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Symbolic actions or effective endeavours? The EU's activities to promote democracy in Ukraine, Moldova and Belarus

The introduction of the article gives a short outline of the development of the EU's democracy promotion policy, and the article itself presents a theoretical model which explains the transition from an authoritarian to a democratic system. The model serves as aid to point out which internal and external conditions are favourable for such a process. The article continues by giving a description of today's most important features of the political systems of Ukraine, Moldova and Belarus and their developments since 1991. It is against this background that the author describes the means by which the European Union has been supporting democratisation and consolidation. In conclusion, it is pointed out that the EU together with the Council of Europe and the OSCE have had positive effects on overall stabilisation, the building of democratic institutions and first signs of consolidation of democracy in Ukraine and Moldova. The EU was not, however, able to impede a development towards authoritarianism in Belarus. Finally, shortcomings and perspectives in the EU's democracy promotion-strategy are discussed.

Keywords: European Union, Democracy Promotion, Ukraine, Moldova, Belarus.

1. Introduction

Since 1986, global economic conditions have been such that the European integration process has accelerated and received new impetus. Due to newly set goals of economic welfare and political security the build-up of new European institutions, the broadening of their powers and the accession-process have improved. It would not be exaggerated to say that in the European Union the conviction prevails that the general basis for security in a broad sense is democracy, respect for human rights, fundamental political and civic freedoms and the rule of law. These values and norms have been considered essential for the European integration since the early 1950s.

The European Union (EU) is eager to promote these values and norms not only in its internal system but also in its relation to external partners. They are therefore mentioned in the Partnership and Cooperation-Agreements (PCAs), the basic documents regulating the relations between EU on the one side and Ukraine and Moldova on the other. Because of the authoritarian government of President Aljaksandr Lukašenka an agreement on shared values between the EU and Belarus has, however, not yet been made. Either complete non-respect or a selective acceptance of the values mentioned above have been the EU's points of concern towards this country since Aljaksandr Lukašenka has been in office. As a consequence, political dialogue between Brussels and Minsk is frozen. However, the non-agreement on political values has not been hindering the development of EU-Belarus economic relations.

The EU is a relatively young promoter of democracy in its external relations. The legal and instrumental basis needed for this purpose was created in the 1990s, when the Soviet Union was resolved and new democratising states were founded. Since that time, these

instruments have been undergoing constant reform and adaptation. The main aim of this paper is to show their use and impact in relation to three former Soviet republics.

The article begins with a definition of democracy and an outline of the EU's activities in the field of democracy-promotion. Point three will present findings of transition-research on internal and external conditions favourable for democratisation. I will then proceed to describe the efforts and successes of democratisation in Ukraine, Moldova and Belarus and the role of external influence. The next part will give a description of the general framework of the relations between the three countries and the EU. Point six will portray the Union's efforts and results in promoting democracy in the three countries. The concluding part will highlight shortcomings as well as perspectives in this respect.

Even though the main interest is dedicated to the EU's supranational institutions with focus on the European Commission (EC), the activities of some member states are covered as well. Because of their close relations to the EU special attention is dedicated to the Council of Europa (CoE) and the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE). Sources of information include specialised scientific literature, official documents, reports by international organisations and mass-media.

2. Democracy and external democracy promotion by the European Union

In essence, democracy means that the public order is based on the principles freedom, equality and control. According to Robert A. Dahl (1998, pp. 85-86) the following institutions should guarantee their implementation:

- Elected officials. Control over government decisions about policy is constitutionally vested in officials elected by citizens. Modern, large-scale democratic governments are representative.
- Free, fair, and frequent elections. Elected officials are chosen in frequent and fairly conducted elections in which coercion is comparatively uncommon.
- Freedom of expression. Citizens have the right to express themselves without danger of severe punishment on political matters broadly defined, including criticism of officials, the government, the regime, the socioeconomic order and the prevailing ideology.
- Access to alternative sources of information. Citizens have the right to seek out alternative and independent sources of information from other citizens, experts, newspapers, magazines, books, telecommunications, and the like. Alternative sources of information are effectively protected by law.
- Associational autonomy. To achieve their various rights, including those required for the effective operation of democratic political institutions, citizens also have the right to form associations or organisations including independent political parties and interest groups.
- Inclusive citizenship. No adult permanently residing in the country and subject to its laws can be denied the rights that are available to others and are necessary to the five political institutions just listed.
- In addition to these democratic-participative rights any society which claims to be a democracy also needs a division of powers, horizontal accountability (checks and balances), the principle of constitutionality (rule of law) as well as respect for human rights (Merkel, 1999a, p.13). Furthermore, in consolidated democracies the public order is considered legitimate. This means that the citizens are convinced that the established democratic institutions and procedures are better than any other alternative. A very detrimental effect on democracy is exerted by corruption, violence and clientship. Corruption and clientship

violate the principles of equality and control (horizontal accountability). Violence or threat of violence restricts the principle of freedom (Lauth, 2004, p. 186-220).

Democracy and human rights as legally binding norms belong to the basic principles of the European institutions, which began to be built after the Second World War and which are now under the “common roof” of the European Union. Until the end of the Cold War the European Community was active in democracy promotion only during the processes of accession of new member-states. When a neighbouring state aspiring membership was (is) given candidate-status, then democracy was (and still is) set as a sine qua non, and a hugely powerful political conditionality machine was (is) deployed. In this case strong political and economic incentives are given to the would-be member and the chances for meeting the democratic standards mentioned above are therefore good.

By comparison with the enlargement process, which has been important for the consolidation of democracy in Greece, Spain and Portugal (as well as later in the Central East European Countries) the EC is still a young and reluctant promoter of democracy in third, non-candidate countries. In 1992 the EU-Council of foreign ministers for the first time expressed its commitment to support civil society in third countries through funding of non-governmental organisations (NGOs). A decision was taken to include clauses referring to democracy assistance in new agreements signed with third countries. The Maastricht treaty listed the promotion of human rights, democracy and the rule of law as falling formally within the aims of EC development policy.

The EC’s oldest and most important assistance programme in favour of comprehensive reform including democratisation in the post-soviet countries is TACIS¹. Set up in 1991 it has been carried out with governments (no action without the third country’s government consent) and has been aiming at supporting the technical, economical and political transition in these states independently from the fact whether they had concluded a PCA with the EU or not. During the period from 1991 to 2005 the programme provided € 7.059,47 million to these post-soviet countries, out of which € 1.239,2 million were spent for Ukraine, Moldova and Belarus.²

Following proposals by the European Parliament in 1994 different budget lines established specifically to fund support for democracy and human rights were gathered together under the European Initiative for Democracy and Human Rights (EIDHR), managed by the EC. The EIDHR raised the effectiveness of the EC’s measures in this field. The aim has been set more specifically at NGOs, international and regional organisations, without precluding national, regional and local authorities as well as public or private-sector institutes and operators. Over the years the amount dedicated to the EIDHR has increased faster than the Commission’s total aid budget, but has remained small in comparison to the EU’s total development assistance. The resources allocated under the EIDHR for the funding of projects all over the world (including Central and Eastern Europe) increased from € 59 million in 1994 to € 102 million in 2001, which represented only about 1 per cent of EU development assistance. In all but four member states (Germany, Sweden, Denmark and the Netherlands) the amount of money

¹ Technical Aid to the Commonwealth of Independent States. TACIS has been eligible for Armenia, Azerbaijan, Baltic countries, Belarus, Georgia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Moldova, Mongolia, Russia, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, Ukraine, Uzbekistan.

