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Master thesis

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EU AS A NORMATIVE POWER: CASE STUDY OF TRANSNISTRIA

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I have written this Master's thesis independently. All viewpoints of other authors, literary sources and data from elsewhere used for writing this paper have been referenced.

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INTRODUCTION

Normative Power Europe concept earned its popularity since 2001, when it was introduced by Ian Manners. According to Manners: *"the EU can be conceptualized as a changer of norms in the international system; and that the EU should act to extend its norms into the international system"[1]*.

The thesis is a single case study and its aim is to show if and how the EU is using its normative power to influence the behavior of the target country, Transnistria in this case. A separate importance is paid to the perceptions and acceptance of the norm taker, Transnistria in our case, and its readiness to change and accept the norms as a reaction to the actions taken by the EU. Transnistria has been described as one of the most resolvable conflicts; still it has maintained its status quo for 26 years, which is leading to a number of issues, described in the thesis. OSCE has undertaken the active role undertaken in the negotiations process whereas the EU was involved as an observer. However recently the EU has become more active in the region as result of its Neighborhood Policy.

The relevance of the study lies in the fact that Normative Power Europe as a theoretical concept can be studied on a set example, and the results may indicate that the EU is having an effect on Transnistria. The theoretical framework in the first chapter has reviewed the critique addressed to the concept, in order to produce a more comprehensive result. The second chapter is a short historical background, important at pinpointing the roots of the cessation of today. The third chapter is a methodological description and data as well as research limitations. It is followed by a description of the general framework of the EU-Moldova relationship in the fourth chapter and the case study analysis is developed in the fifth one with the description of the relations between the EU and Transnistria. The actual diffusion of norms with examples from Transnistrian case is shown in the sixth chapter.

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[1] Manners, Ian. (2001): "Normative Power Europe: The International Role of the EU", European Community Studies Association Biennial Conference.

The thesis is a contribution to the study of Normative Power Europe, since it describes the views of both sides: that of the norm maker – EU in our case; and that of the norm taker – Transnistria, for the purposes of the research. The findings are that despite the geopolitical interests, that continue to be important in Transnistria, the EU's normative power shows effect.

1. NORMATIVE POWER EUROPE

*Normative power works like water on
stone, not like napalm in the morning[2]*

1.1 Normative power Europe concept

This chapter describes the theory of Normative Power Europe (NPE), its meaning and purpose, as well as critique. It is important to start by analyzing the concept of normative power, what it represents and observe if it can be applied to other state powers, besides the EU. The normative power concept has acquired different meanings depending on the context and it has been used before NPE theory emerged. Jepperson formulated the definition of normative power in the following way: „the ability to shape and determine international norms, with norms defined as „collective expectations about proper behavior for a given identity""[3]. This definition states the fact that norms are used as terms describing a state's influence on other parties. In the interpretation of Diez, the normative power "is a power that is able to shape conceptions of the 'normal'"[4]. Makarychev describes norms as universal and essential and they are contrasted with irregularity, disorder or eccentricity[5]. Rouse's understanding of normativity is a very broad one, he sees normativity in terms of "how we hold one another accountable to what is at issue and at stake in ongoing practices"[6]. According to constructivists, a norm refers to "collective expectations for the proper behavior of actors with a given identity"[7]. Stemming from these definitions, the normative power

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[2] Manners, Ian. "The EU's normative power in changing world politics." *Normative Power Europe in a Changing World: A Discussion, Netherlands Institute of International Relations* (2009): 9-24.

[3] Jepperson, Ronald L. "Norms, identity, and culture in national security." (1996).

[4] Diez, Thomas. "Constructing the Self and Changing Others: Reconsidering Normative Power Europe'." *Millennium* 33.3 (2005): 613-636.

[5] Makarychev, Andrey S. "Rebranding Russia: norms, politics and power." *WHO IS A NORMATIVE FOREIGN POLICY ACTOR?* (2008): 156.

[6] Rouse, Joseph. "Social practices and normativity." *Philosophy of the social sciences* 37.1 (2007): 46-56.

[7] Katzenstein, Peter J., ed. *The culture of national security: Norms and identity in world politics.* Columbia University Press, 1996.

concept can be described as the power of norms, which are applied in order to influence other actors' behavior.

The EU is not the first normative power described, and the concept can be observed in the practices of states like the US or Russia, for example. The discussion of the historical aspect of the normative power exists at the conceptual level and in the external policy of other influential states, the difference being the mechanisms of implementation. The characteristic aspect of the EU that distinguishes it from other state-powers is that through the Normative Power Europe, the EU puts emphasis on the values of liberty, democracy, human rights and the rule of law. The main difference observed is that the EU is concerned to represent the image of a peaceful Europe and it is more focused on regional and less on global aspirations, with an emphasis on different and not only military means of influence and a lack of 'missionary spirit' in comparison with the US National Security Strategy"[8]. When we compare the EU with Russia in terms of normativity, there is a different approach in both cases. The European identity is constructed in opposition to its past through the concept of the past as other, whereas the Russian perception on itself is that of a country whose identity is deeply rooted in the past[9].

During the last few decades, the European Union has increasingly tried to characterize itself as an entity guided by moral standards and rules agreed by all member states. This self-conception also guides EU's foreign policy, where instead of military power, more emphasis is put on guiding by example, through promoting rule of law, or using economic and political means. As a result, the EU has been variously described as soft power[10], normative power[11], or civilian power[12]. These qualifications have been created in order to delimit the EU from the military and realist concept of power. When

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[8] Berenskoetter, Felix Sebastian. "Mapping the mind gap: A comparison of US and European security strategies." *Security dialogue* 36.1 (2005): 71-92.
[9] Makarychev, Andrey S. "Rebranding Russia: norms, politics and power." *WHO IS A NORMATIVE FOREIGN POLICY ACTOR?* (2008): 156.
[10] Roselle L., Miskimmon A., O'Loughlin B. 2014. Strategic Narrative: A New Means to Understand Soft Power. – *Media, War and Conflict. Vol.* 7. No. 1. P. 70-84.
[11] Diez T., Manners I. 2007. Reflecting on Normative Power Europe. – *Power in World Politics.* Ed. by Berenskoetter F., Williams M.J. L.: Routledge. P. 173-188.
[12] Duchêne, François, 'Europe's Role in World Peace', in Richard Mayne (ed.), Europe Tomorrow: 16 Europeans Look Ahead, London: Chatham House, 1972: 32–47.

distinguishing normative from ethical and/or civilian, Manners discusses that "normative is about how policy should be, how the EU should reconstruct the current practices"[13]. Manners argues that the EU represents a new and distinct kind of actor within the international system, and transcends the anarchic and self-interested behavior of states[14]. These claims indicate the unique nature of the normative power Europe concept, through which the EU acts as the force for good for other non-EU states. Moreover, Europe is perceived as a cosmopolitan entity[15], advantaged in this regard to promote normativity in international relations and to give up on the argument of force. In this regard, the EU has promoted the trust of external partners, that there is a power, which can be seen on the international scene as a promoter of peace and democracy. The EU is perceived as a political model and a saving power, as an example for East European countries and other states in the EU neighborhood.

According to Manners, normative power concept is applicable to the EU alone, and cannot be applied to other actors, especially not to the United States. He has indicated that the militarization of the EU risks making it more like other, traditional great powers, whilst leaving the problems of interstate politics precisely where they were"[16]. Hedley Bull, on the other hand, considers that the EU has to gain military power in order to be an international actor [17]. Ian Manners argues that after the Cold War, the civilian and military power are not enough to describe what the EU is and that besides being military and civilian, the EU is a normative power[18]. Normative Power Europe theory states that the EU is a new and unique international actor, a "*sui generis*" case. The notion of normative power is used to refer to the power of norms, to the way these norms are interpreted. Former President of the European Commission José Manuel Barroso declared that the EU is "one of the most important, if not the most important normative power in the world. […] There is not another case […] where the United

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[13] Diez, Thomas, and Ian Manners. "10 Reflecting on normative-power Europe." *Power in world politics* 173 (2007).
[14] Manners, I. 2002. Normative Power Europe: A Contradiction in Terms? *JCMS: Journal of Common Market Studies,* 40**,**235-258.
[15] Beck, U., Pouvoir et contre-pouvoir à l'ère de la mondialisation, 2003
[16] Manners, 'NPE reconsidered', 194–195.
[17] Bull, Hedley. "Civilian power Europe: a contradiction in terms?." *JCMS: Journal of Common Market Studies* 21.2 (1982): 149-170.
[18] Manners, I. 2002. Normative Power Europe: A Contradiction in Terms? *JCMS: Journal of Common Market Studies,* 40**,**235-258.

States or China or Russia, has been able to have so many other countries following their patterns"[19].

The Normative Power Europe concept has been developed by Ian Manners in 2002 and it has become widely used in policy debates and in academic studies on external relations of the European Union. Manners claims that the European Union can be seen as a normative power; one that diffuses internal norms in its external relations[20]. According to Manners, the EU should act to extend its norms into the international system[21]. The normative power as described by Manners is seen to focus on following aspects: "Normativity in the sense of inviting value judgments on what is desirable, a form of power that works through immaterial channels, and a type of actor with a particular normative identity[22]. Manners described three meanings of normative power: the first meaning of normative power is the emphasis on normative theory, that is how we judge and justify truth claims in social science[23]. The second meaning of normative power is a form of power that is ideational rather than physical, the emphasis being on the ability to use normative influence, rather than physical force. And the third meaning of normative power is a characterization of an ideal type of international actor[24]. Manners has further identified the roots of the different nature of NPE. According to Manners, this difference is rooted in three sources: historical context (legacy of two destructive wars), hybrid polity (the features of the Union as a post-Westphalian order with institutions of supranational and international levels), and political-legal constitutionalism[25].

The EU is represented as normative power in the relation between the actors of the international system and tends to extend its own model to other states by means of diffusion mechanisms. Normative Power Europe becomes an instrument of its external

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[19] European Commission official website, http://www.eu-consent.net/library/BARROSO-transcript.pdf (accessed 05.03.2017).

[20] Manners, Ian. "Normative Power Europe: The international role of the EU." (2002).

[21] *Idem*

[22] Manners, Ian. "The European Union's normative power: critical perspectives and perspectives on the critical." *Normative Power Europe*. Palgrave Macmillan UK, 2011. 226-247.

[23] *Ibid*

[24] *Ibid*

[25] Manners, Ian. "Normative power Europe: a contradiction in terms?." *JCMS: Journal of common market studies* 40.2 (2002): 235-258.

action. The conceptual debate on the manner in which the EU acts on the international scene has started in the context of the Cold War. NPE is rooted in the strategic thinking over the role EU sees itself playing on the international scale. After the end of the Cold War, the EU has promoted values, which were lacking in former communist countries, like for example democracy and the respect for human rights (the promotion of these values shall not constitute a detailed subject of research in the thesis, except for occasionally referring to them where relevant to the topic of normative power). The EU's constitution as an "elite-driven, treaty based, legal order," means that its identity and behavior are fundamentally based upon a set of common values[26]. Among the most significant values there are: peace, liberty, the rule of law, democracy, human rights, social solidarity, anti-discrimination, sustainable development, and good governance[27]. Manners referred to standards, which constituted "European values" and these standards are the objectives foreseen by the Treaty of the European Union, obligatory for the member states and for the associated countries [28]. Manners argues that the EU norms have a different nature than those promoted by other international actors.

Even if the normative power concept has appeared in 2002, similar notions have been discussed already during the 1970s, that is of the civilian power Europe. For Duchêne[29], for instance, the European Union is the force, which diffuses civil values and democracy on an international scale. He was the first one to point out that the EU was a new form of actor. The author suggests that the EU can impose its civilian power to other communities as a modus operandi, meaning that the EU implicitly undertakes the role of an active international actor. Duchêne also mentions that the EU is a new stage of the political civilization, overcoming the previous formula of military powers. However, this concept is considered flawed and obsolete.

Manners introduced a new vision of the EU as the shaper of norms. The normative principles are not exclusively European, these represent universal practices of the

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[26] Manners, I. 2002. Normative Power Europe: A Contradiction in Terms? *JCMS: Journal of Common Market Studies,* 40**,** 235-258.

[27] *Ibid*

[28] Kavalski E. 2013. The Struggle for Recognition of Normative Powers: Normative Power Europe and Normative Power China in Context. – *Cooperation and Conflict.* Vol. 48. No. 2. P. 247-267.

[29] Duchêne, François. "Europe's role in world peace." *Europe tomorrow: Sixteen Europeans look ahead* 43 (1972).

international community, especially in the post-Cold War setting. Lucarelli and Manners mention that the universal principles are internalized and converted into guiding principles of the EU. Therefore, each broad principle is given a European reading before channeled into relations with third parties[30]. Another important aspect for the theoretical part shall relate to the manner of diffusion of the normative power. Manners has identified several types which contribute to the diffusion of the European norms in international relations. These are: contagion, informational, procedural, and transference diffusion, overt diffusion and cultural filter. These factors shall serve as framework of analysis for current work and will be described in more detail in the following sub-chapters of the theoretical part.

1.2 Normative power Europe critique and appreciation

The article of Manners from 2002 resulted in both critiques and appreciations. The concept developed by Manners was subject to a number of critiques with regard to the normative approach, because there is an important accent placed on the norms and values as the external policy of the European Union. The critics of this concept recognize the attractiveness and the popularity of the idea, proposed first by Duchêne as civilian power and developed further by Manners as normative power. These critiques are brought up by the realist and Neorealist School, in particular. In the opinion of Hyde-Price[31], the normative approach of power cannot describe the entire mission of the EU on international scale. According to Hyde-Price, liberal-idealist concepts of 'civilian' and 'normative' power neglect the underlying dynamics of military and economic power. In his opinion, "the EU is far from being a normative power whose influence derives from what it is rather than what it does"[32].

Sjursen, another scholar who criticized normative power Europe, indicated that normative power within the international system needs to be further specified, and that explicit criteria for assessing if the EU's putative pursuit of norms is legitimate, are

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[30] Manners, Ian, and Sonia Lucarelli. "Values and Principles in EU Foreign Policy." (2006).
[31] Hyde-Price, Adrian. "'Normative'power Europe: a realist critique." Journal of European public policy 13.2 (2006): 217-234.
[32] *Ibid.*

necessary[33]. Merlingen, although recognizing the debate around NPE concept to be an interesting and a theoretically sophisticated one, also considers that NPE is lead by self-interest. Merlingen has the opinion that the power of the EU creates arbitrary relationships between the internationals, the EU, and the locals, the population of especially conflict-ridden areas affected by the EU's foreign policy[34].

Another wave of critique to the concept of normative power is brought by Russian authors[35]. In the public discourse of Russia, the EU is masking its intentions of expansion by promoting normative power. The rise of interest of Russian scholars towards the nature of the EU as international actor and the justification of the normative power appeared with the ideological crises of Russia after the Cold war. The Russian view on the external policy of the EU holds to the interpretation of norms[36]. The EU is seen in contradiction both with Russia as an international actor, as well as with the regions of interest for Russia. Russian scholars critiqued the theory by stressing that "it is nonsense to imagine a single world community with some sort of unified system of values, cultures, single way of life and single stereotypes and standards"[37]. According to Romanova, Russia has challenged the EU's normative power by arguing that international relations have to be based on interests rather than values, and that values promotion is hypocritical, concealing real geopolitical intentions and leading to unnecessary politicization of the human rights agenda[38]. These actions denote that Russia strives to re-establish equality with the EU and wants to be considered as an equal partner.

There is a competition of values that takes place between Russia and the EU, and this is why it is important to establish the understanding of the relation of interests and values.

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[33] Sjursen, Helene. *Civilian or military power?: European foreign policy in perspective*. Routledge, 2013.

[34] Merlingen, Michael. "Everything Is Dangerous: A Critique of Normative Power Europe'." *Security Dialogue* 38.4 (2007): 435-453.

[35] Нарочницкая Н. Является ли Россия частью Европы? [Электронный ресурс] / Н. Нарочницкая // Фонд исторической перспективы : сайт. - URL: http://www.perspektivy.info/print.php?ID= 36255

[36] Solomon T. 2014. The Affective Underpinnings of Soft Power. – *European Journal of International Relations*. Vol. 20. No. 3. P. 720-741.

[37] Gadzhiev, K. (2008) 'O polze i ushcherbnosti "universalnykh tsennostei'", *Mirovaya ekonomika i mezhdunarodnye otnosheniya*, 5.

[38] Tatiana Romanova (2016) Russian Challenge to the EU's Normative Power: Change and Continuity, Europe-Asia Studies, 68:3, 371-390.

The EU is targeting its near abroad which is intended to be as a test ground for its normative power, and this makes part of the geopolitical contest between Russia and the EU. It has been considered that: "both Russia and the EU focus in their policies on the support of the elites"[39]. Consequently, there can be identified a normative conflict between Russia and the EU, which has manifested itself in the events that took place in Ukraine, but is also observable in Transnistria, and other regions of interest of the Russian Federation[40].

These authors are relevant to the research under consideration, in order to verify the functionality of the external policy of the EU as a Normative Power in Transnistria. Thus, the critiques of the normative power concept refer to the real consequences of its implementation in the external policy of the EU. In this way, the problem of effects of this normative power is raised[41]. Both the followers as well as the critics of the concept of normative power Europe do not deny its usefulness for approaching the EU on international scene. As an example, the concept is seen by Hurrel as a standard in building an original political model of the EU, under its theoretical aspect of building a European vision of international relations[42]. In his work, "Normative power Europe: a realist critique" Adrian Hyde-Price offered a neorealist analysis and critique of notions of the EU as a "normative" or "civilian" power. It argues that structural realist theory can shed considerable light on the emergence, development and nature of EU foreign and security policy cooperation. He argues that the EU is used by its member states as a collective instrument for shaping its external milieu by a combination of hard and soft power.

The normative power concept was considered an attractive one by some scholars since it represents a refined expression of the manifestation of power on international scale. These scholars, together with Manners himself, tried to refine NPE and explain more

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[39] Nizhnikau, Ryhor. "When Goliath meets Goliath: how Russia and the EU created a vicious circle of instability in Moldova." *Global Affairs* 2.2 (2016): 203-216.

