member states, engagement in Commission consultations is scarce and has no clear pattern regarding the choice of policy area. Specifically, between

2003 and 2006, the input of civil society groups from new member states to Commission impact assessment consultations accounted for 6.14% of the total opinions submitted. In other words, the total of opinions submitted by the eight new democracies (not including Romania and Bulgaria) is less than half the total opinions submitted by German or French groups, and it amounts to almost the same amount of opinions submitted by Finnish or Belgian groups (see Obradovic and Alonso Vizcaino 2007).

RESEARCH UNDERTAKEN ON THE EUROPEAN ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COMMITTEE SHOWS THAT REPRESENTATIVES OF CIVIL SOCIETY FROM THE NEWER MEMBER STATES ARE LESS ACTIVE

Similarly, research undertaken on the European Economic and Social Committee—the European Union's institution for the representation of civil society in the aftermath of the Eastern enlargement—shows that representatives of civil society from the newer member states are less active (see Pérez-Solórzano Borragán and Smismans 2008). The question is if, to some extent, the under-representation is due to a lack of interest or a felt need on behalf of these new representatives to first go through a longer learning process before taking up such functions, or, rather, if current procedures and established practices tend to disadvantage new members. There seems to be a willingness from some representatives from the newer member states to be more actively involved, although some have complained that current procedural practice tends to privilege "experienced" old member state representatives to their exclusion. A number of representatives from new member states have complained about the absence of interpreters during meetings, for example: "Excuses justifying the lack of interpretation because of the large number of new members and languages cannot be put forward in perpetuity. Since highly specialised vocabulary and terminology is used during the discussion of opinions, it is not simply a question of knowledge of languages but an important problem that requires rapid and effective resolution" (Mendza-Drozd et al. 2004).

The EU's Influence on Addressing Contestation

The fact that enlargement is still a contested policy goes some way to show the limited effect of the European Union's People 2 People programme (formerly known as civil society dialogue) in addressing

contestation. In the absence of a systematic review of the outcomes derived from this programme, what follows is a critique towards it, based on its objectives. What I argue, instead, is the deficient instruments to achieve them. The People 2 People programme aims not only to generate public spheres across different levels, but also to address

THE POLICY TOOLS ADDRESS ALL CIVIL SOCIETY ACTORS: INSTITUTIONS, ORGANISATIONS AND THE MEDIA

the deficiencies of domestic civil societies. Policy tools should not only be heterogeneous, but also aimed at different outcomes. Hence, the measures can be divided into four categories:[17]

1. Support for local, civil-society initiatives and capacity building, in order to reinforce the role of civil society.
2. Programmes to bring journalists, young politicians, trade union leaders and teachers into contact with EU institutions and thus raise awareness about the EU and its enlargement process.
3. Support for building partnerships and developing networks between the civil society organisations, businesses, trade unions and other social partners and professional organisations in the beneficiary countries, and their counterparts in the EU, so as to promote transfers of knowledge and experience.
4. Involving the media in awareness raising to improve citizens information.

A detailed evaluation of these measures allows some initial conclusions about the potential that the civil society dialogue met the general aspiration of creating a transnational, European, deliberative and public sphere that is supportive of enlargement. In general terms, the policy tools address all the relevant actors operating in the public sphere, namely institutions, civil society organisations and the media. Looking in more detail at the actual initiatives to generate a transnational debate (particularly in the case of Turkey), it is interesting to see that the Commission is relying on mechanisms to increase awareness about

---

17 What follows draws on the Communication from the Commission to the Council and the European Parliament, Recommendation of the European Commission on Turkey's progress towards accession; the 2005 Communication "Civil Society Dialogue between the EU and Candidate Countries"; and the 2006 Communication "The Western Balkans on the Road to the EU: Consolidating Stability and Raising Prosperity".