The Programme supported the following sectors: nuclear safety and environment; restructuring of state enterprises and private sector development; public administration reform, social services and education; agriculture and food; energy ; transport; telecommunications; policy advice; democracy promotion;

² <http://ec.europa.eu/comm/europeaid/projects/tacis/financial_en.htm> download 15 November 2006.

dedicated to democracy related aid was smaller than 5 per cent of total development assistance.

Despite of improvements in the EC's democracy promotion in the 1990s, organisational shortcomings were obvious. Most importantly there was a lack of co-ordination within the EC and no coordination between the efforts of the EC and the national governments. Finally in 2001 the EuropeAid Co-operation Office was established. It is responsible for co-ordinating the implementation of all aid-programmes including democracy promotion. (Youngs, 2001, pp.30-34). In recent years the projects³ financed by the EIDHR are bound to promote justice and the rule of law (campaign 1), foster a culture of human rights (campaign 2), promote the democratic process (campaign 3) and advance equality, tolerance and peace (campaign 4). As funding is able to take place without host government consent, it greatly differs from the TACIS-programme. We should not forget the TACIS-based Institution Building Partnership Programme (IBPP), the main objective⁴ of which is to stimulate citizens' initiative and to strengthen the capacity of NGOs, not-for-profit professional organizations and local and regional authorities.⁵

³ Macro-projects identified through calls for proposals, with a contribution of the EC of not less than € 300.000, which are implemented by civil society operators including local authorities. It facilitates not only a transparent selection process, but also the wide participation of civil society as a partner in achieving the EIDHR aims.

Micro-projects are small projects under € 100.000 administered directly by EC-Delegations in the countries concerned. They are designed to support small-scale human rights and democratisation activities carried out by grassroots' NGOs.

Targeted projects, These projects are identified by the EC in the pursuit of specific objectives which cannot be assured through the call for proposals or micro-projects. It allows the EC to actively seek out and plan new initiatives corresponding to identified needs, with the partners of its choice, generally international and regional organisations as the OSCE. Many targeted projects have been election observation missions, prepared and organised by the OSCE, the CoE and the EU and financed by the EIDHR.

(In: http://ec.europa.eu/europeaid/projects/eidhr/eidhr_en.htm >download 10 November 2006).

Financial means in the framework of EIDHR: € 118,63 million in 2005, € 121 million in 2006;

(In: http://ec.europa.eu/europeaid/projects/eidhr/pdf/eidhr-annual-work-programme-2005_en.pdf), http://ec.europa.eu/europeaid/projects/eidhr/pdf/eidhr_annual_work_programme_2006_en.pdf >download 10 November 2006)

⁴ Capacity building for NGOs and civil society organisations; Social reintegration of marginalized groups; Assistance to disadvantaged women and other disadvantaged sections of the local population; Youth policy; Promotion of sustainable health and social care for disadvantaged sections for population at risk (i.e. elderly, homeless, street children, victims of cruelty and AIDS, etc). Local and regional governance issues: Management and administrative reform of municipalities, local and regional authorities; Management of public utilities (transport, water, waste treatment, energy savings), communities programmes, health, education; Support to Civil Society (NGOs, consumer associations, trade unions); Relations with the public (e.g. information provision); Finance and budgeting; Local economic development issues: Development of trade and SME associations; Initiatives in the field of economic development (in particular, support to small and medium enterprises); Strategies for tackling unemployment; Vocational training; Rural diversification; Development and tourism strategies; Economic planning and industrial conversion; Economic development with sectoral focus.

A prerequisite to achieve the programme's objective has been the setting-up and the running of an international partnership between at least two organizations from at least one TACIS country and from at least one EU member state or from a country benefiting from the Phare Programme (In:

<http://www.delukr.ec.europa.eu/page4293.html> > download 9 November 2006).

⁵ <http://www.delukr.ec.europa.eu/page4293.html> > download 10 November 2006

In addition to incentives by manifold support, the EU has made provision for coercive measures as well. In the 1990s, the EU availed itself of the means to suspend or abrogate its contractual relations with third countries if democratic principles were abused. The possibility to do so was included in the EU's „Human Rights and Democracy Clause“ (agreed in 1995) and was designed to facilitate the application of political conditionality. The EU agreed that henceforth all new third country agreements should include the same standardized clause providing for suspension where „respect for democratic principles and fundamental human rights“ were not upheld. In the 1990s, the EU also introduced a number of diplomatic measures, which can be used for the promotion of democracy and human rights. Besides démarches and political dialogue since the Maastricht treaty the EU has the instrument of a Common Position (CP). CPs are binding for the member states and set out clearly what the EU expects of a particular third country and which carrots and sticks might be deployed. In the Amsterdam treaty the instrument of a Common Strategy (CS) was introduced. It sets out EU objectives, including a greater coherency in the use of different instruments and competences, which together support democracy and human rights. No explicit provision exists for the mobilisation of military instruments as a means of safeguarding democracy (Youngs, pp.34-40).

Democracy promotion is a comprehensive endeavour. It refers to many aspects of society and state and can take place at different stages. To clarify the challenges of democracy promotion by the EU in relation to Ukraine, Moldova and Belarus, the following chapter presents a short theoretical framework on the transition to democracy.

3. Theoretical framework for the explanation of the transition of the former Soviet Republics and favourable internal and external conditions for a successful transition

O`Donnell and Schmitter (1986, 7ff.) developed a model of three stages to analyse the transition from a non-democratic to a democratic political system. According to this model, the first stage (liberalisation) is characterized by the crises and consequent collapse of the old regime. During the next stage (democratisation), the necessary democratic institutions are installed and in the last stage there is a consolidation of democracy and a subsequent stabilisation of the democratic regime. Even though democratisation and consolidation tend to overlap and it is therefore not always possible to clearly differentiate between these three stages, the model is nevertheless useful for the description of the political systems of Ukraine, Moldova and Belarus and the analysis of the EC's democracy-promotion-efforts towards these countries.

3.1. Liberalisation

In the stage of liberalisation the old system loses its legitimacy. There can be many reasons for this: the regime is either not able to „deliver“ what people expect and no longer able to reform itself or it has destroyed its own ideological basis because of reform; especially younger generations feel that the regime is outdated; the elites of the regime are divided; there is a pragmatic and well-organised opposition. The chances for a change of the regime are higher, if the society has already gained a certain degree of autonomy from the state, if the people are well educated, there is a high standard of living and there are no or little social or national cleavages and conflicts. Sympathies and material support of the international community for the opposition (political parties, NGOs, media) and other not state-controlled organisations can enhance liberalisation. (Merkel, 1999a, pp.102-104). At the same time external players may still have contacts to the still ruling elites. These players might be able to persuade the ruling elites

to decide for democratisation. Furthermore, there exist possibilities of punishing measures (limitation of contacts, visa-bans, etc.). Positive or negative incentives can be exerted in the economic sphere (trade, direct investment, migration, development aid) as well.