[40] Makarychev A. S. Neighbours, Exceptions and the Political: A Vocabulary of EU-Russian Inter-Subjective (Dis)Connections / A. S. Makarychev // The Elephant and the Bear Try Again. - Brussels, 2006. - P. 15-40.

[41] Smith, Karen E. European Union foreign policy in a changing world. John Wiley & Sons, 2013.

[42] Hurrell, Andrew, and Terry Macdonald. "Ethics and Norms in International Relations." *Handbook of International Relations* 2 (2013): 57-84.

fully what it entails. Their studies have elaborated on the interpretation of the concept of normative power, and have given rise to other concepts, like ethical power [43], responsible power [44], structural power [45]. The derivate results can be considered as attempts to develop the concept further. The NPE concept was supported by many scholars as also demonstrated by being voted one of the most influential ones by the European Union Studies Assocaition (EUSA) [46]. Haukkala has mentioned with relation to NPE as put forward by Manners, that "the most prominent expression of normativity has been the work of Ian Manners on the EU as a normative power". Haukkala has stated that "Manner's ideas have proven to be highly influential but also equally controversial [47]". The evolution of normative power concept caused a better understanding of the limits of its utility in the external policy of the EU [48].

The European model is one that inspires other countries to look for alternatives to the military power. Promoting the European identity as a normative power is found also in the soft power concept, described by Joseph Nye [49]. This concept has won popularity and is found in the discourse related to the international position of the European Union. The soft power concept competes with the normative power in the meaning of building an international identity of the EU. The search for normative backgrounds, which have been described in the theory of Manners and in the theory of other authors, are not only dilemmas of EU, but also make part of the global problems in the international relations after the Cold War. Still, the normative power has an implicit effect in the discourse of EU authorities at the external level.

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[43] Aggestam, Lisbeth. "Introduction: ethical power Europe?." *International affairs* 84.1 (2008): 1-11.

[44] Mayer, Hartmut, and Henri Vogt, eds. *A responsible Europe?: ethical foundations of EU external affairs*. Springer, 2006.

[45] Holden, Patrick. *In search of structural power: EU aid policy as a global political instrument.* Routledge, 2016.

[46] University of Copenhagen, Department of Political Science, official website, http://politicalscience.ku.dk/staff/academic_staff/?pure=en/persons/323164 (accessed 20.04.2017).

[47] Haukkala, Hiski. "The European Union as a regional normative hegemon: The case of European Neighbourhood Policy." Europe-Asia Studies 60.9 (2008): 1601-1622.

[48] Bickerton, Christopher J. "Legitimacy through norms: the political limits to Europe's normative power." *Normative Power Europe: Empirical and Theoretical Perspectives* (2011): 25-42.

[49] Nye, Joseph S. Jr., 'Public Diplomacy and Soft Power', The Annals of the American Academy, 616 (2008): 94–109

1.3. Normative power Europe application

The application of the concepts of civil and normative power of Europe highlight their external manner of action. Normative power is detached from the traditional military power and the reason is that normative power follows normative objectives that are found in the terms of the norms of foundation of the European Union. The European Union has undertaken international responsibility in the diffusion of its own model. This action is directed towards the external cooperation for the development of its own model, as a means to promote the human rights in the world. At first sight this concept seems to be too idealistic, however the EU wants to impose it on international arena at a level of principles of action. In other words, normative power has to become an inherent part of international political actions, and not an influential factor of EU extension, but serve as fundamental value.

The application of normative power concept foresees a political vision of normative principles within a consolidated international framework. The application of the normative power concept highlights the fact that norms have to become objectives of cooperation and future development. In other words, by applying normative power it will be possible to reach a coherence of actions on international level, from the perspective of respect for the fundamental human values. An interpretation of this aspect can be seen in actions of EU enlargement, by including new member states into the EU, since the new quality of EU member state implies that the state assumes and implements entirely the European procedural model. In this case, we can observe an advanced form of procedural diffusion of normative power concept of the EU, as described by Manners [50].

An important step in the development of competencies of normative power Europe, is the fact that with the entry in force of Treaty of Lisbon, the Charter of Fundamental Rights became legally binding for the EU institutions and for national governments, just like the EU treaties themselves [51]. The EU has applied and strengthened the universal

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[50] I. Manners, The Concept of Normative Power In World Politics, "DIIS Brief ", May 2009, http://subweb.diis.dk/graphics/Publications/Briefs2009/B09_maj__Concept_Normative_Power_World_P olitics.pdf (last visited 24.01.2017).
[51] EU Charter of Fundamental Rights, http://ec.europa.eu/justice/fundamental-rights/charter/index_en.htm (accessed 12.03.2017).

values, as proclaimed by the United Nations and the Council of Europe. Consequently, the EU has developed mechanisms, which allow the creative and dynamic development of these concepts [52]. In other words, the difference, although hard to perceive, is that the concepts which justify normative power Europe are not static, but are continuously developing, both at conceptual level, as well as at the level of implementing mechanisms.

An important aspect of normative power development is not only the diffusion of existent norms, but also the capacity of the EU to delimit what is normal and to concentrate on the objective of reglementation. . Concerning the diffusion mechanisms, Gilardi mentioned that the diffusion is a consequence of interdependence and is not defined exclusively (or even primarily) by the fact that something has spread[53]. The adoption of the European Security Strategy in 2003 has given rise to a series of debates on the place and role of the military instruments in EU's external policy. This question is one of the most frequently debated in the EU scholarly environment. The dichotomy of power (soft power versus military power) or the trichotomy (normative standard of power, the economic power, and the military power) is used, as a rule, as a conceptual basis for the consideration of this issue [54].

At a distance of more than 10 years since the adoption of the Strategy, the events in Ukraine have given rise for new discussions related to the values promoted by the EU and normative power Europe. The problems of interests on international level are clashing with the conflict of values in relation with Russia, which has a different interpretation of power in itself [55]. Without denying the importance of norms and instruments of regulation in EU external policy, it has to be mentioned that the EU is rarely eager to exercise methods of pressure and of military power or constraint towards third countries, when the power of conviction or attraction is not sufficient enough.

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[52] Youngs R. 2004. Normative Dynamics and Strategic Interests in the EU`s External Identity. – Journal of Common Market Studies. Vol. 42. No. 2. 415-435.
[53] Gilardi, Fabrizio. "Four ways we can improve policy diffusion research." *State Politics & Policy Quarterly* 16.1 (2016): 8-21.
[54] Feklyunina V. 2015. Soft Power and Identity: Russia, Ukraine and the Russian World(s)'. – *European Journal of International Relations*. P. 1-24.
[55] Sakwa R. 2011. Russia and Europe: Whose Society? – *Journal of European Integration*. Vol. 33. Is. 2. 197-214.

The Normative Power Europe model is imposed, due to the nature of EU, and this model demonstrates the possibility to overcome confrontation by means of cooperation. Inside the EU, there is a complex system of international, transnational and supranational obligations, which ensure the distribution of competences to the member states. This hybrid nature of the EU as an international political entity leads to the fact that EU action in the world is rather limited, especially with regard to the traditional use of military power. Consequently, the normative power as an alternative instrument of influence is characteristic for the EU and is promoted internationally.

The European Neighborhood Policy is applied as a framework for engaging the EU's near abroad and for its norms diffusion. This instrument is providing an alternative to further EU enlargements and also attempts at disseminating the EU normative agenda in relation with the non-candidate states. The ENP actually brings benefits not only to the EU but to the neighboring states as well since it provides economic incentives in return for implementation of key reforms or aligning the national legislation with the EU *acquis*. This is an asymmetric relation of the EU with the neighboring states meaning that the objectives are set by the EU. The economic gains, or the material incentive is guiding the ENP and the EU is applying as a substitute to further enlargements and would produce a "ring of friends" with strengthened democracy and economy. It is important to mention that the diffusion of norms does not entail coercion and although conditionality exists, its effects are positive. The positive conditionality applied as an instrument among EU decision-makers and it also fits well the notion of normative power as it is a form of bargaining power and can be applied to create incentives that persuade partners to apply certain conditions desired by the EU.

1.4. Normative power diffusion

An important aspect for the theoretical part shall relate to the manner of diffusion of the normative power. This aspect shall constitute a framework for deliberative analysis within the Transnistrian case-study. The framework for diffusing the EU norms is the ENP and EaP instruments that the non-candidate countries are offered. The mechanisms described by Manners contribute to the diffusion of the European norms in

international relations. The EU as a regional power is using economic incentives to facilitate the diffusion of its norms. The norms as described in the NPE are: contagion, informational, transference, procedural, overt diffusion and cultural filter.

According to Manners, the ***contagion diffusion*** of norms takes place through the diffusion of ideas between the EU and other global actors[56]. This form of diffusion, also named *pouvoir normatif* is manifested in the way in which ideas and means of regional integration are diffused in other countries. According to Manners, these forms of diffusion rely on mechanisms of imitation and the attraction of ideas.

These are the ideas that are considered to be worth of imitation, like "four freedoms", "single currency", "common high authority", etc. According to Manners, the "environmental imperative" drove the EU to adopt early measures and "lead by example"[57]. The contagion diffusion happens by the way of diffusing ideas from the EU to other actors and it is more a passive way of diffusing EU norms, since mechanism works as a force of attraction and leading by example. With Transnistria being an unrecognized entity, it is challenging to trace-down this mechanism and the findings under this mechanism are scarce.

The ***informational diffusion*** is a component part of the EU public diplomacy strategy, meaning that the norms are promoted through NGOs and non-state agencies. Information diffusion of norms takes place when reference is made to strategic communications, such as different EU policy initiatives, for example from the EU Presidency. Informational diffusion is the result of the strategic communication of the EU[58]. The informational diffusion relies on a number of mechanisms of initiation, declaration and communication including persuasive attraction and argumentative promotion of ideas[59].

The ***procedural and transference*** diffusion of norms is used by the EU as

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[56] Manners, I. J. (2013). Assessing the decennial, reassessing the global: Understanding European Union normative power in global politics . Cooperation and Conflict, 4(3), 304-329.
[57] Baker, 2006; Manners, 2000b: 39–49; Vogler, 2005
[58] Manners, Ian. "Normative power Europe: the international role of the EU." (2001).
[59] Manners, I. J. (2013). Assessing the decennial, reassessing the global: Understanding European Union normative power in global politics . Cooperation and Conflict, 4(3), 304-329

encouragement for internal reforms since these factors entail technical assistance and financial encouragements to parties, in order to pursue internal reforms. The ***procedural diffusion*** of norms takes place through the institutionalization of relationships between the EU and third parties, involving political partnership as found in inter-regional cooperation agreements, membership of an international organization, association agreements or enlargement of the EU itself"[60]. Such examples can be Association Agreements. A general framework for the procedural diffusion is the EaP, which among others, institutionalizes EU's relationship with the Republic of Moldova, including Transnistria, and which is built on norms. The norms established in the EaP and are based on proceeds for their application serve as a next step for their consolidation. An example of the procedural norms are the EaP Summits, these represent both procedural diffusion of norms, as well as informational diffusion. Procedural diffusion relies on a number of mechanisms of partnership, cooperation, association and membership, including the persuasive attraction of ideas, the argumentative promotion of ideas, and the possible prestige and status of associating with the EU and other international organizations[61].

The ***transfer of norms*** is carried out when the EU makes exchanges of goods and offers help and technical assistance to a certain country. This fact includes also the export of standards and norms, which the EU is more and more eager to share with third countries.

The *transference diffusion* of norms takes place when material and immaterial assets are transferred, like for example the humanitarian aid and technical assistance[62]. This form of diffusion can have conditionality clauses, and can be the result of more engagement of EU agencies with support for NGOs on the ground. This mechanism represents the number of actions like technical assistance, support, can take place in form of a dialogue, transference of ideas. Community norms and standards can be transferred through the exchange of goods, trade aids or technical assistance[63]. In addition, through humanitarian and development aid, institutional support, training programs to NGOs.

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[60] *Ibid.*

[61] *Ibid.*

[62] Manners, I. (2002) 'Normative power Europe: a contradiction in terms?', Journal of Common Market Studies 40(2): 235–58.

[63] *Ibid.*

The diffusion of norms is carried out by means of exchanges of goods, trade, aid or technical assistance with third parties through real or financial means. The norm diffusion can also be strengthened by use of political conditionality. Examples of Transference are the PHARE and TACIS programmes in Central and East Europe[64].

Manners also identifies *overt diffusion* and *cultural filter* as ways of expanding influence. In the case of overt diffusion, the EU diplomatic involvement and physical presence of EU missions influences diffusion of norms in third country. As examples are the European External Action Service delegations and embassies of Member States. According to Manners, overt diffusion relies on a number of mechanisms of presence, diplomacy or actions including dialogue, transference or enforcement of ideas[65].

And lastly, in the case of *cultural filter* - the EU's values can be advocated and promoted through either rejection, or adaptation of the third party's political and social contexts to those of Europeans [66].Norms can spread through cultural filter leading to learning, adaptation or rejections of them[67]. Kinnvall argues that the cultural filter is based on the interplay between the construction of knowledge and the creation of social and political identity by the subjects of norm diffusion[68]. Manners indicated that the cultural filter becomes crucial in understanding how and by what means EU symbolic manifestations are interpreted during representation and reception.

It is important to mention, that it is not always possible to make a clear-cut division in each case of the norm diffusion, since there can be an overlapping of mechanisms, while each of them work together to maximize the synergy. Also, due to the status of the ENP states, the most prominent forms of diffusion that are more prevalent are the transference and the procedural diffusions that are strongly applied by the EU.

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[64] *Ibid.*

[65] Manners, I. J. (2013). Assessing the decennial, reassessing the global: Understanding European Union normative power in global politics . Cooperation and Conflict, 4(3), 304-329

[66] Manners, Ian. (2001): "Normative Power Europe: The International Role of the EU", European Community Studies Association Biennial Conference.

[67] *Manners:2002, p.242-243 Manners, Ian, Normative Power Europe: A contradiction in Terms?, Journal of Common Market Studies, vol. 40, Issue 2, 2002*

[68] Kinnvall, Catarina. *Cultural Diffusion and Political Learning-The Democratization of China.* Vol. 88. Statsvetenskapliga institutionen, Lunds universitet, 1995.

The EU is considered to maintain the character of normative power externally, so that it possesses the capacity to change the normative beliefs of other states. In this respect, the EU as a normative maker is the author who directs more or less persuasively the construction of a normative identity of the states under consideration, who are considered to be norm-takers, who are consolidating the norms to be diffused. The mechanisms which are applied by EU as a norm maker were implemented by the public figures with authority in the target states, NGOs and other networks of transnational institutions contributing to the diffusion. The terms norm-maker and norm-taker have been formulated by Jeffrey Checkel [69].

In the case of diffusion, we can talk about both export and import of norms, which can also happen simultaneously. Additionally, norms transfer can be active or passive, direct or indirect, or the transfer from normative maker to the norm-taker. Because of this, there isn't a standard of normative power diffusion. Certain approaches to the export of normative power seem more or less adequate in the case of Transnistria. In the case of Transnistria, the EU's role as a norm-maker and that of Transnistria as norm-taker act with reciprocity, since the norm-taker is not a passive role but there is a simultaneous exchange, a mutual relationship between the parties. When we refer to the transfer of norms, this implies the modification of normative beliefs in the absence of constraints of economic character, or any types of constraints.

The status of Transnistria, during 26 years after the fall of the USSR has applied forms of constraint for conflict resolution. That is why discussing about a traditional formula for normative power diffusion in the case of Transnistria is difficult. The efforts of norms transfer in the case of Transnistria are testing the theoretical disputes of this concept, from the theoretical point of view. The export of norms is concentrated on the normative-makers, which offers a model of successful governing, which have to be mainly taken and implemented by the norm-taker. Accepting this model was not possible in Transnistria, mostly due to the fact that it would lead to identity unification

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[69] Checkel, Jeffrey T. "Norms, institutions, and national identity in contemporary Europe." International Studies Quarterly 43.1 (1999): 84-114.

with the Republic of Moldova, a state from which Transnistria is trying to separate from. The socio-political identity of Transnistria is oriented towards the Euro-Asian model of the Russian Federation. The EU is engaged with the Transnistrian issue since it is in its proximate vicinity and it is officially considered to be part of Moldova, which is one of the poorest countries that the EU borders with, currently a member of the European Neighborhood Policy and striving towards future membership status. Negotiations on the resolution of the Transnistrian conflict are still carried out with the aim of creating a format that would retain Moldova's integrity. Despite being somewhat reluctant to engage with the EU, Transnistria has demonstrated pragmatism in their foreign relations, and appeared cooperative to an extent. But it can be argued that even if the Transnistrian government aims to engage with EU to a limit (in areas which could offer gains for the regime), norm diffusion still takes places within these interactions, and EU influence can be traced.

The EU has manifested with good will the changes that take place in Transnistria. The attractiveness of EU normative standards in the case of Transnistria has a rather pragmatic aspect and this aspect will be discussed in details in Chapter V. Currently, the issue will be described from the methodological point of view and we will refer to the set of mechanisms of diffusion, in the particular case of Transnistria as a potential norm taker. The question to be answered is if the EU as normative maker was capable to use its power of transformation on Transnistria. In case of Transnistria, it has to be analyzed whether the norms are accepted by means of a voluntary borrowing of norms, using a success model or by copying the norm as a form of constraint.

2. HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

2.1. General overview

The history chapter presents a comprised outlook of events that influenced the current state of dynamics as well as of main events describing the development of the EU-Transnistria relations in chronological order. Transnistria is located between Moldova and Ukraine, separated from Moldova by the Nistru River. Etymologically, the name Transnistria means "beyond the river Nistru" in Romanian language. There are other names that are used along with that of Transnistria: "Pridnestrovie" – is the Russian variant of the name used by the Russian-speakers, which means the same – the land, which is across the river Nistru. Also, the name of the river Nistru has a second variant in Russian language: Dniestr. These differences in the proper names might create confusion. In some of the literature used as reference for the history chapter, the names of the river are used both as "Nistru" and "Dniestr" – and the names are kept in the original form by the author. Another variant encountered in the literature is the name "Transdniestria" – due to the usage of the Russian variant of the river Nistru. The official name that the self-proclaimed republic applies is 'Pridnestrovskaya Moldavskaya Respublika' or PMR[70]. Transnistria - Pridnestrovye - PMR - Transdiestria are all different names designating the same region. For the purposes of this thesis, the author is going to use the name that is conventionally applied by international partners like OSCE and the EU: Transnistria – for the unrecognized state, and Nistru for the river. Often, Transnistria is referred to as the *left bank* (of the Nistru river), whereas the *right bank* is used when referring to Moldova. The author is going to use these descriptions as well, since experts have used them during the interviews.