Turkey in the EU member states, but none of these address the creation of deliberative forums for discussion. Rather, the initiatives refer to mobility programmes, scholarships, media development, financial support to NGO development, exchanges between professional organisations, and school links and public relations activities sponsored by the Turkish government (European Commission 2005b:5-8). These mechanisms could potentially address the perceived information gap and thus help to develop better informed citizens, both in Turkey and in the EU, who become more supportive of enlargement. It is not obvious that these mechanisms would either change perceptions—as there is no control on how messages may be understood by citizens—or help bring citizens in Turkey and in the EU to a deeper understanding of each other and the enlargement process, which would unite them in the support of this common project, thus legitimating it.

The networking activities involving civil society organisations from the candidate countries and their counterparts in the member states are geared towards providing socialisation mechanisms. In this way, knowledge transfer can take place and the civil society organisations for the candidate countries can learn how to operate in a pluralistic environment, and learn from the best practice of their EU counterparts. In other words, these initiatives would allow for the socialisation of the professional elites and strengthen the capacity building of civil society organisations in the candidate countries through the sharing of best practice. The policy tools deployed by the Commission point towards deliberation amongst elites. This reproduces the systemic fragmentation that has traditionally limited emergence of a truly pan-European public sphere. Here some kind of aggregating mechanism would be required. The expectation would be that civil society organisations are able to act as a discursive interface among the EU, the citizens of the member states and the candidate countries by monitoring policy-making, and to bring citizens' concerns into EU deliberations. To this day, the People 2 People programme does not provide any kind of feedback or reflexive mechanisms that would facilitate the fulfilment of civil society organisations' potential to help dynamise a public sphere on enlargement. Furthermore, a question still to be addressed is whether civil society organisations in the candidate countries actually posses the capabilities and expertise to aggregate the interest of their constituencies and subsequently channel their concerns to the European level. The answer to this question is "no". The number of capacity-building mechanisms that

the civil society dialogue deploys suggests that civil society organisations in the candidate countries are far from ready to perform the dual conveyor belt function (i.e. aggregating the wider interest and channelling it to the decision-makers). The civil society dialogue's aspirations are not matched by the capacity and expertise of civil society organisations in the candidate countries. There is a clear mismatch between policy aspirations and policy tools that needs to be remedied.

Conclusion

Enlargement policy and civil society promotion are tightly interlinked. While further territorial enlargement has taken a back seat in the current European Union's priority list, the support for democracy in general, and civil society in particular are still significant priorities for the Union, particularly in light of the observed democratic backsliding in new member states such as Hungary or Romania, and of the increasing contestation of European integration as the increasing support for Eurosceptic parties shows.

This chapter has shown how the EU's concept of civil society is deeply rooted in a maximalist understanding of democracy where civic groups, associations, NGOs or trade unions play a fundamental role in ensuring good governance. Moreover, in the specific context of the enlargement policy, they help to address the deficiencies in the implementation of the accession criteria. The European Union acts as a typical international donor who promotes a particular type of civil society and who expects its civil society promotion strategies to trigger domestic change. As this contribution has revealed, the marriage between EU enlargement and civil society promotion is not always a smooth one and the EU has had a limited transformative role. At the domestic level, there is limited evidence to show that the EU's civil society promotion strategy has helped remedy the weaknesses of civil society in new member states, in the Balkan candidate countries and in Turkey. More needs to be done to address funding dependencies and support more grass roots, issue-based groups whose role may not be to implement EU programmes, but to aggregate the interests of diverse sections of society. The EU has been partially successful in providing domestic civil societies with legitimating discourses to try and enhance their participation (when sought) in policy-making when faced with reluctant and often inadequate state

structures. At the European level, while the EU provides opportunity structures for participation in policy making, the evidence points towards a less participatory dynamism amongst civil society actors from the new member states, who struggle to meet the EU's participatory requirements of expertise and organisational good governance against a background of structural weakness. This state of affairs challenges the EU's own ability to lock in democracy in the new member states as

THE EU ACTS AS A TYPICAL DONOR WHO PROMOTES A PARTICULAR TYPE OF CIVIL SOCIETY AND EXPECTS ITS STRATEGIES TO TRIGGER DOMESTIC CHANGE

conditionality no longer applies and the threat of membership suspension on the grounds of not meeting the EU's maximalist understanding of democracy is not yet credible. But it also defies the EU's own attempt to address its democratic deficit by enhancing civil society participation in EU governance, as that civil society active at the EU level does not necessarily mirror the Union's own diversity.