3.2. Democratisation

The success of democratisation and the introduction of the principles of market economy depend to a large extent on the behaviour of the elites of politicians, bureaucrats, economists, military personnel and intellectuals. A slow introduction of new institutions is a sign of resistance of the elites to adapt to the new rules. The elimination of non-democratic regimes and the development of democratic institutions is favoured, if

- the state is independent;
- the state and its governmental system is strong and stable;
- the courts have broad powers;
- the powers of non-elected state-agents (administration, military, police) in the economic, social, cultural and religious spheres are diminished in favour of elected representatives;
- market-mechanisms are established because they favour state bureaucracy's loss of power;
- there is an efficient market-economy with good performance;
- there are high standards of education;
- there are democratic traditions as well as old democratic institutions or a remembrance of pre-authoritarian democratic institutions;
- the mass-media are real means of communication and control;

Concerning the central democratic institutions, parliamentary systems create better pre-conditions for the consolidation of a democracy than semipresidential or presidential ones. A powerful president promotes polarisation and abrupt policy-changes, hinders the development of parties, thereby possibly contributing to the development of a defective democracy or a new authoritarianism. The election law and the election system should promote the representation of all important interests of a society in the parliament. Therefore, a system of pure proportional representation should be preferred to a majoritarian system. The administrative system is also of importance. Bigger states are advised to adopt a federal system with as much self-administration as possible and competences on all levels, because it strengthens the autonomy of the civil society as a whole (Merkel, 1999a, pp.131-133).

Because there is usually a lack of knowledge at this stage, in creating the legal and material basis for the new system, external support is most needed. It can be given by states, intergovernmental organisations or international NGOs. The recipients of support are state-institutions, civil society-organisations as well as private firms. Support is needed in the fields of elections (consultation on the organisation of elections), the management of political parties, the building of state institutions (consultation in constitutional-design, judiciary, legislation-related questions, local self-administration), civil society (support of NGO-activities like interest-representation or political education), market-economy and reform of the armed forces e.g. by cooperation with democratic military (Carothers, 2000, p.88). Financial support, the creation of favourable economic relations for the democratising country, the support of direct investments and a liberal migration policy can be important external interventions in favour of democratisation. The general goal is to protect the democratisation-efforts against anti-democratic developments.

3.3. Consolidation

Whereas the definition of liberalisation and democratisation among scholars is not disputed, there are several explanations and definitions concerning democratic consolidation. According to Merkel (1999b, 145 ff.) a stable democracy needs consolidation in four spheres:

- a) Consolidation of the central state institutions mentioned in the constitution. It is attained if the institutions are active and react efficiently regardless of the difficulty of the situation. The citizens can then benefit from conflict-management, decision-making-management and material support by the state. Moreover, the public order will be more easily supported and considered legitimate. The public order will also have a broadly supported symbolic-integrative effect.
- b) Consolidation of the system of interest-representation. It is attained, if political parties and organisations representing economic interests (trade unions, business unions) are strong enough to represent these interests and handle conflicts effectively. Furthermore, the citizens can easily ascribe clearcut interests to political parties.
- c) Consolidation of the democratic behaviour of potentially anti-democratic political players as the armed forces, radical groups etc. This implies the readiness of these players to accept the democratic rules of the game. The consolidation in this sphere is attained if all such players accept the constitution.
- d) Consolidation of a functioning civil-society capable of generating social capital as the result of social trust, recognition of common values and norms as well as participation in social networks/associations (Gabriel, Kunz, Roßteutscher, van Deth, 2002, p.23). The result is the formation of a culture of citizenship, which supports democracy as a cultural basis.

It should not be disregarded that social and economic disparities as well as ethnic and religious conflicts have detrimental effects on the consolidation of democracy. A tendency towards equal distribution of property and income has a positive influence on democratisation.

At this stage of transition the international community (state-agencies, intergovernmental-organisations, international NGOs) concentrates its activities on the safeguarding and social embedding of the new system. Scholars agree that these goals can be achieved by manifold activities and cooperations of state-institutions and civil society-organisations (NGOs). Voluntary and non profit-organizations of citizens are considered to be “schools of democracy”, capable of promoting democratic behaviour and creating trust among people. Aside from the interventions mentioned above there are some additional possibilities to influence democratisation from outside during the introduction of new democratic institutions and the consolidation of democracy. Financial support and training of independent media can promote transparency and political competition. In case of internal political tensions or conflicts of the transition-country with another country, the international community can exert pacifying influence by political and diplomatic means. The importance of political dialogue between a democratising country and democratic countries, the EC and international organisations should not be underestimated. Positive incentives can be exerted in the economic sphere by increasing development aid as well as creating better conditions for trade and immigration.

4. Stagnation or transition? Efforts and successes of democratisation in the three countries and the role of external influence

In the 1980s, the deep crises of the Soviet Union and the attempts to reform it under the conditions of greater freedom stimulated the rise of oppositional democratic movements in the three Republics. These movements stressed nationalistic aspirations which, in the cases of

Ukraine and Belarus, meant the satisfaction of the needs and historical aspirations of the titular nations by founding independent states. In Moldova the anti-unionist and reform-movement stressed the historical and cultural unity with Romania.

Certainly, these aspirations were problematic insofar as the three countries were ethnically, linguistically and culturally not homogenous. According to the official census in all three countries the number of the members of the titular nations [Ukrainians, Romanians/Moldovans and Belarusians] was (and still is) below 85 per cent. The most dramatic consequences of these aspirations were experienced in Moldova, where the political-cultural movements of the „National Renaissance of the Rumanian Speaking“ and the „Moldovan Sovereignty“ (both supported the accession to Romania) from the end of the 1980s until 1994 were most influential. Consequently, the leadership of the predominately Russian speaking population on the east-bank of the river Dnjestr in 1989/1990 declared its independence from Moldova by proclaiming the foundation of Pridnjestrovskaja Moldavskaja Respublika (PMR). Similarly, the southern district of Comrat, inhabited predominantly by the Turkic-speaking Gagauz, declared its independence but did not finally break away from Moldova because of the recognition of its autonomy by the Moldovan government.

Additionally, it should be taken into consideration that in these countries national self-definition or linguistic affiliation is not necessarily an expression of the will for political independence. Consequently, in all three states the expectations that national mobilisation would be possible and would lay the basis for a high legitimacy of public institutions and thoroughly reforms in the political and economic field were not fulfilled.

First steps towards independence and changes of the political system in the three Republics had already been realised before 1991. The failed Putsch in Moscow in August 1991 was decisive for the final decision towards independence. The turmoil and violence in the Union's capital provoked fears that the central government could take violent measures against the Communists in the Republics. Therefore, in Ukraine and Moldova the new democratic forces and the old party-nomenklaturas, the majorities of which adopted the new discourse of nationalism and reform, had a common goal, which was finally reached in December 1991 by the official dissolution of the Soviet Union. The foundation of the Republic of Belarus was primarily the consequence of external conditions. This Republic's communist-elite lacked reform-aspirations completely. However, after the crisis of August 1991, the communist party was not only forbidden in Ukraine and Moldova, but in Belarus as well. With their international recognition and their acceptance as members of international organisations like the United Nations and the OSCE these countries slowly started to move towards democracy and market-economy.

4.1. Ukraine - catching up in the consolidation

From the late 1980s until November 1991 Ukraine like all the other Soviet Republics experienced liberalisation and democratisation at the same time. On 1 December 1991 the stage of liberalisation ended definitely with a referendum in which 90,23 per cent of the voters expressed their support for state-independence. Simultaneously, Leonid Kravčuk was elected first president of Ukraine. In the following months the government and the parliament continued the process of adaptation of the still valid constitution from 1978 to the democratic principles, which was confirmed by Ukraine's signing of the Charter of Paris for a New Europe⁶ on 16 June

⁶ This document was adopted originally by a summit meeting of most European governments in addition to those of Canada, the United States and the Asian countries of the former Soviet Union, in Paris on 21

1992, thereby expressing her commitment to build democracy and respect human rights as well as the rule of law. On 30 January 1992 Ukraine became member of the Conference on Security and Co-operation in Europe (CSCE).

Later on, contrary to what one would have expected, the country's speed of democratisation turned out to be slow. Even though the basic democratic rights were granted and democratic institutions were built, it took until 1996 to replace the old Soviet constitution by a new one. The new constitution of 1996 laid the executive power in the hands of the president but foresaw a strong position of the parliament in legislation. In reality, due to the weakness of the parties and unclear distribution of competences between the major state-institutions, the president became the central player, controlling the administration on all levels and exerting strong influence on legislation and judiciary, which had a detrimental effect on political and civic freedom of citizens and civil society. The mixed election-system with half of the deputies elected in single-mandate constituencies (majoritarian system) and half of them elected in a system of proportional representation of the parties in a country-wide constituency created good opportunities for the president to influence the decision-making of the parliament. Before the 1999 presidential elections and the 2002 parliamentary elections the use of administrative measures and pressure on mass-media in favour of the president and his parliamentary allies was quite common.

However, in terms of progress on the road to a consolidated democracy the time before the mass-protests in connection with the fraudulent presidential elections of late 2004 (Orange Revolution) were not completely lost years because even under the difficult conditions of semi-authoritarianism the formation of free-media, competitive political parties and other institutions continued.

Since the Orange Revolution the constitutional changes, which were agreed between the government and the opposition to overcome the sharp conflict and the behaviour of the new leadership have been helping a lot to achieve progress in the consolidation of Ukraine's democracy. The parliamentary elections of 26 March 2006 were conducted in line with international standards for democratic elections (OSCE, 2006, p.2). Today journalists are no longer restricted by governmental-interferences and do not have to be afraid of physical attacks. However, the rule of law is still endangered. The political parties and organisations representing economic interests (trade union, business unions) need to consolidate in terms of organisation, membership and interest representation. Even though the judiciary has gained more independence from the executive, the law may still be disregarded. One reason for this is that there continues to be a relatively high degree of corruption.⁷ The rate of participation in civil society-organisations is one of the lowest in Europe. In 2005, similar to the previous years 84 per cent of the population did not participate in any association (Lane, 2006, p.3). Other shortcomings are the lack of power and non-sufficient revenues by subnational governments and violations of human rights (Sushko, Prystayko, 2006, p.11-14). Additional problems for Ukraine's democracy result from the multi-layered cleavages between its different regions. Even though it would be too simple to speak about Russia-oriented East and EU-oriented West, the historical, ethnic, linguistic and religious differences among the population hinder the

November 1990. The charter was established on the foundation of the Helsinki Accords, and was further amended in the 1999 Charter for European Security. Together, these documents form the agreed basis for the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe.

⁷ Corruption Perception Index (CPI) of Transparency International (2005): 2,6, In: http://www1.transparency.org/cpi/2005/cpi2005_infocus.html.download 2 December 2006

consolidation of the nation. A hot spot is the peninsula Crimea with a Russian speaking majority and the Tartaric population, which has returned from expulsion. As far as the economy is concerned, the country is facing serious problems, even though the private sector of the economy contributes a growing share to the GDP. In 2003 it amounted to 65 per cent (Haran, 2004, p. 624)

4.2. Moldova – a fragile state's progress in the consolidation of its democratic system

Moldova's path towards independence in terms of institutional decisions and timing was similar to that of Ukraine. After becoming member of the CSCE on 30 January 1992, Moldova signed the Charter of Paris for a New Europe on 29 January 1993. Less than three years after the attainment of independence in December 1991, the newly elected parliament adopted the country's first constitution in July 1994. It laid the basis for a presidential-parliamentary system. The elections of 1994 and 1998 were considered fundamentally free and fair. Similar to other post-soviet countries Moldova's decision-making process suffered from a lack of clear delineations of competences between the different institutions. Constant disputes between the president and the parliament led to a modification of the constitution, according to which the president is elected by the Parliament. In 2001 the Communist Party won the absolute majority in the parliament and its leader was elected president. Under the leadership of its party-leader and state-president, the Communists dominated all spheres of life. Consequently, democratic standards were violated in different fields such as elections and mass-media. The government intervened severely in the election-campaigns. State-owned mass-media were used as means of propaganda. Other democratic shortcomings were the fragile independence of the judiciary and the control of the central election-commission by the ruling party.

The parliamentary elections of 6 March 2005 brought about losses for the ruling Communist Party, but it kept its absolute majority in parliament. In contrast to its earlier positions since that time the Party has opened its politics towards the positions of opposition parties. Regarding democratic standards there have been improvements in freeing the judiciary from political control and influence. Anti-corruption laws seem to be effective to a certain extent since the Corruption Perception Index (CPI) registered for Moldova in 2005 is 2,9⁸ and 2,3 for 2004. Although there has been no harassment and violence against journalists, investigating corruption, the use of state-controlled media for governmental interests before elections was registered by Freedom House in 2005. From time to time the government tries to pressure civil society-organisations through reregistration rules or through attempts to establish pro-governmental NGOs or trade unions. However, civil society is strong enough to oppose such measures. Democracy on the local levels remains weak because of insufficient competences and financial means (Dura, 2006, p. 10ff).

Further progress in the consolidation of Moldova's democracy depends strongly on the solution of the secessionist conflict with PMR, the stabilisation of state-identity and economic reform. In 2003, the private economic sector's contribution to the GDP amounted to 50 per cent which is much lower than in Ukraine (Munteanu, 2004, p.399).

⁸ <http://ww1.transparency.org/cpi/2005/cpi2005_infocus.html> download 30 November 2006

4.3. Belarus – second liberalisation after authoritarian restoration?

Comparing the three countries one comes to the conclusion that the conditions for the establishment of a democratic order were the worst in Belarus. Stalinism and the experience of the Second World War highly Sovietized and Russified the population. Economically, Belarus was well developed and enjoyed a relatively high standard of living. Even though 81 per cent of the population are, by self-definition, Belarusians, the Belarusian language and culture was and is not very popular. Whereas national feelings of Ukrainians can be stimulated when referring to historical political formations like the Kiev Rus Empire and of Moldovans when referring to the Moldovan principality of the Middle Ages, patriotic Belarusians have no comparable historical reference for their state-project. Instead, the government propagates an ideology of Slavic greatness and nostalgia for the Soviet Era. This is why the president has attempted to isolate the country from the West and has tightened relations with Russia. Therefore, backwardness in the sense of authoritarianism and readiness to unite with Russia are favoured. Only between the late 1980s and 1994 Belarus took a similar path as Ukraine and Moldova from liberalisation to democratisation, which culminated in the adoption of a liberal-democratic constitution in March 1994. After accession to the CSCE on 30 January 1992, Belarus signed the Charter of Paris on 8 April 1993.

However, when Aljaksandr Lukashenka came to power as president in June 1994, he stopped and reversed democratisation. In 1996, the president's proposal to cancel the constitutional division of powers was legitimised by a strongly manipulated referendum. In the same year the elected parliamentary deputies were substituted by people, nominated by the president. Consequently, political competition, freedom of media, associational autonomy and accountability of state organs was extremely reduced. Even though elections of local councils and the parliament take place, their main and perhaps only goal is to legitimise the decisions taken by the president and his team. The tight control of the regime over mass-media⁹ (except internet), makes it very difficult for the oppositional candidates to reach the population. In the economic field the regime is able to preserve its power by the imposed strict limitations for privatisation. Therefore, the economy is to a large extent still state-controlled. In 2003 only 25 per cent¹⁰ of the GDP were earned in the private sector (Silitski, 2004, 96). Nevertheless, there are forces (political activists¹¹, different NGOs), which continue to resist the regime and which hold on in their endeavours to fight for a second liberalisation in Belarus. Corruption seems to be as high as in Ukraine.¹²

⁹ In 2006 the last independent daily newspaper of Belarus vanished. Today two weeklies are considered as not controlled by the state. Interview of the author with the Belarussian Journalist Nelly Bekus, Vienna, 15 September 2006.

¹⁰ According to Kirill Koktyš, political scientist at the MGIMO-University in Moscow, the private sector of the Belarusian economy is even smaller than 25 per cent of the GDP. Interview of the author with Kirill Koktyš, Vienna, 15 December 2006.

¹¹ Oppositional political parties with broad support by a part of the population do not exist.

¹² CPI (2005) – 2,6 (In: http://www1.transparency.org/cpi/2005/cpi2005_infocus.html) download 13 November 2006).

5. Ukraine, Moldova, Belarus and the European Union

Due to its military potential and important role as an energy-supplier after 1991 Russia has been the EU's major partner to the East. In contrast, Ukraine, Belarus and Moldova have been of minor importance. In the first years after the collapse of the Soviet Union the EU's attention to Ukraine and Belarus focused almost exclusively on military denuclearisation, decontamination after Chernobyl, and the future of nuclear energy. Moldova has been even less relevant.

A new chapter in the relations between the EU, Russia and the Western New Independent States (NIS) began, when Brussels became aware of the necessity to enhance - in its own interest - reform in all spheres of life in the post-Soviet societies. The Union offered „Partnership and Cooperation Agreements“ (PCAs), which were to replace the 1989 agreement regulating trade with the Soviet Union. The first Western NIS to sign the PCAs with the EU in 1994 were Ukraine (in force since 1998), Russia (in force since 1997) and Moldova (in force since 1998). The PCA for Belarus was signed in 1995, but in 1997 the EU decided to stop the ratification-process because of the rise of authoritarianism in this country. Another reason for the EU's concerns was that President Lukašenka had developed strong ties with parts of the developing world, where Belarusian weapons and equipment stocks are attractive commodities. For the US and the EU the country has also become a concern in terms of the proliferation of materials of mass destruction. Despite very bad diplomatic relations, which culminated in visa-bans for high rank officials and the limitation of assistance, Belarus has remained eligible for some EC aid-programmes. The realisation of several EC-financed projects (democracy building, humanitarian help, cross-border cooperation, activities linked to attenuating the impact of the Černobyl disaster) and contacts below the ministerial level demonstrated the EU's will to remain engaged in Belarus. Trade relations between the EU and Belarus basically were not affected by the political tensions.

The PCAs with Ukraine and Moldova were negotiated individually. Therefore, their terms vary in points of detail but they have common basic objectives: Firstly, to institutionalize the political dialogue between the two sides in order to establish close political relations. Secondly, to promote trade, investments and harmonic economic relations between both sides in order to accelerate their development. The two sides partially granted each other the „most-favoured-nation“ (MFN) arrangements. Thirdly, to create the basis for good cooperation in economic, social, financial, scientific and cultural spheres. Fourthly, to support the partner country in its efforts to foster its democracy and to consolidate the market economy. However, the PCAs do mention neither membership nor any sort of association with the EU. The most they have offered is better access to the EU-internal market. Part 1, paragraph 4 of the PCA with Ukraine foresees the possibility of an EU-Ukraine Free Trade Area if Ukraine makes progress in reforming the economy on the basis of market principles (Uhoda pro partnerstvo ta spivrobotnyctvo, 1994).

Since the late 1990s growing differences have been appearing between Ukraine and Moldova on the one side and the EU on the other concerning their mutual relations. Both countries have declared the accession to the EU as their strategic goal. Even though the EU's European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP) is a sign of interest in the Eastern neighbourhood, it precludes the accession of these countries. Brussels has declared its readiness to intensify relations by harmonisation on different levels with the aim of promoting cooperation and exchange. So as to achieve this goal and to finally implement the PCAs, in 2005 the EU reached agreements with Ukraine and Moldova on so called Action-Plans. Similar to the conditionalities of the PCAs, the Action-Plans make improvements in trade relations, financial

aid, cooperation in the field of infrastructure, visa-facilitations, negotiations on an enhanced framework-agreement with the EU etc. in relation to progress in consolidation of democracy and respect of principles of market economy, rule of law, human rights and fundamental freedoms.

6. The EU's efforts to promote democracy in Ukraine, Moldova and Belarus

Even though after the disintegration of the USSR the EC/EU reacted quickly in helping the new states to cope with their problems (technical, environmental, institutional etc.), democracy promotion was not a top priority. As described in chapter 2, the EU had at that time only begun to integrate democracy promotion into its policy towards third countries. Of more importance were the Council of Europe (CoE) and the CSCE/OSCE¹³, two inter-governmental organisations with strong working relations (political coordination and financing) with the EU. Whereas the OSCE has become important primarily in the field of conflict-settlement¹⁴, the CoE

¹³ On 1 January 1995 the CSCE became the OSCE.

¹⁴ In 1994 an CSCE/OSCE-Mission began to work in Ukraine. Its tasks included conflict prevention and crisis management in the Autonomous Republic of Crimea. After the successful completion of its task the OSCE-Mission to Ukraine ceased to work in 1999. In the same year the OSCE Project Co-ordinator in Ukraine began to work: The aim of the new form of co-operation initiated between the OSCE and the Ukrainian authorities has been to support Ukraine in adapting legislation, structures and processes to the requirements of a modern democracy. Projects have been dedicated to good governance (public participation in decision making, civic education, follow-up to elections, public access to information) and the rule of law (assistance to the judiciary in the enforcement of the European Convention on Human Rights, assistance to legislators in the sphere of human rights, justice and human dimension; assistance in the application of new civil and commercial codes) (In:

<http://www.osce.org/ukraine/13179.html>>download 2 December 2006).

In 1997 an OSCE Office was opened in Minsk. Its mandate was to support the building of democratic institutions and to observe the respect of OSCE-criteria in the field of democracy and human rights. From 1998 until 2001 the Office was successful in organising a network of independent Belarusian election observers, promoting mutual understanding between government and opposition on negotiations on limited democratic reforms, promoting cooperation between government opposition parties, promotion of independent media, formation of a Belarus-Troika consisting of deputies of the European Parliament and Parliamentary Assemblies of OSCE and CoE and reaching an agreement between the EC, the OSCE-Office for democratic institutions and human rights (ODIHR) and the OSCE-advisor and observer-group in Belarus on a democracy-programme with a budget of € 1 million.

Due to pressure by the Belarusian government, the Office had to stop its work and a new mandate of the new OSCE Office in Minsk (since 2003) was negotiated: The mandate comprises assistance to the government in further promoting institution building, consolidating the rule of law and in developing relations with civil society, in accordance with OSCE principles and commitments; assistance to the Belarusian Government in its efforts in developing economic and environmental activities; to monitor and report accurately on this process (In: <http://www.osce.org/belarus/13189.html>>download 2 December 2006).

OSCE Mission to Moldova. The mandate of the Mission was established on 4 February 1993 by a Permanent Council decision. It consists of the following points: facilitate the achievement of a lasting political settlement of the conflict over Transnistria and assist parties in consolidating the independence and sovereignty of the Republic of Moldova along with an understanding about a special status for Transnistria; gather and provide information on the situation in the region, including the military situation; investigate specific incidents and assess their political implications; encourage the implementation of an agreement on the complete withdrawal of foreign troops from the country; provide advice and expertise on human and minority rights, democratic transformation, repatriation of refugees and a definition of a

has been assisting in shaping the legal basis for the new system. The CoE's main role has been to monitor and strengthen standards of democracy, human rights and the rule of law¹⁵ throughout its member states. Its essential instruments are conventions, the most important of which is the Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms. Membership requires a minimal respect for these conventions. Moldova was accepted as member-state of the Council of Europe on 13 July 1995, Ukraine on 9 November 1995. Belarus applied for full membership on 12 March 1993 but has not been accepted hitherto as a consequence of the November 1996 constitutional referendum, which legitimised the fusion of powers in the hands of the president. In 2005-2006 training of Moldovan and Ukrainian judges and human rights experts took place in a joint effort of the EU and the CoE (ENP Progress Report Moldova, 2006, p.15 / ENP Progress Report Ukraine, 2006, p.17).

Ukraine's and Moldova's contacts with the CoE in the framework of the Committee of Ministers, the Parliamentary Assembly and the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of the Council of Europe has support(ed) the process of integration in the system of common European values. A similar effect of socialisation of these countries results from the assemblies offered by the EU for meetings and discussions with third countries.¹⁶ It is important not to forget that the EU has become important as a presence, integration model and democratic reference in the wider European neighbourhood. As an economically powerful (even more so after the enlargement of 2004) area with high standards of democracy as the priority criterion for membership, the EU does not need to actively try to shape its neighbourhood. If it decides to actively promote its norms and values in the neighbourhood, then the membership-perspective will be the most powerful instrument to extend its values and norms (Emerson, Aydın, Noutcheva, Tocci, Vahl, Youngs, 2005, p. ii). But this has not been the case concerning Ukraine, Moldova and Belarus until now. As Table 1 demonstrates, democracy promotion in the post Soviet-expanse was by far not a major concern of the EU.

special status of the Transdnestrrian region; initiate a visible OSCE presence in the region and establish contacts with all parties to the conflict, local authorities and population. On 9 December 1999, the scope of the mandate was expanded by Permanent Council decision no. 329 to include: ensuring transparency of the removal and destruction of Russian ammunition and armaments; co-ordinating financial and technical assistance to facilitate withdrawal and destruction (In: <http://www.osce.org/moldova/13174.html> download 2 December 2006).

Besides, the OSCE Mission to Moldova advises authorities in Moldova on issues related to the rule of law, human, minority and language rights as well as the process of democratic transformation, including elections (In: <http://www.osce.org/moldova/13428.html> download 2 December 2006). Furthermore, it closely observes the media situation in Moldova, including the Transdnestrrian region. The Mission reports its concerns and observations regularly to the OSCE participating States and to the OSCE Representative on Freedom of the Media (In: <http://www.osce.org/moldova/13427.html> download 2 December 2006).

¹⁵ During the accession processes of the three countries the CoE's Parliamentary Assembly urged for the adoption of new constitutions, laws on political parties and elections, reform of the judicial system, new codification of the civil law, implementation of the human rights-protection and the abolition of the death-penalty.

¹⁶ Political dialogue between the EU on the one side and Ukraine and Moldova on the other side takes place within the Cooperation Councils on ministerial level, the Cooperation Committees of high diplomats and the Joint Parliamentary Cooperation Committees.

Table 1: Total TACIS funds and TACIS funds allocated for democracy promotion, 1991 – 1999 (in million €)

Sector	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	Total
Others: Includes the Democracy Programme and miscell- aneous	2,05	0,83	48,02	40,53	48,71	28,39	52,88	10,56	8,88	240,85
Total	396,5	418,91	472,09	469,68	511,19	536,00	481,73	507,24	427,55	4.220,89

Source: http://ec.europa.eu/comm/europeaid/projects/tacis/financial_en.htm

Table 1 also shows also that the overall amount of TACIS funding slightly increased over the years. As Raik (2006, p.17) points out this was true especially for Ukraine, Moldova and Belarus. In 1995, the overall TACIS funding to the three countries was 70 million Euro, as compared to € 264 million for 2005-2006. In contrast, the proportion of funding for democratisation and civil society by TACIS changed considerably.

6.1. Ukraine – a major receiver ?

Ukraine's state agencies and NGOs have been receiving financial support for democratisation and consolidation from the EC since 1991. According to Raik (2006, p.16) in the period from 1998 to 2004 it amounted to € 133,8 million¹⁷, of which NGOs received € 16,4 million. Between 2004 and 2006 Ukraine received € 110 million for institutional, legal and administrative reform, of which € 10 million have been dedicated to civil society, media and democracy (Raik, p.17). From the EIDHR Annual Programmes 2002 – 2005 5 Macro- and 27 Micro-projects a total of about € 4 500 000 were implemented.¹⁸ For EIDHR-Micro Projects in the year 2006 Ukraine was allocated € 300 000 in support of Campaign 2 (Fostering a culture of human rights) and 650 000 Euro in support of Campaign 3 (Promoting the democratic process).¹⁹

¹⁷ TACIS-, EIDHR-, IBPP- related activities including activities involving the OSCE and CoE concerning election assistance and election observation as well as know how-transfer in legal affairs etc. After decision of the EU Human Rights and Democracy Committee besides Russia and Georgia Ukraine was among the EIDHR-focus countries for the period 2002-2004

¹⁸ <<http://www.delukr.ec.europa.eu/page4363.html>> download 3 December 2006

¹⁹ <http://ec.europa.eu/comm/europeaid/projects/eidhr/documents_en.htm#eidhr>download 3 December 2006.

Table 2: Assistance to Ukraine by selected EU- member states and the USA, 1998-2004 (million €)

Donor state	Assistance to democracy	Assistance to NGOs
Netherlands	5,19	No data
Germany	2,52	No data
United Kingdom	11	0,76
Sweden	16,1	0,92
United States	370,2	77,09

Source: Raik, 2006, p.16.

Additionally, the EU as a whole as well as individual member states have been supporting the political stability of Ukraine on a high political level. Poland was active as promoter of Ukraine's integration into European institutions long before her accession to the EU. Warsaw helped to calm down conflicts between the opposition and former President Kučma, who was accused of violating democratic rights²⁰. During the crises over fraudulent presidential elections in late 2004 the Presidents of Poland and Lithuania as well as the Secretary General of the EU-Council helped to find a diplomatic solution.

On 21 February 2005, the EU-Ukraine Action Plan was adopted. It contains a comprehensive reform-agenda going beyond the PCA which is still the legal basis for the relations between Ukraine and the EU. In twelve paragraphs the plan determines how democracy, rule of law, human rights and fundamental freedoms are to be implemented and consolidated. In its recent ENP-progress report the EU confirmed Ukraine's progress on the road to a consolidated democracy especially in the field of respect for human rights and the rule of law by removing pressure from the media and civil society and reforming customs service. It welcomed the introduction of legislative reforms but criticised that in some spheres progress is hindered by endemic corruption (ENP Progress Report Ukraine, 2006, pp. 2-5). During the EU-Ukraine Summit in Helsinki on 27 October 2006, Bettina Ferrero-Waldner, Commissioner for External Relations and European Neighbourhood Policy, encouraged the Ukrainian representatives to continue on the path of reform offering an enhanced agreement after expiration of the PCA in 2007 and a „deepened“ Free Trade Area with the EU.²¹

6.2. Moldova – neglected by the European Union?

According to Raik (2006), in the period from 1998 to 2004 the EC supported Moldova's NGOs with € 5,6 million, which includes financial support by the EIDHR from 2002 to 2004 aimed at mass media not owned by the state and such NGOs as trade unions (Gabanyi, 2005, p.31).²²

Figures on assistance to democracy are incomplete but it is obvious that in this respect the country was largely neglected by the EC. In the years 1993, 1996, 1998, 2000, 2002, 2004 no support of Moldova by TACIS is registered. The overall support by TACIS from 1991 until 2005 covering all sectors is € 154,6 million, and € 1009 million for Ukraine.²³ Moldova was not

²⁰ The CoE and the EU expressed their concerns over violations of democratic principles in Ukraine.

²¹ <<http://europa.eu.int/rapid/pressReleasesAction.do?reference=PRES/06/297&format=HTML&aged=0&language=EN&guiLanguage=en>> download 2 December 2006).

²² Compare: Commission of the European Communities: Commission Staff Working Paper. European Neighbourhood Policy. Country Report. Moldova, COM (2004)373 final, Brussels, 12. 5. 2004, pp. 2-5.

²³ <http://ec.europa.eu/comm/europeaid/projects/tacis/financial_en.htm> download 27 November 2006

eligible for EIDHR-Micro and –Macro projects in 2005 and 2006.²⁴ By contrast, according to the data in table 3 the contributions of selected member states in the period from 1998 until 2004 did not differ much from those to Ukraine

Table 3: Assistance to Moldova by selected EU- member states and the USA, 1998-2004 (million €)

Donor state	Assistance to democracy	Assistance to NGOs
Netherlands	6,27	No data
Germany	4,53	No data
United Kingdom	0,67	0,23
Sweden	10,8	0,23
United States	71,83	4,27

Source: Raik, 2006, p.17.

Similar to Ukraine and Belarus, in Moldova the relations between government and opposition were sometimes tense and mediation was needed. After 2000, sharp conflicts broke out between the government and opposition. Abuse of powers and hence violations of democratic rights were evident. The government was also criticised because of efforts to re-centralise the administration. The CoE and the EC therefore raised their voices and helped to calm down the situation by mediation (Lewis, 2004, p.198).

The Orange Revolution and the change of government in Ukraine have had consequences for Moldova. Chişinău signed an EU-Moldova Action Plan one day after Kyiv on 22 February 2005, thereby recognizing the EU-set reform agenda. In the meantime, the EC acknowledged that the 2005 parliamentary and local elections generally complied with most CoE and OSCE standards, except as regards the pre-election campaign. It appreciates draft laws on the involvement of NGOs in the legislation process and judiciary reform. At the same time the EC as well as others criticised a lack of freedom of the media, widespread corruption and a fusion of politics and business (ENP progress report Moldova, 2006, pp.2-3).

Of great importance for the political and economic development of Moldova is the resolvment of the conflict over Transnistria. Since 2005 progress has been achieved by the involvement of the EU (and the US) in the negotiation process. Following a request from the Presidents of Moldova and Ukraine, in 2005 the EU established an EU Border Assistance Mission (EUBAM) on the border between Moldova and Ukraine including the Transnistrian segment. The aim of this mission has been to enhance the capacities of the Moldovan and Ukrainian services to ban smuggling and customs-fraud and thereby contribute to the settlement of the conflict.

6.3. Belarus – democracy promotion between rejection and positive expectation

After independence was attained in this country, the relations with the EU and the two intergovernmental organisations CoE and OSCE developed similarly to those of Ukraine and Moldova. In the period from 1991 until 2005, support from the programme TACIS amounted to only € 75,6 million whereas no funding is documented for the years 1996, 1998, 1999, 2001,

²⁴ <http://ec.europa.eu/comm/europeaid/projects/eidhr/documents_en.htm#eidhr> download 27 November 2006.

2002 and 2004.²⁵ According to Raik (2006) the EC's total assistance to NGOs in Belarus in the period 1998-2004 was only € 4,4 million. According to table 4 the contributions of the selected member states were similar to those for Moldova.

Table 4: Assistance to Belarus by selected EU-member states and the USA, 1998-2004 (million €)

Donor state	Assistance to democracy	Assistance to NGOs
Netherlands	1,92	No data
Germany	6,37	No data
United Kingdom	0,23	0,03
Sweden	8,22	3,7
United States	32,07	17,80

Source: Raik, 2006, p.16.

After the replacement of the previously elected parliament by a National Assembly controlled by the President and other severe violations of democratic principles, Brussels reacted by introducing coercive measures. It withdrew support for the accession of Belarus to the CoE, suspended the PCA and limited the contacts and assistance to Belarus. Other measures were restrictions of high level contacts followed by a visa-ban for high rank officials and freezing of bank-accounts. When formulating the criteria, which should have been fulfilled by Minsk as a precondition for renewed ties, the EU closely cooperated with the OSCE Office in Minsk and the CoE (Lynch, 2005, pp.107-108). Ever since this situation has remained unchanged. Up until the year 2006, the political system of Belarus has been making constant "progress" on the way to pure authoritarianism. There have been no signs of the regime to meet the EU's criteria for renewed cooperation.