The earliest records state that the eastern parts of the Carpatho-Dniestrian[71] land belonged to the Kievan state already from the tenth to the twelfth centuries[72]. According to Laoutides, the existence of a Moldovan principality in the eastern Carpathian lands is
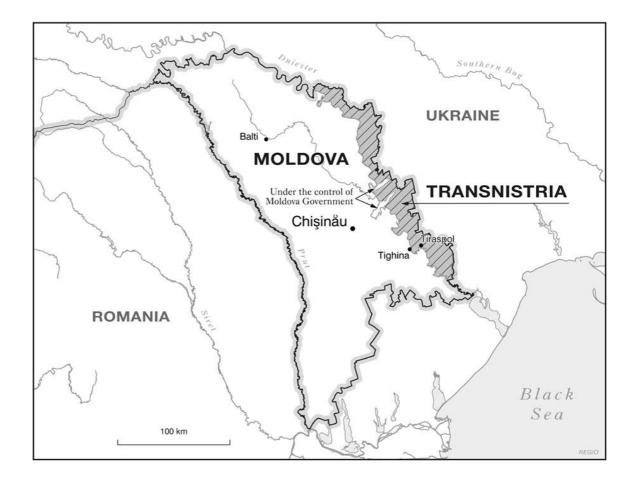
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[70] Transnistrian Republic of Moldova in translation.
[71] Here the name of the river Dniestr is the Russian variant of the name Nistru.
[72] Kolstø, Pål, Andrei Edemsky, and Natalya Kalashnikova. "The Dniester conflict: between irredentism and separatism." *Europe-Asia Studies* 45.6 (1993): 973-1000.

recorded in the fourteenth century[73]. According to Waters, an element of competition appears already in the very beginning of the history of the region indicating its strategic position, an aspect that reflects the importance, which the region will later assume in Russian foreign policy[74].

Figure 1. Map of Moldova

Source: http://www.moldova.org/ [75]

Before the Soviet period, Transnistria was a „classic borderland where ethnic identities were fluid and situational, and where Russian, Ukrainian, Romanian, Jewish and

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[73] Laoutides, Costas. *Self-determination and collective responsibility in the secessionist struggle*. Ashgate Publishing, Ltd., 2015.
[74] Waters, Trevor RW. *The" Moldovan Syndrome" & the Re-Russification of Moldova: Forward Into the Past!*. Conflict Studies Research Centre, Royal Military Academy Sandhurst, 2002.
[75] Moldova.org Information Portal, http://www.moldova.org/en/moldova-ukraine-mfa-reject-russia-duma-accusations-blocking-transnistria/ (accessed 05.03.2017).

German influences combine to create a mixed culture"[76]. Transnistria is an unrecognized state and is considered to be *de jure* part of Moldova. The mixed culture of Transnistria is observed in modern times as well. During the 1989 census, before the conflict in Transnistria arose, in Transnistria there were 40% Moldovans, 28,3% Ukrainians, 25,4% Russians and 1,9% Bulgarians.[77] The Transnistrian conflict, unlike the ones on Abkhazia, South Ossetia and Nagorno-Karabakh, was not an ethnical but rather a geopolitical one. Historically, Transnistria was never considered part of the traditional lands of Romanian settlement[78]. The centuries of wars and the position of Transnistria at the crossroads of people and cultures have created a rather complex history of the region. Transnistria began to be colonized in the Middle Ages by Moldovans that crossed the Nistru river in search for free land and by some Tatars. The territory East of the Dniester River belonged to Kievan Rus' and the kingdom of Galicia-Volhynia from the ninth to the fourteenth centuries[79].

Following the Russo-Turkish war of 1806–1812 and the conclusion of the Treaty of Bucharest, the Moldovan area between the Prut and the Dniester rivers was annexed by Russia in 1812 and came to be known as Bessarabia[80]. The Moldovan principality on the west side of the Prut, in present-day Romania, remained part of the Ottoman Empire[81]. Russian annexation of Bessarabia caused a massive exodus of peasants fearing serfdom and conscription in the Russian army[82]. In 1924, the Moldovan Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic (MASSR) was established as part of the Ukrainian Soviet Republic, including today's Transnistria as well as large areas to the east in present-day Ukraine[83]. In 1939 USSR and Germany signed the secret Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact[84], which foresaw the annexation of Bessarabia by the USSR, which at that time had been part of Romania for more than 22 years. Stalin merged Bessarabia

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[76] King, Charles. "The Moldovans." *Romania, Russia, and the Politics of Culture. Stanfort: Hoover Institution Press* (2000).

[77] National Bureau of Statistics of the Republic of Moldova, http://www.statistica.md/pageview.php?l=ro&idc=295&id=2234 (accessed 15.04.2017).

[78] King, Charles. "The Moldovans." Romania, Russia, and the Politics of Culture. Stanfort: Hoover Institution Press (2000).

[79] *Ibid*

[80] Roper, Steven D. "Regionalism in Moldova: The Case of Transnistria and Gagauzia." Regional & federal studies 11.3 (2001): 101-122.

[81] Vahl, Marius, and Michael Emerson. "Moldova and the Transnistrian conflict." *JEMIE* (2004)

[82] *Ibid*

[83] *Ibid*

[84] Alexandrescu, Ion. A short history of Bessarabia and Northern Bucovina. Romanian Cultural Foundation, 1994.

with the Autonomous Moldovan Soviet Socialist Republic, which became the 15th USSR Republic. Transnistria became part of the MASSR.

Whereas revealing the historical perspective is important for discussing the political situation as a whole, the origins of the current crisis can be found in more recent events. The relations with the separatist Transnistrian Moldovan Soviet Socialist Republic became a leading issue for the Moldovan government, after the secession. Starting with the 1980s, the USSR went through processes of transformation, culminating with the dissolution of the Soviet Union at the end of December 1991. These transformation processes affected each of the Soviet Republics, and aimed at re-building national identity, culture and languages of the republics. The Republic of Moldova faced a new challenge – the Transnistrian Moldovan Republic, which proclaimed its independence from Moldova on 2 September, 1990. The Transnistrian conflict started immediately after the proclamation of independence of the Transnistrian Moldovan Republic.

After the declaration of Moldovan independence in August 1991, Igor Smirnov (leader of the separatist movement and later President of Transnistria) declared that it was necessary to protect the Russian minority in Transnistria from a possible reunification of Moldova with Romania, and it was used to influence the separatists for the purpose of creating the Transnistrian Moldovan Republic. [85] On 2 November 1990, parliamentary elections were held in the majority of settlements of Transnistria, followed by presidential elections and referendum on independence. The election results revealed that 78% of the voters participated in the elections, with 97.7% supporting independence of Transnistria from the Republic of Moldova[86].

The years 1991 and 1992 were marked with clashes between the Moldovan military and Transnistrian paramilitary units. The tensions escalated until the war started in the spring of 1992. The cease-fire agreement was signed on 21 July 1992 and the fights

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[85] King, Charles. "Eurasia letter: Moldova with a Russian face." *Foreign Policy* 97 (1994): 106-120.
[86] В. Ф. Грызлов, Михаил Николаевич Губогло, 1999. Непризнанная республика: Документы государственных органов Приднестровья. Центр по изучению межнациональных отношений Ин-та этнологии и антропологии им. Н.Н. Миклухо-Маклая

stopped. The agreement foresaw the establishment of a peacekeeping force by means of including the Moldova, Russian and Transnistrian forces, as well as the gradual withdrawal of the Russian Army and the creation of the free economic zone in Bendery.[87] During the period of time from 1992 until now, Transnistria started to create a new identity based on the term of Transnistrian people and to socialize the population towards the Russian political space, rejecting European demands for democratization and conflict resolution. The identity is a social construct, and Transnistria has placed significant efforts to create a group identity. The population of Transnistria feels different to the rest of Moldova in 2017. This is also confirmed by the survey, conducted by Perspektiva Center from Tiraspol, in 2003, which concluded that 77% of the people from Transnistria call themselves "the Pridnestrovian people"[88].

2.2. Involvement of the EU and other international actors

Gradually, the EU has become more involved in the situation in Moldova. The 2007 enlargement has brought new neighbors to the EU, which were struggling with a number of internal problems that might destabilize the security situation at the EU borders. Through the European Neighborhood Policy, the EU has prepared a set of measures both the help address the issues that exist in the neighboring countries, as well as to secure its neighborhood. The aim was to foster stabilization, security and prosperity, in line with the Global Strategy for the European Union's Foreign and Security Policy[89]. In February 2005, the EU made an important step by signing the Action Plan, which will serve as a guide for the current relations between Moldova and the EU and an eventual joining of the EU by Moldova. The Both the EU and the USA were involved in the mediation process between Moldova and Transnistria, as official observers, while the process itself is led by OSCE, Russia and Ukraine, along with Transnistria and Moldova themselves – a so-called 5+2 format. Due to historical events, the EU did not participate actively at the incipient stage of the conflict. Also, at the time when the conflict sprang up, the EU was exerting less of its influence on the Eastern

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[87] Kolstø, Pål, Andrei Edemsky, and Natalya Kalashnikova. "The Dniester conflict: between irredentism and separatism." *Europe-Asia Studies* 45.6 (1993): 973-1000.

[88] Оставная, А. (2009) Гражданская идентичность населения ПМР в контексте современных научных подходов. *Политическая фальсификация истории,* 151–155, Тирасполь.

[89] European External Action Service website, https://eeas.europa.eu/headquarters/headquarters-homepage/330/european-neighbourhood-policy-enp_en (accessed 20.05.2017).

states – this was not a priority for the EU at that time. The history of 5+2 negotiations started in 1992, hereby the author presents short points that list the main developments:

History of 5+2 negotiations:

- After the end of the armed conflict, in June 1992 the Presidents of Russia and Moldova – Boris Yeltsin and Mircea Snegur – signed an Agreement on Principles for a peaceful settlement of the Transnistrian conflict. On 29 June 1992 started the deployment of the peace-keeping forces.

- 8 March 1997 in Moscow the Memorandum on the Bases for Normalization of Relations between the Republic of Moldova and Transnistria was signed. It was meant to build relations between parties within frames of the common state and borders of the Moldova.

- 20 February, 2002 started the negotiations on Transnistria in the 3+2 format, which included Moldova and Transnistria – the parties of the conflict, Russia, Ukraine and the OSCE – serving as intermediaries in the "Permanent conference for political questions in the framework of the negotiations on the Transnistrian settlement".

- In 2005, the format was transformed into 5+2, since the EU and the US joined as observers.

- On 25 November 2003, Moldovan president Voronin surprisingly declined a proposed plan for settlement known as the Kozak Memorandum, which was foreseeing the creation of an asymmetrical Federation, with Transnistria and Gagauzia as subjects of this federation. The refusal to accept the plan was reportedly influenced by the EU, as the plan would have given considerable veto powers to Transnistria, which was seen as an opening for Russia to keep controlling Moldovan politics.

- The 5+2 negotiations process has been slow to progress, and has stopped several times. The longest break was from 2006 to 2011. That was the time when the informal meetings of the Permanent conference took place. In 2011, the work of the 5+2 format was re-started. In 2016, one meeting took place in the 5+2 format.

- In November 2017, another meeting took place in the 5+2 format. Before this round of negotiations there has been achieved a break-though in the negotiation process, which could not have been attained without the support and influence of the Austrian leadership of the OSCE. The 2017 round of negotiations are under the Austrian leadership of the OSCE. The topics of discussion have been decided upon and this fact has been declared by authorities and OSCE as being a progress. These issues, have not been considered to be the root problems, still the fact that there have been difficulties in the past to reaching consensus, and the results of the negotiations is considered to be a step forward which has been overcome towards future negotiations. The political representatives of Chisinau and Tiraspol have signed on 25 November 2017, 4 protocols on the main issues that have been dragging for at least a decade:
  - 1. The protocol on the functioning of the 8 Moldovan schools, which teach using the Latin alphabet in the Transnistrian region;
  - 2. The apostillation of diplomas issued by Transnistrian University Taras Shevckenko;
  - 3. Protocol on the usage of agricultural land, located in the Dubasari region, the access to which was blocked by the Transnistrian authorities. These parcels of land belong to Moldovan farmers, but are situated on the territory of Transnistria. During all these years the farmers had a difficult or no access to their land.
  - 4. De-blocking of the telephone lines between the two banks of the Nistru River, which have been blocked since 2006.

It has been argued that the so-called de facto states' conflicts are not "frozen", but are dynamic and smoldering rather than frozen[90]. These authors also mention that the de facto states continue to exercise a tremendous hold over domestic political life in the parent states from which they separated. The current developments in the Transnistrian

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[90] John O'Loughlin, Vladimir Kolossov & Gerard Toal (2015): Inside the post- Soviet de facto states: a comparison of attitudes in Abkhazia, Nagorny Karabakh, South Ossetia, and Transnistria, Eurasian Geography and Economics.

settlement process demonstrate that the situation can change fast when the parties engage in a dialogue, despite the stalemate that has lasted for many years.

Another breakthrough prior to the Vienna meeting was the opening of the bridge across the Nistru river, which is situated on the international road M14. The bridge was blown up during the 1992 conflict, and had been closed since then. The Sides of the conflict have reached a common decision on 3 November 2017 to re-open the bridge. The Head of the OSCE Mission to Moldova, Ambassador Michael Scanlan, called the agreement to reopen the bridge "an historic day" and expressed confidence that additional agreements would be reached within months[91]. Ambassador Wolf Dietrich Heim, the Special Representative of the OSCE Chairperson-in-Office for the Transnistrian Settlement Process has indicated that the reopened bridge "Opens a crucial civilian transportation artery, improves connectivity, can enhance trade and helps to build confidence between the Sides.[92]"

These positive results have been attained for the first time during the negotiation process and can be pointed out as the success by the Austrian leadership of OSCE. Oazu Nantoi, one of the experts interviewed for this thesis, has declared for the "Europa Libera" news portal that the latest results in the negotiations "prove that the conflict is not inter-ethnical one, is not inter-confessional one and not even an internal one"[93]. The decision-makers in this process are from the Sheriff Company, in the person of Victor Gusan from one side and Vlad Plahotniuc from the Moldovan side. Victor Gusan[94] is considered to be the most powerful local oligarch, and he governs the Sheriff Company, which actually dominates the local economy[95]. More experts, journalists[96] consider that

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[91] OSCE official website, http://www.osce.org/stories/austrian-chairmanship-on-transdniestria (accessed 03.12.2017)

[92] *Ibid.*

[93] Oazu Nantoi, "Ucraina are motive să nu privească cu ochi buni prezența trupelor rusești pe teritoriul R. Moldova în spatele său", Free Europe Radio website, https://www.europalibera.org/a/interviu-cu-oazu-nantoi-despre-noua-runda-de-negocieri-5plus2-de-la-viena-liliana-barbarosie-alexandru-cantir/28883641.html (accessed 20.12.2017)

[94] Mihai Popsoi "Former Transnistrian Leader Finds Refuge in Moldova Amid Growing Tension in the Region", Publication: Eurasia Daily Monitor Volume: 14 Issue: 91, https://jamestown.org/program/former-transnistrian-leader-finds-refuge-moldova-amid-growing-tension-region/ (accessed 05.09.2017).

[95] Mark Gilbey "The KGB, some petrol stations & a former Arsenal coach: Meet Sheriff Tiraspol", https://www.fourfourtwo.com/features/kgb-some-petrol-stations-former-arsenal-coach-meet-sheriff-tiraspol (accessed 15.09.2017).

the latest changes are due to the fact that these two persons have decided to defuse the situation.

Secessionist attempts are, by international law, considered as internal problems of the state, which have to be solved by the state itself. Generally, there is no right to secession, although exceptions have been made based on the arguments that a national minority is severely oppressed and there are no other options to protect human rights. The situation in Transnistria did not constitute a persuasive example, when such a right for self-determination or secession was necessary to protect its people. During the collapse of the Soviet Union, only the former Republics were allowed to become independent states, whereas the regions, which made part of them were not to be recognized as legitimate states.

The problem is that Chisinau has no plan to solve the Transnistrian issue[97]. Also, Moldova did not elaborate on what it is going to offer to Transnistria. Currently, the Republic of Moldova is still a very poor country, even if it has been developing its economy. On the other hand, Russia is still offering solid monetary inflow into the region, with which Moldova cannot compete. To somehow address this issue, in spring 2017 it was declared that the Government of Moldova together with experts is developing a Reintegration Strategy, and it happened for the first time after the 25 years of the conflict. Still, this is not going to produce the expected results since Moldova has not succeeded to create an attractive plan to offer to Transnistria and the biggest problems that Moldova is facing are huge corruption problems. The settlement of the conflict and the reintegration was not part of the key problems, which were important for the political class. This issue became current again in 2016, as part of the Presidential campaign of socialist Igor Dodon, since he introduced the state's reintegration as one of the main issues in the presidential campaign, by means of federalization.

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[96] Vladimir Soloviev, "Transnistria and Moldova have a deal", https://www.kommersant.ru/doc/3479847 (accessed 17.12.2017)..

[97] Артем Филипенко, "Приднестровское урегулирование: ждать ли прогресса?", Day Kiev, https://day.kyiv.ua/ru/article/den-planety/pridnestrovskoe-uregulirovanie-zhdat-li-progressa (accessed 20.12.2017).

3. METHODOLOGY

This chapter is going to describe the methodological aspects of the thesis. It presents the research problem as well as the research questions, in order to contour the operationalization of the research problem. These will be followed by the description of the research design and the data applied, and lastly the research limitations will be presented.

3.1. Research problem

In this research paper, the Transnistrian case study is undertaken, with the goal to demonstrate the applicability of the concept of normative power Europe. The research problem, stemming from the aim of the study is the following: *Is the normative power Europe having an influence of Transnistria? If so, how is it influencing the developments in Transnistria?*

For Eastern Europe, the supporters of European type of democratization have adopted normative power at the basic level of social reconstruction. The promoters of normative power diffusion in Eastern Europe are both actors from the European institutions as well as local actors of democratization in these countries. The political elites in the Republic of Moldova were no exception. These have assumed the European norms and values as a foundation for socio-political actions. Normative power diffusion in the Republic of Moldova has to be observed critically, under the aspect of the denial of a Soviet type of identity, which is perceived as centrally organized economy placing high importance on its military power. The association with social constructivism is difficult to overcome, especially in terms of correlating normative power diffusion with the social reconstruction of East European states neighboring the EU, after the fall of the USSR.

Thus, the topic under discussion is the association between normative power and the undertaking of European identity behind the Eastern border of the EU. The EU external policy actions are perceived as undertakings to transform the identity in the former

communist countries from one type of the society: totalitarian and militarized society – to a society based on the respect for peace, democracy and human rights. Concerning this difference in opinions and perceptions on the normative power, as a form of identity, there are descriptions in the constructivist literature, where the norms are seen as identity constituents[98]. With other words, normative power had a constitutive effect on countries, where after the fall of the USSR a void developed in the perception of identity.

In terms of generalizability, the lessons from Transnistria are important to learn from, as they have a potential to be useful in the future for the case of Donetsk and Lugansk in Ukraine. The conflicts have similar dynamics, as these cases do not represent historically long ethnical conflicts, all of these entities are backed by Russia, and the local population expresses their will to become more involved with the Russian Federation to the point of joining it, while the base countries (in this case: Moldova and Ukraine) are open towards EU involvement. The fact that the situation in Ukraine does not seem to be stabilized enough at this point prevents including Donetsk and Lugansk as part of a comparative study. However, once the situation becomes clearer, the lessons learned from Transnistria would be very useful for the EU and could be applied to the Lugansk and Donetsk situations as well.

3.2. Research hypothesis and research questions

The research hypothesis tested in this thesis is formulated as follows:

> *The EU acts as a normative power in the case of Transnistria, and holds sufficient regional institutional mechanisms to influence Transnistria.*

The focus of the current study has been established by the research problem, elaborated in the previous sub-chapter and it indicates that first of all the thesis has to take into account the sources for normative power Europe and the influence they have. In order to establish the influence of normative power Europe, the following questions have been raised:

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[98] T Diez "Constructing the Self and Changing Others: Reconsidering 'Normative Power Europe'" (2005) 33 Millennium – Journal of International Studies 613.

1. Does the EU follow a normative approach towards Moldova and Transnistria?
Since the EU does not recognize Transnistria as a separate entity, its efforts are channeled towards Moldova as a whole, which included Transnistria. That is why, it is inevitable to observe what is the general framework of EU actions in Moldova, in order to single out the influence exerted on Transnistria. Secondly, in order to find out how the normative power is being used, the following questions have been raised:

2. What are the mechanisms of normative power used by the EU in Transnistria?
In order to answer the second question, an analysis based on the mechanisms of norm diffusion, as elaborated by Ian Manners are applied. With the aspect, the methodology takes into account the complex process of norm diffusion, which is produced as a result of the EU influence.

Finally, in order to study the effects of normative power Europe has in Transnistria, the following question is asked:

3. How effective has EU's normative power approach been in Transnistria?
In order to answer the third questions, the thesis has combined the findings to establish the general effect of normative power Europe on Transnistria.

3.3. Research design

The research design is stemming from the concept normative power Europe, developed by Ian Manners, also it takes into account various studies that have measured normative power Europe in a qualitative way, having in mind that the current research design is built on a qualitative method.

Qualitative analysis. The thesis is applying qualitative analysis, which sees Transnistria as the unit of analysis, norm adoption is the dependent variable and the NPE (normative power Europe) is the independent variable, which affects change in Transnistria. The fact that qualitative research was chosen for the study of norm

diffusion gives an opportunity for an in-depth description of a complex situation. Qualitative methods offer advantages and some scholars, like Odell have considered them equal or superior for generating valid theory[99]. The qualitative research has analyzed the EU policies and the findings from the interviews in Moldova and Transnistria.

A **single case study** has been chosen due to the fact that the cases that may seem similar to be examined in this framework are all facing different situations. The secessionist states which might be eligible for a comparative study: Abkhazia, South Ossetia and Nagorno-Karabakh, also the Northern Cyprus – these are all facing different situations which cannot be comparable: The Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus is considered to be part of the EU but which is currently under occupation; Abkhazia and South Ossetia are recognized by Russian Federation and have a status of partially recognized states, and they are not communicating with their base state Georgia, unlike Transnistria which is not recognized by Russia. In the case of Nagorno-Karabakh – it is not recognized and there is no communication with its base state Azerbaijan, while in the peace process they are represented by their patron state Armenia, in contrast with the case of Transnistria, which itself is participating in the negotiations process, under the 5+2 negotiation process. A single case of Transnistria merits attention, since the patron state – Russia does not recognize its independence, and on the contrary, its official stance is to support the indivisibility of the Republic of Moldova.

Some authors describe the advantages that the single case studies have when comparing to other methods. Odell, for example concluded that: "case studies are generally better than the alternative views for documenting processes"[100]. The scholars have produced a wide array of debates on the applicability of the single case study in the research and testing of hypothesis. Case studies are widely used and this method has a number of scholars supporting its strengths in the research. Flybjerg for example, argues: "the case study is useful for both generating and testing of hypotheses but is not limited to these

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[99] Odell, John S. "Case study methods in international political economy." *International Studies Perspectives* 2.2 (2001): 161-176.
[100] *Ibid.*

research activities alone"[101]. In his paper he contested the misunderstanding about case-study research, which were used to criticize them and produced thorough arguments in the favor of case studies as a solid method for research. Ragin, when referring to the case study, indicated that criticizing single case studies for being inferior to multiple-case studies is misguided, because even single case studies "are multiple in most research efforts because ideas and evidence may be linked in many different ways"[102]. One of the valuable conclusions promoted by Flyvbjerg was that "the case study is a necessary and sufficient method for certain important research tasks in the social sciences, and it is a method that holds well when compared to other methods in the gamut of social science research methodology[103]. Another scholar, Hawkins argued that "the case studies offer particular advantages to scholars…these include depth of analysis, construct validity, the identification of causal mechanisms, asymmetric theoretical arguments … and theory generation"[104].

Data sources

The data collection has been carried out in two ways: first was the collection of data from the semi-structured interviews conducted by the author. Secondly, there have been studies the relevant EU communications and strategies, key policy papers, relevant literature, human rights reports, Freedom House index, journalistic investigations, and newspaper articles, statistical data offered by Moldovan and Transnistrian authorities.

The resources introduced in the framework are compiled on the basis of different theoretical sources, e.g. articles from peer-reviewed journals, relevant books, in order to compile the theoretical section. The EU political discourse will also be taken into account. This will be carried out by means of existing literature and secondary data.

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[101] Flyvbjerg, Bent. "Five misunderstandings about case-study research." *Qualitative inquiry* 12.2 (2006): 219-245.
[102] Ragin, Charles C., and Howard Saul Becker, eds. *What is a case?: exploring the foundations of social inquiry*. Cambridge university press, 1992.
[103] Flyvbjerg, Bent. "Five misunderstandings about case-study research." *Qualitative inquiry* 12.2 (2006): 219-245.
[104] Hawkins, "Case Studies", *The SAGE handbook of comparative politics*. Sage Publications, 2009.

3.3.1. Semi-structured interview method

The interview method is used for conducting the research on the developments in Transnistria. Given that the diffusion of normative power comes down to peoples' perceptions and also assumptions, interviews were used in this research to gain better understanding of how normative power works in the case of Transnistria. Transnistria will be analyzed as an identity, which since the early years of USSR constituency has been a militarized territory, as an outpost of communist type society diffusion in South East Europe. This aspect will be described in Chapter IV of the thesis, where the normative power diffusion mechanisms in Transnistria will be exemplified. As a result of initial analysis of available materials, the decision was to focus on interviews conducted with political and social decision-makers, with a view on normative power and its diffusion in the case of Transnistria. Coming from the idea that in the case of normative power diffusion, it has to show the experience of policy-makers or of any other actors, the obtained data has been integrated into a coherent system, based on a systematic approach.

An interview is an investigation technique, which puts into circulation various ideas of political and public persons who avail of information. The term of interview has many meanings, the common features are the following: interview as a means of conversation between two or more persons, one of them taking the initiative and the control. The interview is conducted in a series of questions and answers, and the discussion has a well-defined goal. Ken Metzler[105] gives the following definition to the interview: "a conversational exchange of information on behalf of an audience to produce a level of intelligence neither participant could produce alone".

The semi-structured interviews have been used to gather information on the diffusion of normative power Europe. Semi-structured interviews involve predetermined questions that do not necessarily all have to be asked, or asked in the same order in each interview. When conducting interviews with decision-makers, Aberbach and Rockman suggest that a semi-structured format is preferable, since "open-ended questions provide a greater opportunity for respondents to organize their answers within their own

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[105] Ken Metzler, Creative Interviewing, New Jersey, Prentice Hall, 1977, pp.16-21

frameworks"[106]. This format also allows the interviewer to explore unanticipated responses to questions[107]. These advantages are particularly important in the present context since the very aim of the interviews is to establish the frameworks within which policy-makers understand the world.

The interviewees were chosen based on their experience and knowledge of the case. Contacts have been selected after browsing various think tank web pages, which have a specific emphasis on the Transnistrian issue, also some snowball sampling was applied, that is the interviewees were asked to recommend further people to be interviewed. NGOs and Transnistrian authorities – Ministry of Foreign Affairs, have been contacted as well. Various experts residing in the Republic of Moldova and Transnistria were contacted to answer the interview or to provide possible contacts. Approximately 20 interview requests in Russian, 5 in English, 10 in Romanian with a cover letter and interview questions were sent to different experts and officials, asking for an interview, to be conducted personally or by Skype. The interview questions have been attached, see Appendix 1. All the interviewees were provided with the semi-structured interview questions in advance. During the interviews themselves, additional questions were asked for clarification. All of the interviews were recorded. For languages other than English, the interview questions have been translated into Russian and Romanian and the results have been later on translated into English after the interview.

15 interviews have been conducted between 5th of June until 30th of November 2017. The duration of the interviews was 40 minutes in average; the longest ones were 1.5 hours. Out of all interviews, 3 were conducted in English, 6 in Romanian and 6 in Russian language. Most of the interviews were conducted in person – in Chisinau, and the rest by skype, 2 were submitted in written form. Some interviewees requested anonymity, due to the nature of institution they work for. The composition of the interviewees is as follows:

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[106] Aberbach, Joel D., and Bert A. Rockman. "Conducting and coding elite interviews." Political Science & Politics 35.04 (2002): 673-676.
[107] Berry, Jeffrey M. "Validity and reliability issues in elite interviewing." Political Science & Politics 35.04 (2002): 679-682.

The selection of interviewees was based on their expertise and knowledge of the case study country, due to the complexity of the topic. There have been sent 10 interview requests in English, 20 in Russian and 10 in Romanian with a cover letter and interview questions. Eight interviews have been held personally by the author, five by Skype and two were filled in personally by the respondents. The interviews have been recorded, with the agreement from interviewees. Three interviewees requested anonymity, due to their employment contract requirements. The translations of the interview questions have been performed in case the interview was performed in languages other than English that is in Romanian and Russian. The findings of the interviews were later translated into English.

The respondents of the interviews were as follows:

1) EU Foreign Action Service Official, directly involved in the Confidence Building Measures provided for Transnistria, starting with 2009 until September 2017.

2) EU diplomat, involved with the Transnistrian settlement issue.

3) International expert, involved with confidence building measures in Transnistria.

4) Artem Filipenko, International expert and researcher, specialized in the Transnistrian issue, Director of the "Context-Prichernomorye" Black Sea Coast Information Agency, Odessa, Ukraine.

5) Oazu Nantoi, Moldovan national expert. Political analyst and researcher on Moldova/Transnistria, specialized in international relations. Currently, member of the Institute for Public Policy think-tank.

6)   Denis Cenusa, expert at Moldovan think-tank "Expert-Group". Political scientist, his research interests include EU affairs and European integration, ENP and Eurasian integration initiatives.

7)   Ion Manole, expert, executive director of "Promo-Lex" Association, a human rights and advocacy organization, a leading organization which cooperates with Transnistrian NGOs to protect human rights in the region.

8)   Iurie Morcotilo, economic expert at Moldovan think-tank "Expert-Group", originated from Transnistria.

9)   Victor Dragutan, expert and analyst with experience in Moldova's advancement in the Association Agreement, until July 2016 - Program Manager in the Confidence Building Measures Program, with the UNDP Moldova office.

Transnistrian respondents:

10)   Anatoly Dirun – Director of the School for Political Research and political scientist from Tiraspol, Transnistria.

11)   Evghenii Dunaev – Chairman of the Informational legal center "Apriori", legal consultancy, developing of civil society from Tiraspol, Transnistria.

12)   Raisa Asauleac – Program coordination of "NGO Resource Center and Initiative Groups for Transnistria".

13)   Vitaliy Rotar – Director of "Institute for Law and Civil Society" NGO from Transnistria. The Institute is working on the grassroots and middle social leadership levels, offering support to public leaders, youth and NGOs, in the understanding and participation in the European integration process.

14) Andrey Nikolaev- Director of "Radoliubets" NGO – Association of Bulgarian culture, active with social projects and human rights initiatives in Transnistria.

15) Luiza Doroshenko – Director of "Media Center", a journalist center from Tiraspol, Transnistria.

The interviewee method was used to cover the gaps, the grey areas that appeared due to the lack of access to information in the secondary sources. The reason why political and social decision-makers were chosen as interviewees is that they work as the "gatekeepers" when it comes to norm diffusion, especially in a society like Transnistria. Due to the experience of the respondents, their views were presented in a rather balanced manner. Still, perception has a subjective nature and can be debated. The interviewer's task was to be as neutral as possible, and abstain from personal views. The thesis is taking into account the value of perception as an indicator.

The questions of the interview were slightly modified when performing interviews with Transnistrian NGOs or experts, so that the focus was placed on their perspective of the situation. The questions of the interview suppose that the respondents are aware of the situation and the concepts used that is why the experts have been chosen as interviewees. Also, based on the fact that the interview was semi-structured, not all questions were answered by all the interviewees, still the advantage of an interview technique like that is the fact that the respondent could be open about questions, and to give additional overviews on various subjects.

An objective justification for the usage of the interview method is that in this case it is practically impossible to analyze the norm diffusion by using other methods, due to the lack of access to authentic sources of documentation. Using the elite's expertise for the interview gives an invaluable resource of information, since they are the ones who have a deeper understanding of the processes that take place in Transnistria. The interview questionnaire is aimed to reflect the opinion of experts involved in the field of normative power diffusion in Transnistria, on the basis of specialty literature. The

questionnaire offers empirical perspective for analyzing the diffusion process of normative power that is by consulting the opinion of experts concerning the relation with the EU in case of Transnistria. Theoretically, the questionnaire has the goal to avoid the prejudice towards the „imminent success" of the normative power diffusion. The theoretical framework, which was developed for the drafting of the questionnaire, is developed for the empirical exploration of cases of success and failures of normative power diffusion in the case of Transnistria.

Another aspect tackled by the questionnaire refers to normative power diffusion as an element of Europeanization and reconstruction of Transnistrian identity. Although, this fact will be difficult to clarify, the intention is to describe the vision and the perception on normative power at the local level in Transnistria, under the aspect of diffusion and assumption of Europeanization at the border between the East and the West. The answers of experts, who are directly involved in the process of normative power diffusion, will be analyzed on the true position, whether it is rejection and the resistance towards the normative power Europe by Transnistria, or acceptance and internalization of the related norms and values. This aspect will be defining and verifying the hypothesis of normative power success as a principle of action, in the case of Transnistria. Therefore, the normative power diffusion in the case of Transnistria refers especially to the norms, which were meant to create a common European space for this territory, and the differences of opinion resulting from the will to adopt or not to adopt the European norms in the various segments of the Transnistrian society. Using this approach adopted in the framework of the questionnaire, it is possible to critically assess the relation dictated by the diffusion of power between the EU – as a norm-maker and Transnistria – as the norm-taker.

3.4. Research limitations

The diffusion has several advanced mechanisms, and in the given case we will resume only to those relevant to the case of Transnistria. Thus, the EU as a norm-maker is oriented towards bringing normative changes in compliance with the normative standards and to recruit new perspective members. If on the one hand, "generalizations from single-country studies will always be limited, since the country unit itself is bound

by particular characteristics, while the potential for comparing variation in political phenomena across units is bound by time and space"[108]. On the other hand, the single case studies can play a critical role in comparative politics, by the fact that "they can be used to provide new classifications for observed political phenomena; generate and probe hypotheses that can be tested in different countries[109], etc. The limitations of the single case studies, contrast with the benefits they produce.

Among the limitations of the method is the responsiveness of the interviewees and the accessibility of the data. Unfortunately there was a low rate of responsiveness, and the findings are based on the interviewees who were eager to contribute. The Transnistrian authorities were contacted as well – the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Transnistria, and a few Members of Parliament, however, without any response. Many of the Transnistrian NGOs that have been contacted did not reply, as well as academics from that region. The NGOs from Transnistria who were eager to participate were all active partners of the OSCE Mission in Moldova, actively participating in the process of building confidence between the two banks.

The fact that there is a mixed sample of respondents helps to counter possible biases, which might result from personal opinions of the respondents. Also, the respondents have been quite critical of the processes and their concerns have been written down and reflected in the research. Concerning the evaluation of the influence of the normative power Europe, some outcomes are not final and will continue to bring results. It is necessary to further research the interaction of state with civil society to provide a broader picture.

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[108] Landman, Todd, and Neil Robinson. *The SAGE handbook of comparative politics*. Sage Publications, 2009.
[109] *Ibid.*

4. DEVELOPMENT OF THE EU-MOLDOVA RELATIONSHIP

The EU involvement in the Transnistrian issue has been increasing gradually. During the last 12 years, EU in Transnistria has transformed its role from being a low importance influencer to becoming one the main international actors producing change in the Transnistrian issue and in Moldova in general. The Transnistrian issue has become an important part of the EU-Russian agenda as well and an issue of dispute, and was described as "the new frontline" in the strained relationship between the EU and Russia[110]. It is important for the EU to support the stability of Moldova, which became its neighbor after Romania joined the EU in 2007. The enlargement has stimulated the EU to help Moldova address its internal problems: including a weak Government, economic difficulties, organized crime, emigration, and the secession of Transnistria. The fact that Moldova was going to become a new neighbor of the EU has drawn its attention to the internal problems Moldova was facing, including the issue of Transnistria and the stalemate in the negotiation process. As a result, the EU had adopted a number of actions to address that issue. One of them was the appointment of the EU Special Representative to Moldova, who started his duties in 2005, and whose task was to ensure the coordination and consistency of external actions of the EU in Moldova[111]. The mandate of the EUSR included the EU contribution to the resolution of the Transnistrian conflict in accordance with the agreed EU policy objectives and in close coordination with the OSCE.[112] The EU Delegation was opened in Moldova in October 2005. At that period of time, Transnistria was still opposing Western involvement and was distrustful towards Europe.

The EU has involved instruments to support the settlement of the conflict, one of these is the Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP). The European Security Strategy pointed out that "it is in the European interest that countries on the EU's borders are

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[110] Lynch, Dov. "Shared Neighbourhood or New Frontline? The Crossroads in Moldova." *Russie. Cei. Visions no* 2 (2005).
[111] Official Journal of the European Union, Council Joint Action, 2005/265/CFSP, 23 March 2005, http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=uriserv:OJ.L_.2005.081.01.0050.01.ENG (accessed 05.0§.2017).
[112] *Ibid.*

well-governed[113]. The EU is promoting the reforms in the EU neighborhood by means of the European Neighborhood Policy (ENP) and the European Security and Defense Policy (ESDP). Also, in 2005 the EU launched the EU Border Assistance Mission to Moldova and Ukraine (EUBAM) and it represents the first EU involvement on the ground in conflict resolution in former USSR space and it is a EU Commission-led Mission. This came after the joint request forwarded by Presidents of Moldova and Ukraine, in 2005, inviting the EU to contribute to border monitoring. EUBAM contributes towards the peaceful settlement of the Transnistrian conflict through the negotiation mechanism 5+2 process and its related expert working groups[114]. Also, the EUBAM participates in the confidence-building measures between Chisinau and Tiraspol on transport, customs, veterinary and phytosanitary and law enforcement issues[115]. It also contributes to improved border management in a conflict area as well as undermining the smuggling and other criminal activities on the border, since the Mission monitors the trade directed from Transnistria to Ukraine.

The EUBAM is also assisting in the implementation of the Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Agreement - DCFTA, while interacting with Customs Services both in Moldova and in Ukraine and has advised both countries on their application[116]. The latest EUBAM activity report, for 2016 states the contributions that the Mission has provided, including the changes that the Transnistrian authorities have undertaken. In terms of confidence-building measures, EUBAM has supported the peaceful settlement to the Transnistrian conflict. During first years of activity of EU in Moldova, the EUBAM did not visit the left bank and the monitoring was performed along the Moldova-Ukrainian border either on the Moldovan side or on the Ukrainian one. This situation changed while Transnistria changed its approach and started to allow the visits of EUBAM and to participate in their joint activities. Also, EUBAM has organized joint study visits of customs experts from Chisinau and Tiraspol to their German

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[113] European Security Strategy: A Secure Europe in a Better World, Brussels, 12 December 2003.
[114] EUBAM official website, http://eubam.org/what-we-do/conflict-resolution/ accessed (20.12.2017).
[115] *Ibid*
[116] EUBAM official website, http://eubam.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/03/Report_2016_ENG.pdf (accessed 15.12.2017).

counterparts[117], the first event took place in 2013, where they learned about EU standards in joint customs control, with a view to enhance and harmonize customs procedures on both sides of Nistru river. This was the first customs initiative for Chisinau and Tiraspol.

The main breakthrough in the confidence building process was to engage both parties on joint workshops and study visits, resulting in closer alignment of its regulations with EU requirements. One of those events took place in November 2016, when the EUBAM Mission organized a joint workshop on plant health import controls for Chisinau and Tiraspol phytosanitary and customs specialists. This was the second time in EUBAM's history that it succeeded in bringing both sides together to share their experience[118].

Another EUBAM achievement was to contribute to the revitalizing of the trans-boundary rail link between Chisinau and Odessa through Transnistria, which was reactivated in 2010 after a four-year stall[119]. This fact was perceived as a positive step in people to people contacts and to the cooperation between the two banks of the Nistru River. In terms of phytosanitary cooperation: the most significant progress in confidence building measures in 2016 was registered in developing cooperation on veterinary, sanitary and phytosanitary issues. An assessment of controls has been performed by EUBAM experts and presented to Transnistrian Foreign Office in Tiraspol. As a result, Transnistria has suspended the obligation for phytosanitary certification of relevant exports, in line with EUBAM's recommendations[120]. Currently, the mandate of the Mission was extended until 2020, upon the request of the Republic of Moldova and Ukraine.

Through the European Neighborhood Policy, the EU works with the Eastern neighbors, including Moldova. It was launched with the attempt to create "a ring of countries, sharing the EU's fundamental values and objectives, drawn into an increasingly close

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[117] EUBAM official website, http://eubam.org/newsroom/transnistrian-party-joins-eubam-study-visit-to-german-swiss-border/ (accessed 02.01.2018).
[118] *Ibid*
[119] EUBAM official website, http://eubam.org/what-we-do/conflict-resolution/ (accessed 15.12.2017).
[120] EUBAM Annual Report, http://eubam.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/03/Report_2016_ENG.pdf (accessed 03.01.2018).

relationship… This will bring enormous gains to all involved in terms of increased stability, security and well being"[121]. The ENP represents the extension of the EU norms, standards to the countries outside of the EU. There are four main domains that take part of this policy[122]:

1) Good governance, democracy, rule of law and human rights;
2) Economic development for stabilization;
3) Security and;
4) Migration and mobility.

The ENP Policy provides the support for the institutional building, to trade liberalization, legislative harmonization and it also contributes to the conflict resolution in the neighborhood. These aims are achieved by means of Action Plans (AP) between the EU and neighboring countries, with Moldova this AP was approved in 2005. Among the priorities, enumerated in the EU-Moldova Action Plan, is the sustained effort towards a viable solution to the Transnistria conflict[123]. The ENP instrument was modeled on the enlargement process, being similar to the Association Agreement structure[124]. The EU efforts and assistance depends to a great extend on the willingness and commitment of the conflicting parties to discuss the issues with the EU.

The ENP was upgraded at the 2009 Prague Summit to a new approach − Eastern Partnership (EaP), which is focused on a deep bilateral and multilateral cooperation of EU with six states, including Moldova, and with two other regional projects – Black Sea Synergy and the Northern Dimension. The EaP is supplementing the ENP and enables political and economic integration, without a promise of enlargement. Although a questions appears on how effective the EU norm diffusion is in its near abroad without a clear promise of enlargement in the case of Moldova and Transnistria, this questions

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[121] Communication from the Commission, European Neighbourhood Policy: Strategy Paper, COM(2004) 373 Final, Brussels, 12 May 2004, p. 5,
http://www.europarl.europa.eu/meetdocs/2004_2009/documents/com/com_com(2004)0373_/com_com(2004)0373_en.pdf (accessed 20.10.2017).
[122] European Union External Action webpage, https://eeas.europa.eu/headquarters/headquarters-homepage/330/european-neighbourhood-policy-enp_en (accessed 20.10.2017).
[123] European Commission website, https://eeas.europa.eu/sites/eeas/files/moldova_enp_ap_final_en.pdf (accessed 20.05.2017).
[124] Kelley, Judith. "New wine in old wineskins: Promoting political reforms through the new European Neighbourhood Policy." *JCMS: Journal of Common Market Studies* 44.1 (2006): 29-55.

has been addressed by the new model of democracy promotion which rests on the functional cooperation between administrations, and that it bears greater potential beyond the circle of candidate countries. Even though the governance approach does not tackle the core institutions of the political system, and is not a substitute for the EU leverage, it does promote transparency, accountability and participation at the level of the state administration[125].

This program is coordinated via its Directorate-General for Neighborhood Policy and Enlargement Negotiations. Based on this new program, a deeper political and economic integration with the EU is pursued. As a result, in 2013, the Republic of Moldova has initialed the Association Agreement with the EU at the EaP Summit in Vilnius. Also, the Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Agreements have been concluded. Along the most important areas of bilateral cooperation was visa facilitation and liberalization, and Moldovans gained the visa-free right to travel to the EU in 2014.

The core components of the EaP are the Association Agreements (AA), the Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Agreements (DCFTA) and the visa liberalization agreement[126]. Moldova and the EU have been negotiating an AA since 2010 and the DCFTA since 2012, whereas a bilateral visa dialogue was initiated as part of the EaP[127]. As of 1 January 2016, after repeal of the EU Autonomous Trade Preferences regime, Transnistrian exports continued to benefit from preferential treatment in the EU, since the scope of the DCFTA application extended to the entire territory of the Republic of Moldova pursuant to Decision 1/2015 of the EU-Republic of Moldova Association Council [128]. Initially, the Transnistrian authorities did not show any interest in implementing the reforms necessary for the DCFTA[129]. Transnistria was benefitting

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[125] Börzel, Tanja A., and Bidzina Lebanidze. ""The transformative power of Europe" beyond enlargement: the EU's performance in promoting democracy in its neighbourhood." *East European Politics* 33.1 (2017): 17-35.

[126] Rinnert, David. "The Republic of Moldova in the Eastern partnership." *From "Poster Child" to "Problem"* (2013).

[127] European Union External Action website, https://eeas.europa.eu/headquarters/headquartershomepage_en/4011/EUMoldova%20relations,%20Factsheet (accessed 02.03.2017).

[128] EUBAM Annual Report, 2016, http://eubam.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/03/Report_2016_ENG.pdf (accessed 04.01.2018).

[129] Rinnert, David. "The Republic of Moldova in the Eastern partnership." *From "Poster Child" to "Problem"* (2013).

from the Autonomous Trade Preferences (ATP), which were later suspended after the ratification of the DCFTA and Transnistria had to implement reforms necessary for the DCFTA with Brussels. The Normative Power Europe agenda in Moldova and Transnistria has been promoted with small steps, starting with economic incentives whose effects will be analyzed in the following chapter below.

5. ANALYSIS

The analysis of Normative Power Europe and its effect on the case study country – Transnistria will be provided in the present and next chapter. A short background on economic situation will be provided, followed by an analysis of the political situation, to show where the effects of the EU normative power are more successful, followed by examples and findings.

5.1 Background and economic situation

The object of study in international relations is focused mostly on large and powerful states, whereas partially recognized or unrecognized states are more challenging to analyze. The status of such states makes it more difficult to monitor the developments that take place inside. Lack of transparency, no participation within international forums and organizations, together with influences from patron states, which want to keep these unrecognized states within their sphere of interest, do add to the complexity. Some of these entities have appeared following the collapse of the Soviet Union (South Ossetia, Nagorno-Karabakh, Abkhazia and Transnistria). Despite these limitations, it is important to continue the research of such entities since they exist outside of international framework and represent a threat to regional and international security. What is more, despite general expectations, they have proven to be quite durable, and considering the current geopolitical climate, are unlikely to disappear soon. Dov Lynch concludes that these *de facto* entities are "racketeer states," that is, entities that provoke and/or are a threat from the state they seek to break away from, and then, at a price, protect the population from the same threat[130]. It is therefore imperative to study these entities in report with the outside world and in this case with the EU and its normative power.

Since 1991 Transnistria emerged on the path of state building, it has managed to create and establish its own state-like structures, even their own army, supported greatly by the Russian troops stationed on the territory of Transnistria since the 1992 war. These are the so-called peacekeepers, 402 in number. Besides, Russia holds the Operative Group

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[130] Lynch, Dov, *Engaging Eurasia's Separatist States. Unresolved Conflicts and De facto States.* Washington, DC: United States Institute of Peace Press, 2004.

of the Russian Forces, the legal successor of the 14th Army, containing approximately 1200 regular soldiers, mainly recruited from Transnistrian locals[131]. Despite the numerous times when Moldova demanded Russia to withdraw its troops from the territory of Transnistria, Russia has refrained from doing so, even if it pledged to withdraw the troops by 2002, in 1999, at the OSCE Summit in Istanbul in 1999.

Although the conflict has been described as "frozen", it has been argued that the so-called de facto states conflicts are not "frozen", but are dynamic and smoldering rather than frozen[132]. Transnistria is cooperating with external partners, and is becoming more open for cooperation. Transnistria as a small, unrecognized state cannot survive without help from abroad. Faced with financial constraints and limited resources, vulnerabilities in front of external developments, Transnistria has to find an approach to compensate for these deficiencies, by means of aligning with outside partners, the main ones being the EU and Russia, which are in contradiction. The main partner and supporter of Transnistria, Russia, has been described as playing the role of the patron in this relationship of patron-client[133]. This model consists of reciprocity in the patron and client relationship and exchange of benefits, which the parties could deliver to each other. In order to survive as a state, Transnistria has to adapt to the changes in the international field and to apply certain strategies.

In terms of behavior of the EU towards the issue of Transnistria, it has been described as "soft balancing"[134], which is characterized by the usage of non-military methods of limiting Russia's ability to exercise power. The "soft balancing" approach has produced a "paper wall" in the conflict, or a barrier against Russian dominance. The EU has used this strategy, in order to promote the stability in the region, as well as to maintain good relations with Russia.

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[131] Moldova.Org Independent Information Portal, http://www.moldova.org/en/russian-troops-illegally-stationing-transnistria-held-military-exercise-nistru-river/ (accessed 27.12.2017).
[132] Kolossov, Vladimir. "A Small State vs a Self-Proclaimed Republic: Nation-Building, Territorial Identities and Prospects of Conflict Resolution (the Case of Moldova-Transdniestria)." *From the Adriatic to the Caucasus* (2001): 1000-1028.
[133] Andrey Devyatkov, "Russia and Transnistria in a patron-client relationship", Laboratorul pentru Analiza Conflictului Transnistrean, retrieved from: http://www.lact.ro/2017/04/17/andrey-devyatkov-russia-and-transnistria-in-a-patron-client-relationship
[134] Cantir, Cristian, and Ryan Kennedy. "Balancing on the Shoulders of Giants: Moldova's Foreign Policy toward Russia and the European Union." *Foreign Policy Analysis* 11.4 (2015): 397-416.

This effort in building a separate state is also reflected in measures taken to form a distinct Transnistrian identity, different from that of the Republic of Moldova that they separated from. Being isolated from the outer world due to restrictions imposed by the unrecognized status, does help in creating a separate identity, and in perceiving Moldova as "the other". These efforts have worked despite similar ethnic composition on both banks, as shown in the statistical data. The population of Transnistria accounts for 475 000 citizens, or 14% of the overall population of the Republic of Moldova[135]. It is composed of three main ethnic groups, as well as minorities[136].

A similar ethnical composition is in the Republic of Moldova, though with a far higher percentage of Romanians/Moldovans and with one more ethnic group of Gagauz (Turkic origin of orthodox religion, residing in the south of the Republic of Moldova). The latest census of the population from 2014 showed the following figures:

Table 1. Ethnic composition

Transnistria	Republic of Moldova
• 32.1% Moldovans • 30.4% Russians • 28.8% Ukrainians • 2.5% Bulgarians • 6.2% others / unspecified	• 75% Moldovans + 7% Romanians • 7% Russians • 6.6% Ukrainians • 4.6% Gagauz • 1.9% Bulgarians • 0.8 others

Sources: www.statistica.md[137]

Since the collapse of the Soviet Union, new generations have been born who believe in their state and future independence. The Constitution of Transnistria, first adopted in 1991, provides for a semi-presidential political system, however the balance of power

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[135] World Heritage Encyclopedia, "Demographics of Transnistria", http://self.gutenberg.org/articles/eng/Demographics_of_Transnistria (accessed 21.03.2017).
[136] *Ibid.*
[137] National Bureau of Statistics of Moldova, http://www.statistica.md/pageview.php?l=ro&idc=479&#idc=429& (accessed 25.03.2017).

was gradually shifted towards the presidency[138]. The further amendments in the Constitution were attempts to strengthen the presidential power.

Lately, Transnistria has applied to the UN with a request for the status of observer, in order to push forward the process of its international recognition: "This fact will give a chance to bring forward our position to the international actors directly, without interpretation from the opposing party"[139]. Tiraspol wants to be heard by EU without the help of intermediaries and have a direct dialogue: "*If the EU will remove their intermediaries from Chisinau, I am more than sure that the role of the EU will be better understood in Tiraspol… no matter how the EU sees us: as an uncontrolled territory, or as partially controlled territory[140]*". In an interview held by the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Transnistria with the mass-media, he mentioned that Transnistria is not sitting still, they are developing the bilateral relations (with Moldova), and they are cooperating with international organizations: "*It is our decision, after all if we want to exist as a state or not and in case if Chisinau recognizes Transnistria as an independent state, who could be against that?[141]*". In an interview conducted by the author of this thesis, it was emphasized: "*We believe that the fact that Transnistria exists for 26 years is a proof in itself that we are a viable and independent state*"[142].

As declared by Transnistria since 2006, the direction of the country is unification with the Russian Federation[143]. Despite the fact that Moscow has not changed their official view on the status of Transnistria and still supports the territorial indivisibility of the Republic of Moldova, Russia continues to provide support to this entity, including

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[138] Blakkisrud, Helge, and Pål Kolstø. "From Secessionist Conflict Toward a Functioning State: Processes of State-and Nation-Building in Transnistria." *Post-Soviet Affairs* 27.2 (2011): 178-210.
[139] Free Europe Radio News portal, Анатолий Дирун, "Приднестровье научилось встраиваться в региональную и глобальную повестку",https://www.europalibera.org/a/interview-anatoly-dirun-tiraspol-chisinau-transnistria-moldova-russia-un-politics/28753984.html, 24 September, 2017 (accessed 05.10.2017).
[140] Interview by the author with Anatoly Dirun, Director of the School for Political Research from Tiraspol
[141] Ministry of External Affairs of Transnistria official webpage, http://mid.gospmr.org/ru/hgb (accessed 07.10.2017).
[142] Interview by the author with Anatoly Dirun, Director of the School for Political Research from Tiraspol
[143] Ministry of External Affairs of Transnistria official webpage, http://mid.gospmr.org/ru/hgb (accessed 07.10.2017).

financial. NGOs initiated by Moscow have implemented projects on infrastructure[144]. According to sources, Russia has issued 160 thousand passports to Transnistrian residents, which guaranteed social benefits, out of them the pensions[145]. It is important to mention that these pensions are not flowing to the national budget, but are received by the Russian citizens residing on the territory of Transnistria. Russia has also contributed to Transnistria by means of subsidies for gas imports. Transnistria received Russian gas even if they did not pay for it. This has led to an accumulation of debt that is considered to be over 5 bln USD[146]. This fact has favored people's general support to the authorities. These actions on behalf of the Russian Federation indicate that Transnistria serves as a leverage instrument to promote their policy in the Republic of Moldova and to keep this country within their ring of the near-abroad states, rather than the desire to recognize Transnistria as a separate entity.

The results of surveys and experts' reports are not optimistic. According to the Freedom House Report from 2016, Transnistria is not considered to be a free country, with an aggregate score of 24 out of 100; ranking in civil liberties: 14 out of 60, rule of law: 2 out of 16[147]. The influence of the internal groups of oligarchs who retain most of the power within the state, the lack of political will from the Republic of Moldova, as well as the difficulty for the EU and international actors to cause dramatic changes by means of negotiations, these all factors are hampering Transnistria to make vivid improvements in democratization.

Chisinau took a number of measures to re-gain the control over the region, and one of these actions was the initiative to introduce new customs stamps in Transnistria. In 2001, Moldova introduced new customs stamps to be used for export operations, this fact has limited the foreign trade activity of Tiraspol[148]. In fact the effect was to limit the uncontrolled trade activity, whereas in terms of overall trade activity this measure has been beneficial to the PMR since they gained the direct access to the EU markets,

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[144] Istomin, Igor, and Irina Bolgova. "Transnistrian strategy in the context of Russian–Ukrainian relations: the rise and failure of 'dual alignment'." *Southeast European and Black Sea Studies* 16.1 (2016): 169-194.
[145] *Ibid.*
[146] *Ibid.*
[147] Freedom House Country Report on Transnistria, 2016, https://freedomhouse.org/report/freedom-world/2016/transnistria (accessed 10.07.2017).
[148] Popescu, Nicu. *EU foreign policy and post-Soviet conflicts: stealth intervention.* Routledge, 2010.

which other post-Soviet de facto states cannot benefit from. Another action was to apply control on the common frontier with the help for the international mission EUBAM, in order to limit illegal trade operations[149]. Although Transnistria and Russia denounced these actions, and considered them acts of economic pressure, both the Moldovan as well as the EU authorities consider them as actions to strengthen Moldova's control on their Eastern border. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Moldova reacted to these actions and claimed that these are "absolutely unfounded critiques, meant to confuse the public opinion and provoke new tensions[150]". Another example when actions undertaken by Moldovan authorities were blamed was the initiative to start the joint control of the Moldovan-Ukrainian border. This action has been labeled as Moldovan "economic blockade" with the support of Ukraine by Transnistria, although in the eyes of the rest of the world this initiative was saluted as a way to stop the smuggling across the border and to diminish corruption.

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[149] *Ibid.*
[150] Moldova.Org Information Portal, http://www.moldova.org/en/moldova-ukraine-mfa-reject-russia-duma-accusations-blocking-transnistria/ (accessed 21.08.2017).

Figure 2. Map of Moldova and Ukraine

Source: www.euromaidanpress.com[151]

The fact that Moldova does not have control over its border with Ukraine along the 454 km, which is controlled by Transnistria, has raised numerous problems like smuggling, uncontrolled migration. The negotiations to open joint Moldovan-Ukrainian border crossing posts were held for many years, and only in 2017 did both countries agree on a joint strategy. The first joint checkpoint has been opened on Ukrainian territory bordering Transnistria and 12 more will be opened in the future[152]. The first joint

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[151] Yuri Zoria "Ukraine Helps Moldova Regain Control over Border in Transnistrian region", Euromaidan Press Independent Newspaper, 21 July, 2017, http://euromaidanpress.com/2017/07/21/ukraine-helps-moldova-regain-control-over-border-in-transnistria-region/ (accessed 10.08.2017).
[152] *Ibid.*

crossing point is in Kuchurhan-Pervomaisc in Odessa Oblast, which was labeled by the Russia's Foreign ministry as "elements of external pressure" referring to the EU funding involved in the process[153]. This measure was important not only for the purposes of control over the territory. It is an important action, which, according to EUBAM is going to bring considerable benefits[154], among which: the re-established international transport corridors across Transnistria; increased transparency by control of goods moving across Transnistria; allowing Ukrainian and Moldovan, including Transnistria economic operators to import/export goods, this way reducing time and cost that otherwise was used for double clearance and re-routing; and supporting the free movement of goods and people as one of the 5+2 process key principles. The head of the European Union delegation to Moldova, Pirkka Tapiola, mentioned after a meeting with representatives of the EU Border Assistance Mission to Moldova and Ukraine (EUBAM) and that he could say with certainty that there was no blockade on Transnistria[155].

The economic situation in Transnistria has reached critical values of imbalance. Transnistria is struggling with severe economic crisis and one of the outcomes was a 30% pay cut in the public sector and pensions in 2015-2016[156]. Also, the negative impact of external factors, and the status of unrecognized state affect the economy of Transnistria to a great extent. The economy started to deteriorate at the end of 2014 and the main factor was the fact that Russia offered less financial support, due to the situation in Ukraine (occupation of Crimea and the war in Donbas). The separatist government was only able to pay 70% of pensions and public sector wages in 2015 and poverty has escalated as a result[157]. The dependence on external markets and, more importantly, on foreign infrastructure, has made the TMR particularly vulnerable to

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[153] *Ibid.*

[154] EUBAM Annual Report, 2015, http://eubam.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/12/Report_2015_ENGL.pdf (accessed 17.11.2017).

[155] Free Europe Radio, "Putin Demands Measures to Lift Transdniester Blockade", 31 March, 2014, based on reporting by Reuters, https://www.rferl.org/a/moldova-russia-putin-blockade-transdniester-crimea-us-germany/25316072.html (accessed 16.08.2017).

[156] Vladimir Thoric, Natalia Petrusevici, Liubovi Veliciko "Pupublica Sheriff" Investigation Report, 30 June, 2016, https://www.rise.md/articol/republica-sheriff-3/?lang=ru (accessed 21.05.2017).

[157] Euractiv, News Portal "Transnistria's economic woes present Moldova with opportunity", https://www.euractiv.com/section/europe-s-east/news/transnistrias-economic-woes-present-moldova-with-opportunity/, 23 February, 2017 (accessed 07.09.2017).

global economic conjuncture and the will of its neighbors to continue economic interactions[158].

A very explicit way to show the developments in Transnistrian economy along time, is to start with the collapse of the Soviet Union and observe the way the situation has changed until nowadays (see Tables 2 and 3), is to compare the economic developments on both banks of the Nistru river, that is in Transnistria and the rest of Moldova. According to the comparative study carried out by economists, the GDP on both banks of the Nistru River is of 7,6 billion USD, out of which on the right bank (Moldova) the GDP is of 6,6 billion or 86%, and on the left bank (Transnistria) – 1 billion USD or 14% [159].

During the collapse of the USSR the degree of industrialization on the left bank was 2.5 times higher than on the right bank, but in present times there is the same share on both sides. In the 90s, after the fall of the USSR, Transnistria was left with several large industrial plants. Currently, these are in bad condition. The situation is worsened due to the fact that Moscow finds it more and more difficult to keep Transnistria "afloat"[160] due to increasing budgetary and economic pressure. This situation requires a strong injection of currency to save the Transnistrian ruble. The GDP fell by 22 % in 2015 alone[161].

[158] Istomin, Igor, and Irina Bolgova. "Transnistrian strategy in the context of Russian–Ukrainian relations: the rise and failure of 'dual alignment'." *Southeast European and Black Sea Studies*16.1 (2016): 169-194.
[159] Ionita, Veaceslav . *Premizele privind reintegrarea sistemelor economico-financiare de pe ambele maluri ale Nistrului.* IDIS "Viitorul", 2017
[160] Andrey Devyatkov "Transnistria: Support not Abandonment", Intersection, 20 May, 2016 *http://intersectionproject.eu/article/russia-europe/transnistria-support-not-abandonment (accessed 10.09.2017).*
[161]European Council on Foreign Relations website, Wider Europe Forum "Who's to blame for Transnistria's economic crisis?" 07 July, 2016
http://www.ecfr.eu/article/commentary_whos_to_blame_for_transnistrias_economic_crisis_7073
(accessed 19.08.2017).

Table 3. Economic indicators for Transnistria, comparative with Moldova:

	1991	2016
Population	0,55 mln. pers.	about 0,4 mln. pers.
Industrial Potential, out of total GDP of Moldova	40%	14%
Agricultural Potential, percentage out of Moldova	30%	11%
Banking System, out of Moldova	22%	12%
Textile Industry, out of Moldova	43%	9%
Food Industry, out of Moldova	40%	13%
Foreign Trade	98% towards former USSR	65% towards EU

Source: *IDIS- Viitorul*[162]

These tables demonstrate the extent of the degradation, taking place in Transnistria. The industrial and agricultural potential have diminished drastically. In order to exist as a sovereign state Transnistria lacks economic sustainability (currently the state budget is supported financially by various funds from the Russian Federation) and it needs recognition from other states. The budget revenues are not enough to cover the pensions and salaries of the public sector. The dramatic economic situation poses a direct threat to stability in the region and creates tensions in this unrecognized republic.

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[162] Gotisan, Iurie,*"Economy of Reintegration, IDIS-"Viitorul", Chisinau, Moldova (2017)*

Table 4

Economic indicators in 2016:

	Left bank	Right bank
Population, thousand people	475	2.913
GDP, billion USD	1,01	6,6
Covering Expenditures with Revenue from the Consolidated Budget	77%	94,8%
Revenue from the Central Budget, thousand USD	134	1.447
Central Budget Expenditures, thousand USD	246	1.621
Public Debt, thousand USD	1.260	2.560
Debt Per/capita, thousand USD	2.650	880

Source: IDIS "Viitorul" Foundation[163]

The situation with currency reserves in the Central Bank of Transnistria is catastrophic, according to experts. The total currency reserves of the entire Republic of Moldova, together with Transnistria constitute 2.345 million USD, out of which the right bank has 2.333 or 99,5%, and the left bank has only 12,5 million USD – according to latest public data from March 2016, which constitutes only 0,5% of the total reserves of the Republic of Moldova. If reported to the number of the population, the currency reserves of the right bank per capita are 30 times higher and constitute 800 USD per capita, compared to 26 USD on the left bank[164]. The same expert suggests that the lack of currency reserves on the left bank creates serious pressures on the Transnistrian currency and without a considerable monetary injection, the Transnistrian ruble risks a major depreciation. The situation is dramatic with regard to expenditures, covered by the state budget. The left bank relies on foreign help from the Russian Federation to

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[163] Ionita, Veaceslav . *Premizele privind reintegrarea sistemelor economico-financiare de pe ambele maluri ale Nistrului.* IDIS "Viitorul", 2017
[164] *Ibid*

survive and cover their expenditures. The GDP on the left bank constitutes one billion USD, which accounts for 14% of the general GDP of the Republic of Moldova[165].

Russian financial assistance to Transnistria has diminished significantly due to the fall in the ruble exchange rate, as the rate of the Transnistrian ruble against the dollar (the main settlement currency) is maintained at a high level by the authorities of the unrecognized republic[166]. Additionally, the authorities have taken steps to alleviate the situation by devaluating the local currency. One first attempt was in June, 2017, when the currency was devaluated by 25%[167]. Since the economy is suffering and Russia delayed its support, the government proceeded to the next devaluation of the Transnistrian ruble from 15 to the US dollar to 15.5 to the US dollar in early November, 2017[168]. Oazu Nantoi[169], in an interview to the deschide.md news portal has declared that: "despite the sanctions, Russia avails of sufficient financial resources to maintain this regime. There is an impression that Russia does not want to finance this regime"[170]. The small internal market, taken together with the decreased demographic potential and a decreasing potential of the region results in the vulnerability of its economy and the impossibility to function without outside help.

Transnistria has been labeled as "black hole" of Europe, and its political regime – to be dominated by corruption, lawlessness and money laundering. The fact that the territory lacks legal access to the world economy, does contribute to the emergence of the black market. The decades of the legal limbo have also brought their contribution. These conditions highlight the threat that prolonged conflicts bring and signal the fact that the

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[165] *Ibid.*
[166] Andrey Devyatkov "Transnistria: Support not Abandonment", Intersection, 20 May, 2016 *http://intersectionproject.eu/article/russia-europe/transnistria-support-not-abandonment (accessed 10.09.2017).*
[167] Iulian Ernst, "Transnistria devalues currency further as Russia delays support", 14 November, 2017, http://www.intellinews.com/transnistria-devalues-currency-further-as-russia-delays-support-132431/ (accessed 20.11.2017).
[168] *Ibid.*
[169] Oazu Nantoi, political analyst, expert in IPP think-tank.
[170] Vasile Cojocari **"Krasnoselski recunoaşte. Moscova nu mai dă bani de pomană"**, Deschide.md News Portal, 08 November, 2017,
 https://deschide.md/ro/stiri/politic/20984/Krasnoselski-recunoa%C8%99te-Moscova-nu-mai-d%C4%83-bani-de-poman%C4%83.htm (accessed 01.12.2017).

problem will not solve itself, but that special complex measures should be taken to tackle it.

5.2. Political situation

Between 1991 and 2011 the country was led by Igor Smirnov, who lost the elections in favor of Evghenii Shevciuk at the end of 2011. During the next election rounds, in 2016, the winner was Vadim Krasnoselski – the President of the Supreme Soviet of Transnistria, who won by accumulating more than 62% of votes. The strongest political party, "Obnovleniye" ("Renewal") which is the political arm of Sheriff, the largest company based in Transnistria, holds 33 out of 43 places in the National Assembly. According to the Rise Moldova portal of journalist investigation, the Sheriff conglomerate is the wealthiest and the most influential business group in Transnistria[171]. The companies within the Sheriff holding are active on all segments of the economy – from the food products, cars, fuels, medications, to production and exportation of alcohol, mobile and fixed telephony, furniture, internet, banks, insurance, hospitality, sports and mass-media. Many of the employees of the holding are deputies in the Supreme Soviet, on behalf of the Obnovlenie party, which has won the majority of seats in the Parliament.

Added to the picture is the fact that Transnistrian businesses are not able to continue smuggling activities any longer, due to the EUBAM Mission presence as well as the actions of Ukraine and Moldova to control their borders and prevent smuggling. As a result, Transnistria recently started to export more to the European Union than to the Russian Federation. The statistics show that the volume of export from Transnistria to the EU has increased to reach the 65%. Meanwhile, the Transnistria export to the Russian Federation was worth only 7 million US dollars, almost twice less than in the same period of the last year[172].

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[171] Vladimir Thoric, Natalia Petrusevici, Liubovi Veliciko "Pepublica Sheriff" Investigation Report, 30 June, 2016, https://www.rise.md/articol/republica-sheriff-3/?lang=ru (accessed 21.05.2017).
[172] Valeriu Chiveri, "Activity of the business community in the Transnistrian region in the conditions of the unsettled conflict", June 2016, http://ipre.md/wp-content/uploads/2016/06/Activity-of-the-business-community-in-the-Transnistrian-region-in-the-conditions-of-the-unsettled-conflict.pdf (accessed 07.08.2017).

The declarations of Russian Federation with regard to the status of Transnistria are rather clear: they do not recognize its independence and support the indivisibility of the Republic of Moldova. However, Russia still keeps its presence on the territory of Transnistria and offers political protection to the Russian speaking population and maintains the current *status-quo* of Transnistria with providing continuous support. It is through Transnistria that Russia makes attempts to introduce the Republic of Moldova into its sphere of influence by trying to convince the latter to join the Eurasian Economic Union (where Moldova is currently an observer member).

5.3. EU boosts change in Moldova and Transnistria

Since Transnistria is an unrecognized state, the EU does not have any presence on its territory, which excludes the overt diffusion, making the assessment of EU impact a difficult task. Also, there is a lack of information about the developments that take place in Transnistria, and the actual sources of information are the experts. On the other hand, the EU institutions consider the Transnistrian issue as politically sensitive one; hence there is no openness in discussing these issues – as was stated in replies to the author's requests for interviews or during the interviews themselves. Besides, there is a shortage of data on economic and social developments in Transnistria, provided by their local authorities. What is possible to perform is to study the EU actions and the reactions of Transnistrian authorities on the other hand.

Concerning the perspective of Transnistria, it has declared its will to join the Russian Federation, as in 2006 there was a referendum on joining Russia, with 97% of votes cast in favor[173]. Since the Russian Federation, as mediator in the 5+2 negotiations process, is supporting the unified Moldova, Transnistria is continuously participating in the negotiations, showing their political pragmatism. While this has been the result of the referendum, a curious result was obtained in another survey conducted by CBS-AXA on both banks in 2009, aiming at investigating the opinions on joining the EU. The results obtained showed that the majority of the people on both sides of the river are in favor of

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[173] Andrew Gardner, "Russia to Annex Transnistria", European Voice, 19 March, 2014, https://www.politico.eu/article/russia-to-annex-transnistria/ (accessed 21.09.2017).

joining the EU (72% in Moldova and 63% in Transnistria) [174]. Among other results, 37.7 % of Transnistrians think that the biggest impediment to joining the EU is the lack of a settlement to the conflict[175]. Even though these are not recent surveys, such a high percentage attained is indicative of the potential for change that the EU has and the attractiveness of the EU in Transnistria.

The EU has implemented its economic incentives in Transnistria, which have proven to be successful. The Preferential trade arrangements between Moldova and the EU are operating since 2005, also named the **Generalized System of Preference Plus – GPS+**. Due to the positive results coming out of this arrangement, the Transnistrian authorities continued the work to implement the conditions in order to further benefit from Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Agreement. In 2008, the EU has extended the autonomous trade preferences for Moldova and as a result, the trade statistics of Transnistria have been changed – with major exports going to the EU states, rather than to Russia. The Association Agreement including its Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Area was designed to cover the entire territory of the Republic of Moldova, and that includes Transnistria. The Association Agreements/Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Areas (AA/DCFTAs) represent a number of actions and instruments meant to boost the trade between EU and its partner countries. As a result, the trade with the EU between the whole of Moldova registered increasing trends since application.

DCFTA is an obligatory condition in order for Transnistria to enjoy the freedom of export to the EU. There was a list with special engagements that was forwarded to Transnistria, named "measures to facilitate the access of Transnistrian enterprises to the EU market"[176]. A series of these measures have been agreed by the Transnistrian authorities. On December 18, 2015, it was decided by the AA – EU-Moldova Association Council – that the DCFTA should be implemented all over Moldova starting with January 1, 2016[177]. The difficult economic situation that Transnistria is

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[174]"The Perception of Moldova's and Transnistria's Residents Towards Russia, The West, and Each Other," funded by the British Embassy Chisinau, conducted by the independent Centre for analytic research New Age (Transnistria) and the sociological company CBS-AXA (Moldova), June 2009.
[175] *Ibid*
[176] Denis Cenusa "Is DCFTA implemented in Transnistrian region or not" OP_ED, IPN, 23 January, 2017, http://ipn.md/en/dosar-transnistrean/81676 (accessed 15.09.2017).
[177] *Ibid.*

facing is stimulating its participation in the DCFTA. Gradually the political elites of Transnistria will have to apply the conditionalities imposed by the EU in the form of structural reforms, as influenced by the DCFTA.

The DCFTA is an arrangement between the EU and the Republic of Moldova that foresees a preferential trade relationship, based on mutually advantageous treatment, giving to each other better access to their markets than that offered to other trade partners[178]. It foresees the removal of import duties and export as well, on trade goods. As a result, obstacles in trade are removed and the companies have a better access to the EU markets.

The recent bank fraud scandal when 1 billion USD of state reserves have vanished from national banks in Moldova in 2014, involving prominent politicians, caused dissatisfaction with the pro-European Government and produced mass protests in Chisinau[179]. These events caused the disappointment of the EU in Moldova, as it used to be called a "success story" before. There are fears that the EU might abandon or lessen their support to Moldova due to this scandal. The fraud has left people in crucial point for change, which explains and has diminished the people's support to pro-European parties. Before that Moldova was considered to be the "success story" of the European Neighborhood Policy, but this event has caused ascendance of pro-Russian politicians, like Igor Dodon who has won the presidential elections from October, 2016. The disappointment on behalf of the EU and of the population of Moldova in the Governing elites is understandable, however many reforms have been carried out in Moldova until this event took place. As mentioned by one interviewee: "*Despite these disappointments I think that there are systemic changes that are irreversible and what I think the EU should not do is become disappointed too fast*"[180]. The EU is an institution that moves slowly, hence: "*If the EU starts moving out of Moldova, in a couple of years when the situation will be better, and it will be important to provide some of the support, it will not be so easy to shift its presence back*"[181].

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[178] DCFTA EU-Moldova webpage, http://dcfta.md/eng/ce-este-dcfta (accessed 12.08.2017).
[179] Brett, Daniel, Ellie Knott, and Mihai Popșoi. "The 'billion dollar protests' in Moldova are threatening the survival of the country's political elite." *LSE European Politics and Policy (EUROPP) Blog* (2015).
[180] Interview by the author with Victor Dragutan, expert in Moldova's advancement in the AA
[181] *Ibid*

In Transnistria, the EU presence is felt stronger, due to the economic benefits that the liberalized trade brings. Still, there is some reticence towards reflecting the EU support and efforts in the mass-media. A Transnistrian interviewee has mentioned that: "*The EU support and activities are generally not very well reflected in our mass media*"[182]. The impression is created that the Transnistrian regime is vigilantly controlling the activities of NGOs financed from abroad to prevent the development of a solid civil society, which might grow strong and cause change. With all that, the positive influence of the EU is acknowledged in Transnistria and the Transnistrian group of respondents have voiced that there is a general welcoming and acceptance of the EU assistance and support: "*We do not see anything wrong in cooperating with EU, we can have a lot to learn from Europe and Europeans, there are many positive practices which can be implemented here as well*"[183].

Transnistria already feels the economic advantages of cooperation with the EU, resulted from the implementation of the DCFTA and trade liberalization and the efficiency of the EU in this respect has been acknowledged by Transnistrian respondents: "*"Out of the efficient activities, we can mention the economic interaction, which is positively influencing Transnistria. We can see tangible results due to the influence of the DCFTA*"[184].

The Transnistrian authorities are taking a closer look on local NGOs since several human rights NGOs have been blocked by local authorities. The authorities have prepared a bill against "foreign agents" – aiming to prohibit the NGOs that are not agreed upon by the authorities. This initiative is copied from Russia, when in 2012 the Law on Foreign Agents was introduced, that required NGOs that are funded by foreign organizations, to register themselves as foreign agents[185]. This fact has been indicated by some NGOs aas a limitation to their activities: "*The main problem in our activity is that a new concept is being introduced, with the help of Russian Federation – that of*

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[182] Interview by the author with Andrey Nikolaev- Director of "Radoliubets" NGO, Transnistria
[183] *Ibid*
[184] Interview by the author with Anatoly Dirun, Director of the School for Political Research from Tiraspol
[185] Maxwell, Michael P. "NGOs in Russia: Is the recent Russian NGO legislation the end of civil society in Russia." *Tul. J. Int'l & Comp. L.* 15 (2006): 235.

foreign agents and there is a new draft law that is being reviewed now[186]". One of the NGOs active in the field of human rights, located in Chisinau is Promo-Lex and they are being targeted by the Transnistrian authorities as well. They are blamed for "ideologically influencing" the people of Transnistria: *"The Transnistrian KGB has created a lot of obstacles to us, while we were the first ones to open the door to the civil society in Transnistria, by organizing debates, summer schools, other activities*"[187]. Unfortunately, the Promo-Lex NGO has not been allowed to enter Transnistria for the last two and a half years[188].

The Transnistrian respondents consider the example of Moldova as a positive one, despite the numerous problems that exist and would like to follow their lead: *"What we see as the example of Moldova, is an improvement of the culture of civil society, its growth and development. The laws that are promoted are clearly in the front run of the society. From our side, we are even envious on the situation in Moldova, and we would like to see how it will unfold in the future and what the effects will be*"[189]. In terms of EU support, the opinions are that there is a need for special programs tailor-made for Transnistria, by taking into account the situation in place: *"The EU does not have a comprehensive strategy for the settlement of the conflict*"[190], and that the *"EU does not have separate programs directed on the work with Transnistria*"[191].

Still, Russia holds to its influence in the Republic of Moldova, through its channels and strong instruments. Russia is still the only provider of gas in Transnistria and it can still provoke some separatist attitudes not only in Transnistria, but also in Gagauzia and in other parts of Moldova. Russia plays hard against the EU power in Moldova and Transnistria. A paradoxical situation is with the gas delivery in Transnistria from Russian Gazprom. For more than 25 years Transnistria has not paid for their gas consumption. Instead, the debt is accumulated to the burden of the Republic of Moldova

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[186] Interview by the author with Evghenii Dunaev, "Apriori" NGO, Tiraspol
[187] Interview by the author with Ion Manole, "Promo-Lex" NGO
[188] *Ibid*
[189] Interview by the author with Evghenii Dunaev, "Apriori" NGO, Tiraspol
[190] Interview by the author with Anatoly Dirun, Director of the School for Political Research from Tiraspol
[191] *Ibid*

– and has reached the amount close to 6 billion USD[192]. Besides, there is massive propaganda from Russia mass-media sources that is influencing the opinions of people in Transnistria: *"The population lives in poverty, and hence it is easier being manipulated"*[193]. People still have nostalgia for the Soviet past and this nostalgia is heavily exploited by the authorities: *"In Transnistria,... the Soviet model of security offered a strong nostalgic contrast to the inadequacies of the existing system or the uncertainties and dislocations of Western-style democracy*"[194].

The EU is one of the most active actors in the region and it sees the status of Transnistria within the reintegrated Republic of Moldova. The involvement of the EU in the promotion of human rights takes place, and there was voiced the need for the EU involvement in a mixed Committee for Human Rights: *"When a person is put to jail on a fictitious case, then that person is helpless. So a mixed Committee on Human Rights, with the involvement of the EU can serve as a real instrument to help find a solution at the highest level.[195]"*. The idea with the mixed committee was voiced during the interview, and have not encountered any papers or agreements to create it, although similar ideas have also been expressed by the interviewees from the Moldovan NGOs, like Promo-Lex, for example. EU's contribution to the promotion of human rights is felt in the region and there are initiatives carried out in this respect: *"Sufficient efforts are given in order to support the human rights of people in general and of separate groups of people – for example people with disabilities or for example national minorities"*[196].

The EU favors the small steps policy in the interaction with its partners: *"The EU institutions tend to apply small steps approach which applies a multitude of actions of low intensity, but unfortunately the EU is not able to react when the situation is*

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[192] Mikhail Tulyev "Russian gas for Moldova: Who will pay the debts", for EADaily, https://eadaily.com/en/news/2017/02/13/russian-gas-for-moldova-who-will-pay-the-debts (accessed 17.10.2017).
[193] Interview by the author with Artem Filipenko, political expert, Ukraine
[194] O'loughlin, John, Vladimir Kolossov, and Gerard Toal. "Inside the post-Soviet de facto states: a comparison of attitudes in Abkhazia, Nagorny Karabakh, South Ossetia, and Transnistria." *Eurasian Geography and Economics* 55.5 (2014): 423-456.
[195] Interview by the author with Evghenii Dunaev, "Apriori" NGO, Tiraspol
[196] Interview by the author with Raisa Asauleac, Program coordination of "NGO Resource Center and Initiative Groups for Transnistria

changing very quickly"[197]. The obstacle towards a more efficient change is the resistance to modernization coming from local authorities, both in Transnistria as well as in Moldova, according to experts: *"This resistance to modernization is related to the fact that certain privileged groups of people want to keep these privileges and this is why they are obstructing the reforms"[198]*. So what the EU is facing is not only the Russian influence, but also the reluctance of Transnistrian and Moldovan authorities to change the status quo.

Among EU contributions is the fact that *"The EU has been able to keep the dialogue between the sides going and avoid worsening to the security situation in the region"[199]*. The key interests of the EU are to prevent the escalation of the Transnistrian conflict, control of migration and of the trafficking of human beings, which were declared primordial conditions according to the Association Agreement EU-Moldova. The EU influence is provided by long-term means through channels, such as: financial assistance, direct budgetary support, technical assistance, foreign investment, support in the Transnistrian settlement process and the securitization of the borders with the help of the EUBAM Mission.

 The joint border crossing in Pervomaysk-Kuciurgan is a major step forward in putting an end to smuggling activities. Border delimitation, which did not take place during many years, is already happening has been another step forward. According to the Ukrainian expert, "Ukraine does not approve the Russian scenario. Since 2014 the actions of Ukraine have been directed towards neutralization of potential threats, including military ones, coming from Transnistria. The agreement to install joint border-crossing posts is a logical step directed towards pushing Transnistria towards the Moldovan legal field.[200]"

The advancement of the EU normative power in Moldova and Transnistria has benefitted the support coming from Ukraine as it has been playing more influence in the

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[197] Interview by the author with the EU Foreign Action Service Official
[198] *Ibid*
[199] Interview by the author with EU diplomat
[200] Artem Filipenko "Transnistrian settlement: waiting for progress?", Day Kyiv.ua, 28 November, 2014, ttps://day.kyiv.ua/ru/article/den-planety/pridnestrovskoe-uregulirovanie-zhdat-li-progressa (accessed 02.10.2017).

region. The escalation of conflict in the Eastern Ukraine and certain activities in Odessa has caused Ukraine to pay more attention to the Transnistrian conflict as well and to be more interested in providing its support to the Transnistrian settlement process. As a consequence there have been measures undertaken by Ukraine, since the threat has influenced the Ukraine to move forward the cooperation with Moldova and to secure their borders by closing their territory for the transit of Russian military to-and-from Transnistria, as an impact of the Russian troops being dislocated in Transnistria. *"Ukrainian authorities consider that the Russian troops dislocated on the territory of Moldova present a threat to Ukraine, and this fact is written down in the Military Doctrine of Ukraine"*[201]. Besides, many experts in Ukraine consider that the conflicts in Transnistria and east of Ukraine are interconnected: *"The key strategic goal of Russia is to include the regions – for example for Ukraine to accept Donbas, and for Moldova to accept Transnistria – based on the conditions that are convenient to Russia. The idea of transformation was the rights of these secessionist regions to block the political decisions taken at the central level. That is, to block the movement of Moldova or of Ukraine towards the EU"*[202].

The majority of the Moldova experts still consider that the besides the geopolitical factor, the internal weakness and lack of will of Moldova to deal with the secessionist problem is the main cause of the problem. The opinion of Oazu Nantoi, a Moldovan national expert, who deals with the Transnistrian issue is that the Chisinau authorities are only pretending to be preoccupied in the Transnistrian conflict: and did not do enough to solve it: *"This conflict is not solved yet not because Russia is so fierce, but because the authorities from Chisinau are corrupt, incompetent, and besides are involved in illegal smuggling schemes with implication of Transnistria"*[203]. This opinion is also shared by some scholars as well. When speaking about the de facto states, Lynch mentioned that: "Moldova, Georgia and Azerbaijan have not become magnets sufficiently attractive to induce the separatist areas to compromise in order to benefit from the restoration of political and economic relations"[204].

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[201] Interview by the author with Artem Filipenko, political expert, Ukraine
[202] Interview by the author with Artem Filipenko, Ukrainian expert
[203] Interview by the author with Oazu Nantoi, expert in IPP think tank.
[204] Lynch, Dov. "Separatist states and post-Soviet conflicts." *The Legacy of the Soviet Union*. Palgrave Macmillan, London, 2004. 61-82.

The Transnistrian respondents, while accepting the attractive model of the EU and having acknowledged that the aim of the EU in Transnistria is to spread the EU norms of democracy, human rights and rule of law, they do not actually support the final aim of the EU aim to support re-integration of Transnistria as part of Moldova. Most of the Transnistrian respondents consider this goal unattainable since Transnistria is striving towards joining Russia. While the EU is recognized by Transnistria as a regional and international power, and is welcomed as a partner for development, cooperation with Russia on major issues is sought necessary for further development and peaceful conflict resolution. The EU power has been acknowledged and requests for help addressed to the EU institutions have been voiced, in terms of addressing deficiencies of some norms, like the human rights advancement. The Moldovan path of development is followed closely and positive advancements are taken into consideration, as part of the confidence-building program.

6. DIFFUSION OF EU NORMS IN TRANSNISTRIA

The chapter of diffusion of norms will describe main instruments the EU uses in order to promote its support and influence. It is followed by a description of diffusion mechanisms of the normative power Europe, and the findings that have been identified per each of these mechanisms in Transnistria. Due to the fact that the EU channels their support towards Moldova, including Transnistria, it is challenging to divide this support and identify a single strand, which is dedicated to Transnistria only. Also, the nature of the EU, being composed of 27 member states, with overlapping institutions and initiatives – like the OSCE, produce results that are visible and sometimes cannot be singled out as only being the result of one effort.

The EU is building asymmetrical relations with its partners, in order to provide for internal changes in those countries. These changes are not produced due to coercion or application of force, but through the power of attraction and the changes take time to be visible. Europe was described as a transformative power, one which is "broad and deep: once sucked into its sphere, countries are changed forever…Europe does not change countries by threatening to invade them: its biggest threat is to cut off contact with them[205]". Normative power is particularly efficient in case when a country has a long-term perspective and a will for subsequently joining the EU. In case of a EU candidate country, there are the Copenhagen criteria that serve as conditions to join. However, at this stage further enlargement is not under consideration, as Europe has reached its limits. The Copenhagen criteria, which are compulsory for a candidate and are strong incentives for structural change, cannot be applied in the case of Moldova and Transnistria.

The instruments the EU can use as alternatives for enlargement, to further advance its influence in the neighboring countries are the European Neighborhood and Eastern Partnership (EaP). As previously written, the EU with its Southern and Eastern Neighbors to foster stabilization, security and prosperity through its ENP Policy and EaP initiative.

The NPE outlines three core norms, which include: *democracy, rule of law* and *human*

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[205] Leonard, Mark. *Why Europe will run the 21st century*. London: Fourth estate, 2005.

rights[206]. Manners has also identified additional four norms have been identified: social solidarity; anti-discrimination; sustainable development and good governance[207]. In this chapter, these core norms have been applied and analyzed in the framework of the EU policies and conditionalities undertaken in Transnistria and the way the actions taken by the EU towards Transnistria have contributed to the promotion of these norms. The actions taken by Transnistria as a result of these actions will be evaluated through the prism of advancing these norms. Further, the diffusion of these norms has been traced down to actions performed by EU. This chapter is going to examine the normative influence of the EU on Transnistria by means of the six mechanisms of norm diffusion, as identified by Ian Manners, and the findings are going to be analyzed. The chapter is going to analyze the diffusion mechanisms from both the side of the EU – in order to describe whether the EU could be more active in promotion these mechanisms. From the point of view of Transnistria, it is important to show their reaction to EU policies and initiatives as evidence to the diffusion of EU norms.

The mechanisms that are being used to diffuse the norms in Transnistria are examined in terms of strength and capacity. It is important to mention that the fact of measuring the impact of the EU on Transnistria is facing a number of difficulties due to the lack of a direct instrument of assistance programme. All forms of assistance given by the EU to Transnistria are a part of the overall package of policies and assistance provided to the Republic of Moldova in general. Other difficulties faced are the lack of information, the reluctance of the Transnistrian authorities to share data and the fact that the EU regards the Transnistrian issues as "politically sensitive".

The six mechanisms of diffusion, as identified my Manners are[208]:

1. Contagion or unintentional diffusion of ideas.

2. Information diffusion.

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[206] Manners, I. (2002) 'Normative power Europe: a contradiction in terms?', Journal of Common Market Studies 40(2): 235–58.

[207] Manners, I. (2002) 'Normative power Europe: a contradiction in terms?', Journal of Common Market Studies 40(2): 243–4.

[208] Manners, I. (2002) 'Normative power Europe: a contradiction in terms?', Journal of Common Market Studies 40(2): 235–58

3. Procedural diffusion: Institutionalization of a relationship of the EU and a third partner.

4. Transference: Exchange of goods, aid, and technical assistance.

5. Overt diffusion: Represents the physical presence of the EU in third states.

6. Cultural filter: referring to learning and changing social and political identities.

A significant aspect in these mechanisms is the absence of physical force in the imposition of norms. This absence of physical force and the importance of cultural diffusion lead to the argument that "the most important factor shaping the international role of the EU is not what it does or what it says, but what it is"[209].

1. Contagion

This is a more passive manner of diffusion. With Transnistria being an unrecognized entity, it is challenging to trace-down this mechanism and the findings under this mechanism are scarce. The attractiveness of European standards is felt also in the case of Transnistria, and some findings can be pointed out at this stage. However, the difficulty that the Transnistrian authorities are facing is the implementation of these changes, since these require infrastructural changes and funding as well as time to implement these initiatives. Among the implemented changes there can be mentioned the environmental, phyto-sanitary, health standards – also described in the transference diffusion part, since these have been included in the Confidence Building Measures Program. As mentioned previously, some degree of overlapping is in the diffusion mechanisms is observed.

2. Informational

As an example of information mechanism is the EU visibility in Transnistria. It is currently being promoted but is hampered by the local authorities' reluctance to publically acknowledge the EU contribution. This fact is supported by a number of

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[209] *Ibid.*

interviewees from Transnistria: "Several schools, hospitals and kindergartens have been renovated with the help of EU funds, but this fact is very weakly reported by our mass-media sources, it looks like our mass media is avoiding such events, or this kind of information seems to be banned. On the contrary, in case of Russian funding, they are all reflected in the news [210]". Since Transnistria has no international identity as a stand-alone state, this mechanism is problematic to single out. The Information diffusion is the mechanism when the EU can take a more active role.

3. Procedural

The *procedural diffusion* foresees the institutionalization of the relation between the EU and a third country, normally by means of trade or membership agreements. From a critical point of view, the EU norms are setting the rules that distinguish between the right and the wrong in political environment. As previously mentioned in the theoretical chapter, the procedural diffusion of norms represents the institutionalization of relationships between the EU and third parties and as examples can serve the AAs. In this part, the discussion will be on the implications of the AA in Transnistria. Another example is the economic and political incentives offered to both Moldova and Transnistria, in the form of the DCFTA.

Due to the fact that the Moldovan authorities do not control the Transnistrian region, a special consideration was made to cover Transnistria as well. Implementing the DCFTA in Transnistria was problematic due to the differences in the economic system of Transnistria, the difference of standards and technical norms. DCFTA is also perceived as having a strong geopolitical impact on Transnistria. The expectations for this instrument are high: it is expected to produce a decrease of the influence of the Russian Federation in the Republic of Moldova, and changes in Transnistria as well. The obstacles in this process are the fact that the Transnistrian authorities have taken the decision to follow the Russian legal standards and to follow the process of gradual integration into the common legal field.

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[210] Interview with Evgeniy Dunaev, Apriori NGO, Tiraspol

The EU has declared that it continues to support a comprehensive, peaceful settlement based on the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Moldova with a special status for Transnistria. Transnistria, as part of Moldova, benefits from the EU's DCFTA Facility, focused on support to small and medium business enterprises. The Association Agreements/Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Areas (AA/DCFTAs) were concluded in 2014. These have brought the relations between the EU and Moldova to a new level. The agreements aim at strengthened political association and economic integration. They constitute a plan for reforms that will bring the partner countries close to the EU by aligning their legislation and standards to those of the EU.

All trade from Transnistria to the EU was conducted under the Autonomous Trade Preferences regime, in a duty-free regime. The condition imposed by the EU for the Transnistrian companies to participate in this program was for them to be registered at the State Registration Chamber in the Republic of Moldova. The Autonomous Trade Preferences system allowed the companies from Transnistria to export to the EU under a duty free regime. The Transnistrian authorities had to apply regulatory adjustments, in order to continue using the preferences. As a result, quite a big number of Transnistrian companies registered with the Moldovan authorities, in order to benefit in continuation from the liberalized regime with the EU and be able to export.

The benefits from Transnistria participation in the EU liberalized trade is the following: gradual Europeanization for Transnistria, continuing to improve the relationship between Moldova and Transnistria, avoiding EU-Russia relationship crisis, and the reduction of excessive geopolitical influence from Russian Federation on the Republic of Moldova.

The economic crisis has played its role in opening Transnistria towards more cooperation with the EU by pragmatically accepting the changes to be implemented. Even though there was seemingly no other choice then comply with the EU requirements, the positive effects are felt and will all contribute to a better economy. The norms that the EU is keen to diffuse are considered to be generally accepted as these have an universal character.

4. Transference

The diffusion of norms is carried out by means of exchanges of goods, trade, aid or technical assistance with third parties through real or financial means. The norm diffusion can also be strengthened by use of political conditionality. Examples of Transference are the PHARE and TACIS programmes in Central and East Europe[211].

- **Confidence Building Measures (CBM)**

Confidence Building Measures is another form of support that the EU is providing to Transnistria. The Confidence Building Measures are activities undertaken by the EU in coordination with implementing partners – UNDP, IOM. The objectives are to develop the communities on both banks, to promote a rapprochement between Chisinau and Tiraspol and the dialogue between the two sides. Mediation and confidence-building measures are aimed at creating bottom-up trust by expanding or repairing economic and social links between Moldova and Transnistria[212]. Under this program, the EU provides 28 million Euros over a period of 4 years for the integration of Moldova. The aim of the program is to build confidence between the two sides of the Nistru river and developments in the rural areas of the security zone. The program, launched in 2013 aimed at improving institutional and coordination abilities institution and the settlement of the Transnistrian conflict by means of awareness building, promoting dialogue with civil society on the two banks of the river Nistru. These measures are designed to facilitate the settlement of the Transnistrian dispute, by increasing confidence between Chisinau and Tiraspol through joint initiatives involving local authorities, civil society organizations and other stakeholders from both sides[213].

CBM are designed in form of capacity-building activities, which foresee activities aimed at different technical areas, with involvement of European experts, aimed at developing a viable civil society. The activities in the program involve participants from both banks. The aim is to exchange useful experience, to identify common problems

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[211] European Parliament, Briefing No 33, The PHARE Programme and the enlargement of the European Union, http://www.europarl.europa.eu/enlargement/briefings/33a1_en.htm (accessed 12.08.2017).

[212] Stanislav Secrieru (2011) The Transnistrian conflict – new opportunities and old obstacles for trust building (2009–2010), Southeast European and Black Sea Studies, 11:3, 241-263

[213] European Commission official webpage, https://eeas.europa.eu/headquarters/headquarters-homepage/419/eastern-partnership_en (accessed 05.04.2017).

and to create solutions. The program runs in partnership with the Chisinau authorities, and the Tiraspol authorities, local NGOs. The aim was to open the dialogue between the two banks and to promote a solid partnership. With the help of European experts, the European standards are promoted and the outcome is the development of a strong civil society on both banks. According to experts' opinion: "confidence building measures are the most tangible and consistent from the point of view of their impact. Without negotiations we cannot find common ground and we cannot quit the *status quo*, that is why the negotiations are important to break the ice between parties" [214].

The EU has launched the Confidence building measures, since the restart of the negotiations since 2011. These measures also included the gradual review of EU sanction on Transnistria, the ban on movements applied to the leaders of administration. This ban on movements was stopped by the decision of the EU Council, to allow the leaders of Transnistria to take part at negotiations, on the territory of the EU. (reference Council Decision 2011/641/CFSP, amending the Decision concerning restrictive measures against the leadership of the Transnistrian region).

From 2012 – until 2017 was carried out the 3rd phase of the Confidence Building Measures Programme, funded by the EU and co-funded by the UNDP office in Moldova. The contribution for the third phase is valued at 10.6 million Euro, out of which the EU contributes by 9,5 million and the UNDP – 1.1 million[215]. The general objective was to increase confidence between the both banks of the Nistru River by means of enhanced social and economic development, by involving local authorities, civil society, business community and the stakeholders. The results, according to the report[216] stated that there was evidence in positive results in each of the components of the program, which are: Business development Component; Community Development Component; Environment Component; Support to Civil Society Component.

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[214] Interview by the author with Denis Cenusa, expert at Pro-Expert Group Think tank.
[215] Support to Confidence Building Measures Program IV), 2015-2018,
http://www.md.undp.org/content/moldova/en/home/projects/confidence-building-measures-programme-4.html (accessed 08.07.2017).
[216] Project Document: "Support to Confidence Building Measures 2015-2017, EU-UNDP, Increased opportunities and better living conditions across Nistru river,
http://www.md.undp.org/content/dam/moldova/docs/Project%20Documents/Pro_doc%20CBM4.pdf (accessed 17.09.2017).

According to a recent independent evaluation of the Confidence Building Measures Programme[217], there have been considerable achievements in social infrastructure reaching in excess of 100 000 people, business development, trading relationships, the grants have reached numerous people and established reinforced cross-river partnerships and links. Examples of such activities are: cross-river cooperation of local authorities, business and individual links that have been established through the program.

The outcome, stated by the report evaluates the program as highly relevant, with achievements at each of the components. The first component results number among all, the study visits to EU countries for entrepreneurs, 52 new partnerships negotiated, out of which 15 were cross-river, more Transnistrian companies joining the Moldovan Chamber of Commerce; a Business School sub-component being finalized providing 40 training programs covering a range of business topics. The team of 16 trainers was supported by international experts. Joint international study visits were conducted to EU states. The Youth grant scheme sub-component aimed at development of young entrepreneurs. The Rural tourism subcomponent benefitted from the program by opening 23 new bed and breakfast enterprises – which were equally distributed on both banks of the Nistru River. The third component – empowered local communities and actors from both sides: this component has produced 40 new projects, 62 full-time jobs, and quality of life of 100 000 people were improved. The health project targeting Transnistria region: equipment has been purchased; training has been provided; access to services has been provided. Besides, the environmental component: 4 project proposals developed. The Dialogue sub-component: the dialogue process has created a cross-river platform for civil society experts, professionals. This project assembled 80 representatives from both banks and 18 projects have been outlined.

According to the report, the CBM programme, despite the expected and experienced challenges, demonstrates considerable effectiveness. An increased people-to people contact was provided, cross-river trade, cross-river contractual relationships, and

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[217] Evaluation of Confidence Building Measures Programme Moldova, 2013-2017, Final Project, 10/2014, https://erc.undp.org/evaluation/evaluations/detail/6726 (accessed 12.09.2017).

development of the business spheres, youth development, environmental projects, cultural events, development of child protection policies. According to the findings of the report, these activities are to be maintained in the future. Investments have been made to infrastructure and the replacement of outdated equipment, and improvements in the quality of life for people have been registered. Also, CBM supported small businesses, facilitated improved environment for business development. Interestingly, the Evaluation Report on CBM report[218] notifies that there is clear evidence that the people to people exchanges have led to questioning of the presentation of the *status quo* and resulted in increased openness to cross-river interaction. These measures were to eventually solidify bottom-up trust.

5. Overt diffusion

The idea of an international peace keeping force in Transnistria was voiced before, and this could have served as an example of overt diffusion, but the idea was not approved by the EU. Transnistria would like to have a more direct interaction with the EU in fact, in order to promote a better understanding between parties. As one of the interviewees voiced his opinion: *"I am more than sure that the role of the EU will be better understood in Tiraspol. Until now, the majority of the projects are carried out with the help of the partners from Chisinau. And as a result, the picture is distorted"* [219].

6. Cultural filter

The final factor described for the diffusion of EU norms is the *cultural filter*.

Examples of findings of cultural filter, applied in the case of Transnistria are presented below:

- **Death penalty abolition:**

Since 1998 the EU has played a leading role in international abolishing of the death penalty and according to Manners, this fact represents an example of the normative

[218] Evaluation of Confidence Building Measures Programme Moldova, Final Project 2013-2017, 12/2014, https://erc.undp.org/evaluation/evaluations/detail/6726, p. 39 (accessed 12.09.2017).
[219] Interview with Anatoly Dirun, Director of the School for Political Research from Tiraspol

power of the EU[220]. Although Transnistria cannot be party to international treaties, human rights treaties, there has been notified the unilateral recognition of international treaties through decisions in the Supreme Soviet of Transnistria[221]. The mentioned treaties are the European Convention of Human Rights, International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, UN Conventions on the Rights of the Child, UN Convention on Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide. The authorities are regarding these treaties as part of their legislation *de facto,* but according to Hammarberg[222] the main problem is in the implementation of the agreed standards.

The **death penalty** is *de facto* abolished by means of an executive decree issued in 1999[223], with references to recommendations of the Council of Europe's Parliamentary Assembly in the preamble (reference), reference made to the principles of humans and the inalienable human right to life. Although, the Criminal Code still stipulates the possibility of death penalty in article 58. In practice, the moratorium decree is overriding the Criminal Code and the death penalty is replaced by imprisonment for life.

- **Education**

Some influences in the education policies can be found in Transnistria as well. Despite the fact that the Transnistrian authorities are oriented towards the educational space of the Russian Federation, and strive to adopt the Russian educational standards, Transnistria has accepted some Bologna Process criteria. Experiments in education implemented in higher education institutions in Transnistria have been debated by local experts: "The implementation of the Bologna process in the Transnistrian region is challenging. Unfortunately there have not been created necessary institutions for the proper implementation of the Bologna System"[224].

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[220] Manners, I. 2002. Normative Power Europe: A Contradiction in Terms? *JCMS: Journal of Common Market Studies,*
[221] Hammarberg, Thomas, and UN Senior Expert. "Report on Human Rights in the Transnistrian Region of the Republic of Moldova." *United Nations* 14 (2013).
[222] *Ibid.*
[223] *Ibid.*
[224] IDIS-Viitorul webpage, http://viitorul.org/newsview.php?l=ro&idc=132&id=5361&t=/STI-RI-I-EVENIMENTE-IDIS/Educatia-punte-de-legatura-intre-cele-doua-maluri-ale-Nistrului

CONCLUSION

The EU applies normative power to influence countries towards democratization process. The EU creates incentives and provides standards and norms for other countries and enhances commitment from the partner country. The tools that the EU uses are the political dialogue, the support of democracy and creation of incentives for democratic change. The aim of the thesis was to identify if and how does normative power Europe influence on the developments in Transnistria. The author first presented the framework for analysis, being the normative power Europe diffusion mechanisms, applied through the prism of the ENP and EaP.

As a conclusion, procedural, transference diffusion and some elements of the cultural filter are present in the case of Transnistria and the EU has used strong financial, political, diplomatic as well as conditionality. This paper shows the way ENP uses its normative power and the way it is diffused using its mechanisms. A future suggestion is to have a revision on how the EU uses its power, its efficiency in order to keep continuity. The most significant forms of norm diffusion exerted by EU on Transnistria are the Transference and the Procedural diffusion.

Given the findings stated above, it can be concluded that the EU did exert normative power over Transnistria, which played an important role in signing of the DCFTA, through the activity of EU organizations in the region. The norms diffused by the EU have been defined in line with Manner's theories and democracy, rule of law and human rights - three of his stated "core norms" of the EU - have been chosen to delimit the thesis. Despite the difficult task of proving a direct causal link between the EU conditionality and the reforms made by Transnistria, the paper shows favorable effects that mostly represent a bottom-up approach with their effects to continue to appear in the long run. What is important to mention is that the changes take time to implement, and usually the effects are not visible at once as the EU is applying the small steps strategy. The EU power has been acknowledged cooperation is accepted.

(accessed 04.08.2017).

To summarize, even though the EU has a vast potential in Transnistria to produce change, it is increasingly having difficulty on its way, and the changes are produced at a slow pace and the effects are still expected to be produced. The main finding is that the normative power Europe works in the example of Transnistria, but in a more narrow way.

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APPENDIX 1

Interview questions:

1. Could you tell me a little about yourself and your work?

2. Please describe how EU is engaged in Transnistria?
   a. What are EU's intentions towards Transnistria?
   b. What do you think is the main reasons behind EUs involvement in Transnistria?
   c. What kind of activities does EU undertake in/towards Transnistria?
      i. In terms of democracy promotion
      ii. In the field of regional development
   d. Who is the main target of these activities?
      i. How many and what kind of activities target the civil society?
      ii. How many and what kind of activities aim to target the state structures of Transnistria?
   e. How do EU actions in Transnistria relate to the Transnistrian-Moldovan relations and address the ongoing conflict?
   f. How do EU actions in Transnistria relate to the Transnistrian-Russian relations?

3. Overall, how would you evaluate the consistency of EU's intentions and actions towards Transnistria since 2007, when Moldova/Transnistria became immediate neighbors of the EU?
   a. If there have been any changes, then what kind and when?
   b. If there have been changes, then what are in your opinion the reasons behind them? Bigger policy changes on the EU level or changes on the local level?

4. Overall, how would you evaluate the success of EU's actions in Transnistria?
   a. Can you name actions that have been more successful, and actions that have not worked?

     i. In terms of democracy promotion

    ii. In terms of promoting regional development

   iii. Actions that are targeting the civil society

   iv. Actions that are targeting the state structures

5. If EU actions in Transnistria have failed, then what in your opinion would be the main reasons for that?

6. How would you evaluate the influence of Russia (in terms of EU's success or failure in Transnistria)?

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