Finally, contestation of EU enlargement is increasing and the European Union is having to address more immediate challenges, such as the aftermath of the Euro zone crisis, the lack of robust united action to address the refugee crisis, and the difficult relations with Russia. However, these difficulties ought not to divert the EU's attention from its civil society promotion strategy in candidate countries in particular, and its Eastern Neighbourhood in general. The European Union needs in these countries dynamic, independent civil society organisations that are able to exercise checks and balances on national governments, especially if they deviate from the principles of democracy, rule of law and protection of individual rights.

RELATED ARTICLES:

From Nation-States to Member States:
European Integration as State Transformation

The Welfare State in Europe

The Impact of European Integration on National
Democracies: Democracy at Increasing Risk in the Eurozone Crisis

ieves Pérez-Solórzano Borragán

Berman, S. 1997. "Civil Society and the Collapse of the Weimar Republic." *World Politics* 49(3): 401-429.

Bernhard, Michael 1996. "Civil Society After the First Transition." *Communist and Post-Communist Studies* 29(3): 309-330.

Black, L. 2003. "Critical Review of the Capacity-Building Literature and Discourse." *Development in Practice* 13(1): 116-120.

Börzel, T.A. and A. Buzogány. 2010. "Governing EU accession in transition countries: The role of non-state actors." *Acta Politica* 45: 158-182.

Carmin, J. 2010. "NGO capacity and environmental governance in Central and Eastern Europe." *Acta Politica* 45: 183-202.

Cohen, Jean L. and Andrew Arato. 1990. *Civil Society and Political Theory*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.

Collier, David and Steven Levitsky. 1997. "Democracy with Adjectives: Conceptual Innovation in Comparative Research." *World Politics* 49: 430-451.

DG Enlargement Information Unit 2002. *Explaining Enlargement. A Progress Report on the Communication Strategy for Enlargement*. March, 2002. Available at http://ec.europa.eu/enlargement/archives/pdf/enlargement_process/past_enlargements/communication_strategy/explaining_enlargement_en.pdf.

Dimitrova, A. 2002. "Enlargement, Institution-building and the EU's Administrative Capacity Requirement." *West European Politics* 25(4): 171-190

Drauss, F. 2002. "La société civile organisée en Pologne, République tchèque, Slovaquie et Hongrie." Luxembourg, Office des publications officielles des Communautés européennes.

Eurobarometer 2013. *Eurobarometer 80: Public Opinion in the European Union*. Available at http://ec.europa.eu/public_opinion/archives/eb/eb79/eb79_publ_en.pdf.

Eurobarometer 2014. *Eurobarometer 81: Public Opinion in the European Union*. Available at http://ec.europa.eu/public_opinion/archives/eb/eb81/eb81_publ_en.pdf.

EUROCHAMBRES 2003. "Central European Business Community Still Lacks Preparedness for Single Market." Brussels, 22 May 2003.

European Commission. 2000a. Press Release "EU Commission launches a comprehensive communication strategy on enlargement." Brussels: European Commission, 11 May 2000.

European Commission. 2000b "Communications Strategy for Enlargement." Brussels: European Commission. Available at http://ec.europa.eu/enlargement/archives/pdf/enlargement_process/past_enlargements/communication_strategy/sec_737_2000_en.pdf.

European Commission. 2001. "European governance: A white paper." Brussels: European Commission.

European Commission. 2005a. "Plan-D for Democracy, Dialogue and Debate." Communication from the Commission to the Council, the European Parliament, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions.Brussels: European Commission.