Despite the fact that the Belarusian government has created difficult working-conditions for external-democracy promotion, Belarus was eligible for Micro- and Macro-Projects funded by the EIHDR. In 2005 the allocations for Micro-Projects (campaigns 2 and 3) amounted to € 420 000 and in the year 2006 to € 400 000.²⁶ In 2005, the EC supported information and media organisations with training through the TACIS programme, and has supported the Belarusian Association of Journalists. To improve access to free media and independent information sources in Belarus, an EC contract with "Deutsche Welle" was signed on 15 August 2005 for a daily prime-time radio broadcast over one year in Russian and Belarusian language (Connections, 3/2005, p.5). Furthermore, another EU-funded radio-station determined to broadcast into Belarus and to counterpoise the quasi-information monopoly of the government was installed. A third radio station (Radio Racyja) with a similar task operates close to the border with Belarus in Eastern Poland.

Among the purely symbolic gestures of its commitment to liberalisation in Belarus is the European Parliament's granting of its Sakharov prize for Freedom of Thought to the Belarusian Association of Journalists in 2004 and to the leader of the Belarusian opposition Aleksander Milinkevič in 2006. Long lasting effects can be expected by the EU's financial support to the European Humanities University (EHU), founded 1992 in Minsk and since 1994 in Exile in Vilnius. In October 2006 the EC launched a 3-year scholarship programme worth € 4,5 million to

²⁵ <http://ec.europa.eu/comm/europeaid/projects/tacis/finacial_en.htm> download 27 November 2006

²⁶ <http://ec.europa.eu/comm/europeaid/projects/eidhr/documents_en.htm#eidhr> download 4 December 2006

support scholarships for Belarusian students who have been penalised by the Belarusian regime and who have been denied access to Belarusian universities because of their political activities during and after the presidential elections of 19 March 2006. Thanks to these scholarships, Belarusian students who were initially expelled will be able to pursue their studies in neighbouring countries in particular at the EHU in Vilnius and in Ukraine.²⁷

7. Impact assessment and perspectives

The results of an assessment of democracy promotion depend on a definition of this term. Beyond doubt, all means should be taken into account regardless of whether they can be quantified financially or not. For the purpose of this paper the author has focused on democracy promotion by the supranational European Commission, the CoE and the OSCE. Initiatives of selected member states were covered to the extent needed to permit an estimation of the overall impact of these institutions in the field of democracy promotion towards the three countries. The “reformistic” weight of many programmes and activities can be assessed by the financial expenditures. Others, such as legal advice, political dialogue, monitoring and mediation (etc.) have to be assessed in a qualitative way.

In theory, democracy promotion can take place during the stages of liberalisation, democratisation and consolidation. In the cases discussed here, the external players had practically no direct influence on liberalisation. However, the agreement on the respect of human rights between the “West” and the Soviet Union in the framework of the CSCE (Helsinki Accords) was an important stimulation for change. In 1991, the EU, the CoE and the CSCE welcomed the democratic choice of the governments in Kyiv, Chişinău and Minsk. At that time, democracy promotion was not at all a priority-task of the EC. Tackling with the threats resulting from the USSR’s nuclear arsenal, environmental problems and economic decline through technical and economic assistance seemed to be more important. In contrast, the EU’s instruments to promote democracy had yet to be developed. Since the beginning of the 1990s the tools instrumental to external democracy promotion and development aid have been constantly developing. For most programmes the amount of money allocated has been increasing.

The EC, the two organisations and individual member states provided manifold material and consultative support to build democratic institutions, promote the rule of law, resolve conflicts and protect fundamental freedoms as well as human rights. Legal advice and recommendations, monitoring, election observation and support to independent media have been having a largely positive effect on transition in Ukraine and Moldova. Financial support has helped to stabilize the macro-economic situation of these countries.²⁸ After Belarus left the path towards democracy in 1994, Minsk has been increasingly hostile towards Western democracy promotion. In recent years it has tolerated only limited Western activities to support independent journalists, oppositional politicians and humanitarian as well as economic help.

²⁷ <<http://europa.eu.int/rapid/pressReleasesAction.do?reference=IP/06/1402&format=HTML&aged=0&language=EN&guiLanguage=en>> download 2 December 2006

²⁸ The overall assistance to Ukraine, Moldova and Belarus [through TACIS, EIDHR, macro-financial assistance, humanitarian aid (ECHO) and the Food Security Programme] between 1991 and 2005 amounted to € 2.723 million. By contrast, Poland received € 5.710 million of EU funds in the period 1991-2003 (Raik, 2006, p.15).

Altogether, because of many shortcomings, the endeavours of democracy promotion have been having a limited effect. Obviously, the support for civil society organisations is very weak and the argument that the civil societies of these countries have been marginal can be only partially accepted as an excuse. Visa regulations have been strict and have not been encouraging contacts between people. Due to the EU's policy, the import of different goods (food, textiles, steel) into the EU has been restricted. The PCAs and the Action Plans of Ukraine and Moldova include only weak incentives for reform. Concerning Belarus the strategy to maintain minimal contacts with the political leadership and to simultaneously provide the opposition with reluctant support is being questioned.

From the beginning of the year 2007 on the ENP will be affected by organisational changes. The main financial tool for the EC's activities in Ukraine, Moldova and Belarus will be the European Neighbourhood and Partnership Instrument (ENPI). Until 2013 the budget of aid foreseen for all the countries of the ENP (to the East and the South of the EU) is € 12 billion, which is 32 per cent more in real terms than in the last budget period.²⁹

The provisions for the ENPI foresee support to the rule of law, good governance, impartiality and effectiveness of the judiciary, the fight against corruption, democratisation, civil society and media pluralism (Regulation No 1638/2006, Title 1, Art. 1). Without doubt, the accession of the Central Eastern European countries has been enhancing the EU's endeavours in its Eastern neighbourhood. Poland and the Baltic States have clearly been supporting Ukraine's call for an EU accession-perspective. Some improvements have been made during the EU-Ukraine Summit in Helsinki on 27 October 2006, when the Ukrainian Foreign Minister and the EU's Commissioner for External Relations and European Neighbourhood Policy signed an agreement on visa-facilitations. After ratification of the agreement more groups of Ukrainian citizens will travel more freely into the EU. Facilitations will also positively affect the small border-traffic.

Despite these signs of closer relations it should not be forgotten that a substantial intensification of activities in the field of democracy promotion towards Ukraine and Moldova will only occur in case of preparations for accession to the EU. However, such perspectives are still missing. In Belarus, the prospects for the promotion of democracy are the worst. On the one hand, due to the authoritarian system the Western institutions have limited access to the country and on the other hand, Brussels and the national governments are reluctant to "irritate" Moscow.³⁰

²⁹ <<http://europa.eu/rapid/pressReleasesAction.do?reference=IP/06/1676&format=HTML&aged=0&language=EN#fn2>> download 10 December 2006

³⁰ It should not be forgotten that the political reality in Ukraine, Moldova and Belarus is strongly influenced by the geopolitical ambitions of Russia, which tries to keep its influence on these countries as strong as possible and which is therefore in opposition to "Westernisation", be it in political, economical or military terms.

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