European Commission. 2005b. "Dialogue between the EU and Candidate Countries." Communication from the Commission to the Council, the European Parliament, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions. Brussels: European Commission, 29 June 2005.

European Commission. 2006. "The Western Balkans on the Road to the EU: Consolidating Stability and Raising Prosperity." Communication from the Commission to the Council, the European Parliament, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions. Brussels: European Commission.

European Commission. 2008. "Launch of new Civil Society Dialogue Programme." Brussels: European Commission, April 2008. Available at http://ec.europa.eu/enlargement/docs/civil-society-development/leaflet_taiex_version_90408_en.pdf.

European Commission. 2013. *Guidelines for EU support to civil society in enlargement countries, 2014-2020*. Brussels: European Commission. Available at http://ec.europa.eu/enlargement/policy/policy-highlights/civil-society/index_en.htm.

European Commission. 2014. "Enlargement Strategy and Main Challenges 2014-15." Brussels: European Commission. Available at http://ec.europa.eu/enlargement/pdf/key_documents/2014/20141008-strategy-paper_en.pdf

European Commission. 2015a. "Overview—Instrument for Pre-accession Assistance." Brussels: European Commission. Available at http://ec.europa.eu/enlargement/instruments/overview/index_en.htm.

European Commission. 2015b. "Europe for Citizens Programme." Brussels: European Commission. Available at http://ec.europa.eu/citizenship/europe-for-citizens-programme/index_en.htm.

European Commission 2015c. "Civil Society." Brussels: European Commission. Available at http://ec.europa.eu/enlargement/policy/policy-highlights/civil-society/index_en.htm.

Fagan, A. 2005. "Civil society in Bosnia ten years after Dayton: International Peacekeeping." 12(3): 406-419.

Fagan, A. 2010. "The new kids on the block—Building environmental governance in the Western Balkans." *Acta Politica* 45: 203–228.

Forest, M. 2006. "Emerging Gender Interest Groups in the New Member States: The Case of the Czech Republic." *Perspectives on European Politics and Society* 7(2): 170-184.

Gershman, C. and M. Allen. 2006. "The Assault on Democracy Assistance." *Journal of Democracy*. 17(2): 36-51.

Glenn, John K. 2001. *Framing Democracy. Civil Society and Civic Movements in Eastern Europe*. Stanford: Stanford University Press.

Grabbe, H. 2001. "How does Europeanization affect CEE governance? Conditionality, diffusion and diversity." *Journal of European Public Policy* 8/6: 1013-31.

Grugel, J. 2002. *Democratization. A Critical Introduction*. Basingstoke: Palgrave.

Marc Morjé Howard. 2003. *The Weakness of Civil Society in Post-Communist Europe*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

A. Ishkanian. 2007. "Democracy promotion and civil society." In *Global Civil Society 2007/8: Communicative Power and Democracy. Global Civil Society,* edited by Martin Albrow, Marlies Glasius, Helmut K. Anheier, and Mary Kaldor, Sage: 58-85 Available at http://eprints.lse.ac.uk/37038/.

Juncker, J.C. 2014. *A New Start for Europe: My Agenda for Jobs, Growth, Fairness and Democratic Change. Political Guidelines for the next European Commission. Opening State-ment in the European Parliament Plenary Session*. Available at http://ec.europa.eu/priorities/docs/pg_en.pdf.

Juncos, A.E. and N. Pérez-Solórzano Borragán, forthcoming. "Enlargement." In *European Union Politics,* edited by M. Cini. and N. Pérez-Solórzano Borragán. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Juncos, A.E. and Whitman, R. 2015. "Europe as a Regional Actor: Neighbourhood Lost?" *Journal of Common Market Studies, Annual Review* 53: 200–215.

Kaldor, Mary. 2003. *Global Civil Society: An Answer to War*. Cambridge: Polity Press.

Kohler-Koch, B. and C. Quittkat. 2013. *De-Mystification of Participatory Democracy: EU Governance and Civil Society*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Kopecky, P. and C. Mudde. 2003. "Rethinking Civil Society." *Democratization* 10(3): 1-14.

Kostovicova, D. 2006. "Civil Society and Post-Communist Democratization: Facing a Double Challenge in Post-Milosevic Serbia." *Journal of Civil Society* 2(1): 21-37.

Liebert, U. and H-J. Trenz. 2011. "The 'New Politics of European Civil Society': Conceptual, Normative and Empirical Issues." In *The New Politics of Civil Society,* edited by U. Liebert. and H-J. Trenz. Abingdon: Routledge.

Manners, I. 2002. "Normative Power Europe: A Contradiction in Terms?" *Journal of Common Market Studies* 40: 235–258.

Mendza-Drozd, M., K. Kamieniecki, T. Czajkowski, J. Mulewicz, D. Stulik, I. Plechata, et al. 2004. *Letter to Ms. Anne-Marie Sigmund*. Warsaw, December, 7, 2013.

O'Brennan, J. 2013. "Enlargement Fatigue and its Impact on the Enlargement Process in the Western Balkans." In *The Crisis of EU Enlargement*. LSE Ideas Report. Available at http://www.lse.ac.uk/IDEAS/publications/reports/SR018.aspx.

Obradovic, D. and José M. Alonso Vizcaíno. 2007. "NEWGOV, New Modes of Governance: Eastern Europe as an Accountability Constituency in the Commission Consultations." Deliverable Ref. no. 24/D07.

Ost, D. 1993. "The Politics of Interest in Post-Communist East Europe." *Theory and Society* 22: 453-486

Papadimitriou, A. and B. Stensaker. *Capacity building as an EU policy instrument: the case of the Tempus program*. Available at http://www.pef.uni-lj.si/fileadmin/Datoteke/Mednarodna/conference/wher/papers/Papadimitriou.pdf.

Pérez-Solórzano Borragán, Nieves. 2006. "Postcommunist Interest Politics: A Research Agenda." *Perspectives on European Politics and Society* 7(2): 134-154.

Pérez-Solórzano Borragán, N. and S. Smismans. 2008. "The European Economic and Social Committee: After Enlargement." in *The Institutions of the Enlarged European Union: Continuity and Change*, edited by E. Best, E. T. Christiansen, and P. Settembri. Edward Elgar.

Pérez-Solórzano Borragán, N. and S. Smismans. 2012. "Representativeness: A Tool to Structure Interest Intermediation in the European Union?" *Journal of Common Market Studies* 50: 403-421.

Putnam, R. with Robert Leonardi and Raffaella Y. Nanetti. 1993. *Making democracy work: civic traditions in modern Italy*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.

Quitkatt, C. 2011. "The European Commission's Online Consultations: A Success Story?" *Journal of Common Market Studies* 49(3): 653-674.

Rehn, O. 2008. "Civil Society at the Heart of the EU's Enlargement Agenda." Speech delivered at the Conference on Civil Society Development in Southeast Europe Building Europe Together. Brussels, 17 April 2008.

Schimmelfennig, F. and U. Sedelmeier. 2004. "Governance by conditionality: EU rule transfer to the candidate countries of Central and Eastern Europe." *Journal of European Public Policy*, 11/4: 661–79.

Schimmelfennig, F. and U. Sedelmeier. eds. 2005. *The Politics of European Union Enlargement. Theoretical Approaches.* London: Routledge.

Sedelmeier, U. 2011. "Europeanisation in new member and candidate states." *Living Reviews in European Governance* 6(1).

Sedelmeier, U. 2014. "Anchoring Democracy from Above? The European Union and Democratic Backsliding in Hungary and Romania after Accession". *JCMS: Journal of Common Market Studies* 52: 105-121.

Vachudova, M. A. 2005. *Europe Undivided: Democracy, Leverage and Integration after Communism.* Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Read the entire book at:

OpenMind

Follow us at:

Other BBVA OpenMind books: