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**University of Bath**

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# **Europeanization through the Grapevine: Communication Gaps and the Role of International Organisations in Implementation Networks of EU External Migration Policy**

Daniel Wunderlich<sup>1</sup>

University of Bath, Bath, United Kingdom

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## **Abstract**

Communication links are a key dimension for implementation of European Union (EU) policies in non-member states because EU influence abroad is otherwise severely hindered. Exploring project implementation of external migration policy in Morocco and Ukraine highlights the role of the United Nations High Commission for Refugees and particularly the International Organisation for Migration for bridging and exploiting communication gaps between administrations in Brussels and ‘the field’. Linking the Europeanization literature with insights on implementation, organisational sociology and social networks raises attention to the ‘grapevine’ of interorganisational communication structures that mediates EU influence and reveals manifold actor influence in Europeanization processes and on policy output beyond EU control.

## **Keywords**

communication; European Union migration policy; implementation networks; international organisations; non-member states

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<sup>1</sup> Department of Politics, Languages and International Studies, University of Bath  
Claverton Downs, Bath, BA2 7AY, United Kingdom. Email: [d.c.wunderlich@bath.ac.uk](mailto:d.c.wunderlich@bath.ac.uk).  
Tel.: +44 1225 383402

## **Introduction**

Although Europeanization studies in EU accession countries have gained prominence with the 2004 and 2007 enlargement rounds (Schimmelfennig & Sedelmeier 2005; Bache 2010), the influence of EU policies in non-member states (NMS) has been largely neglected and requires theorising that accounts for differences from accession and member states (Schimmelfennig 2009). This article addresses this gap and simultaneously links it with insights from the literature on implementation, organisational sociology and social networks. If Europeanization is ultimately about EU impact on processes and policy output then it should be linked with the implementation literature as an established area of public policy research that deals with how policy is “translated” into “action”. The link is theoretically useful and points at an area of study where EU influence becomes most tangible in form of EU projects set in time and space. Furthermore, it allows insulating direct from indirect forms of EU influence as well as from non-EU driven change such as socialisation and lesson-drawing (Schimmelfennig 2009: p.8). Direct EU influence is therefore understood as the EU’s ability to successfully pursue its policy objectives through implementation of its projects and programmes in NMS. Better analytical focus becomes possible on unfolding Europeanization processes in a ‘controlled environment’ to provide insights into a new area that might otherwise be obfuscated by their complexity (Zahariadis 2008: p.223).

In contrast to accession and member states, EU policy implementation in NMS is more limited. The EU operates external policies outside of its legal reach, without sanctioning system, lacking substantial incentives, meaningful conditionality and administrative capabilities while simultaneously facing uncertainties about the appropriate means to shape the implementation target “international migration”, about its scale and “logics”. This setting creates a gap between Brussels, where policy objectives are set, and the implementation context in NMS, where networks try to produce the intended change. Implementation networks emerge around EU policy objectives, are composed of governmental, international and non-governmental organisations, have a polycentric structure and are stable beyond the normal three-year lifecycle of individual EU projects.

Already the 2007 multi-presidency work programme for the external relations of EU Justice and Home Affairs (JHA) mentions 37 times the words ‘implementation’, ‘implementing’ and ‘implement’ in an only 21 page document (Council 2007). The Stockholm Programme, which sets the most current EU framework for this area, shows continuing concern about policy implementation and identifies the need for greater coordination and dialogue with NMS regarding migration issues (Council 2009). How do EU implementation networks bridge the gap between Brussels and NMS and address

uncertainties? Who profits from this constellation and why? What does this mean for EU influence on policy output and our understanding of Europeanization processes in NMS?

It is argued that communication links, understood as formal or informal inter-organisational communication channels that transmit expert knowledge regarding implementation, are the crucial dimension in EU implementation networks and help to address these uncertainties. Although network relations are multi-dimensional, communication links are a precondition for other inter-organisational relations at large and Europeanization processes in specific. While states ultimately set policy objectives and regulate migration, the grapevine of communication links in implementation networks allows interpreting and translating objectives into “action”, allocating funding and attributing legitimacy to projects. Analysing communication links should therefore provide central understanding of Europeanization processes in NMS. Findings show that implementers are largely undisturbed by EU policy-makers when driving Europeanization processes abroad. Implementation of policy objectives can become dependent on often overlooked non-state actors in this communication grapevine such as international organisations (IOs) that provide central communication links across the EU outer border and can facilitate or compromise implementation. Consequently, policy is shaped along the way rather than following a template set in Brussels and EU influence can become obscured in this interactive process.

External migration policy presents an interesting case for studying Europeanization as a EU priority for its ‘neighbourhood’. The EU has hierarchical intentions in this internally motivated external policy field. This means it aims at restricting migration movements into its territory through external cooperation and does not differentiate its policy objectives much between European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP) countries. Apart from decentralised funding to NMS agencies, the Commission has implemented centralised thematic instruments under implementation since 2001. If the implementation of centrally managed programmes in a EU priority policy area does not correspond to a hierarchical process then Europeanization is unlikely to be controlled by Brussels in other external policy areas where programmes are decentralised or seen as less important.

Drawing upon 59 interviews in Brussels, Morocco and Ukraine, this article uses social network analysis (SNA) to examine country cases that are EU targets of substantial external migration projects and that are explicitly left without membership perspective – thus making them novel ground for Europeanization studies. The paper is structured as follows: Section 1 adapts findings of the Europeanization literature to NMS contexts; section 2 supplements them with the literature on implementation, social networks and organisational sociology; section 3 visualises concrete examples of communication structures around implementation of

EU external migration policy; finally, section 4 theorises the role of IOs with a detailed analysis of links of the International Organisation for Migration (IOM) and the United Nations High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR) with EU and NMS actors as well as their influence on Europeanization processes.

### **Theorising Europeanization in non-member states**

EU influence on polity, policy and politics at domestic level has been conceptualised as Europeanization and provides a substantive field of scholarly literature (see for example Graziano & Vink 2006). The literature has established a range of domestic responses to accommodate EU influence (Börzel & Risse 2003: pp.69-70), which indicates the underlying interpretation processes at domestic level. Similarly implementation research stresses that policy is not set in stone at the point of decision-making but undergoes challenging processes that can drive policy output away from original intentions (for an overview of the implementation literature see Hill and Hupe 2002). Indeed Europeanization research found that interpretation helps translating policies into national contexts and policies are at times deliberately vague for that purpose (Mörth 2003). Accounts of domestic ‘fit’ and ‘misfit’ with adaptational pressure from the EU level seem inadequate (Mastenbroek and Kaeding 2006) and Europeanization models should accommodate the interpretation and communication processes of organisations. Research has confirmed particularly the importance of administrative capacities and veto players on the one side and willingness of domestic actors on the other for Europeanization processes (Treib 2008: 10-11, 17). Besides domestic factors, the literature on member and accession countries highlights the importance of EU ‘modes of governance’ (Bulmer & Radaelli 2004; Knill & Lehmkuhl 1999). In contrast, directed EU influence in NMS will be less dependent on what “comes down” from the EU level due to three limitations:

- (1) EU external policies are outside the reach of the EU legal framework, which binds member states to implement directives and regulations. In contrast to accession countries that need to transpose all EU policies as a precondition for membership, other states are under no such obligation.
- (2) In the accession process, substantial incentives are the central ‘mechanism’ for Europeanization with membership as the ultimate reward (Schimmelfennig & Sedelmeier 2005). The ENP was created as the most similar framework to membership on offer for NMS. However, it ‘lacks any substantial incentives...’ and has therefore ‘been deprived of any substantial leverage’ (Whitman and Wolff 2010: p.13). Although some incentives such

as visa facilitation agreements are on the table to achieve policy change in NMS (Trauner & Kruse 2008), these incentives are too ‘chunky’ to be used in a fine-grained manner that corresponds with the complex realities of implementing numerous individual projects.

- (3) The EU has no sanctioning mechanism towards NMS that compares with that of the Commission and European Court of Justice in the case of member states or with the threat of withholding membership from accession countries. Although the Council of the European Union (2002: 11) stated that ‘an unjustified lack of cooperation in the joint management of migration flows’ can lead to unspecified penal measures, this procedure has never been applied. Non-compliance did not lead to EU sanctions because individual Commission Directorate Generals (DGs) were protecting their portfolios from contamination by other DG’s policy objectives and broader foreign policy interests prevailed over migration policy interests even in this priority area (Wunderlich 2010: 266-267). This reflects a broader picture of inconsistent application of conditionality in NMS (Schimmelfennig 2009: p.16).

These limitations of EU influence in NMS underscore the role of communication links in the implementation context. Organisational sociology helps to conceptualise the role of communication for implementing organisations to make sense of their environment.

### **The role of communication links in implementation networks of EU external policies**

The basic proposition that communication structures are central to implementation finds support in the literature on organisational sociology. Any organisation that wants to act purposefully in its environment needs to be able to make sense of what is going on around it (Daft & Weick 1984). Since the implementation of EU policies depends on cooperation because the EU does not possess administrative authority in NMS, implementers need to be able to (a) make sense of the policy object “migration”, (b) identify capable cooperation partners and (c) achieve enough mutual understanding to follow through with joint projects. However, addressing these challenges is difficult. Boswell (2009: 170) describes migration as a challenging policy target marked ‘by uncertainty over [the] scale and consequences, as well as controversy over the appropriate means’ to act on it. Lacking or mismatching migration policy approaches in western European countries of immigration in contrast to countries of emigration and transit indicate that organisational structures are not likely to correspond across the EU outer border. Although communication links cannot overcome the identified limitations of EU influence in NMS, they play a crucial role where overarching authority is lacking and uncertainty is great. For example, communication links are necessary to establish

how to allocate and control EU funding, exert authority or legitimate action. They help to introduce EU policy objectives, spread problem perceptions as well as different approaches to dealing with them.

The importance of adequate administrative capacities is well established in the Europeanization and implementation literature (Treib 2008: p.11) and is particularly relevant for organisational sense-making and communication where interaction is less established as across EU borders. Qualified staff needs to have time and resources to establish and maintain communication networks. Relevant information on appropriate approaches, available resources and cooperation partners needs to be identified and processed for informed decision-making to fit the local context.

In contrast to top-down approaches that assume a hierarchical “implementation chain” that under the right conditions could perfectly translate a political decision into a matching outcome (Sabatier & Mazmanian 1979; Gunn 1978), bottom-up approaches dismiss the notion that implementers are mere tools in the hands of political actors. These studies point at pressures and uncertainties that affect implementers (Lipsky 1971; Brunsson 1989) who are mainly concerned about how to create feasible interventions with restricted resources and fit them to a local context while strengthening their position vis-à-vis other organisations. Implementation is consequently a dynamic and inherently political process of negotiation between actors as in Barrett and Fudge’s (1981: p.4) understanding of a ‘policy-action relationship’ in which policy objectives are interpreted, modified and in some cases subverted. Accordingly, the existence of EU external policy objectives says little about whether or how they are put into practice (Bicchi 2010; Wunderlich 2010).

Europeanization processes can alter opportunity structures and lead to ‘differential empowerment of actors’ (Knill & Lehmkuhl 1999: p.2; Risse et al 2001: p.11). Functionally driven implementation networks do not guarantee that communication links are complete or that information circulates evenly as shown in the literature on social networks (Festinger et al 1950). Communication gaps can be assumed within formal structures even where organisations are functionally relevant to each other and especially in an international setting. Organisations that bridge gaps are important for network communication for two reasons. (1) Granovetter (1983) highlights the ‘strength of weak ties’. Highly connected networks provide their members with little “new” information and circulating information soon becomes redundant. In contrast, less frequently used links between groups and with “outsiders” (‘weak ties’) contribute potentially relevant news as relays between them. (2) In areas with a lower density of inter-organisational links, information is scarce and communication gaps can persist over time between groups as ‘structural holes’. Those organisations that bridge

structural holes can become information hubs or brokers of rare information between both sides (Burt 2001: pp.208-211). Brokers pass on information to where it is in demand, where it benefits their own interests and strengthens their position in the network. Communication structures and the behaviour of relays and brokers should have an important role in shaping Europeanization processes.

Much like communication between the trenches depended on the ‘grapevine’ of telegraph wires which were strung around branches and transmitted garbled messages during the US-American Civil War, the translation of EU policy objectives into action in NMS depends on (1) the structure of communication links in implementation networks and (2) organisations’ capabilities to acquire, process and employ information for their purposes. Insights that communication links are central to reducing uncertainty for EU policy interventions in NMS combined with bottom-up accounts that implementers have considerable leeway during the process suggest a closer look at the networks and their central actors. SNA allows searching implementation networks for those organisations that combine capabilities with crucial communication links across the EU outer border and assessing their influence over the implementation process and policy development. The following sections use quantitative and qualitative SNA to identify opportunity structures, such as ‘structural holes’, and potential veto players, relays and brokers within implementation networks. This opens sight to network structures as a whole beyond a narrow focus on individual actors’ relations (Marin & Wellman 2010). SNA hereby responds to demands in the Europeanization literature to account for structural and agential factors although it emphasises actors’ relations over their properties.

### **Implementation networks of EU external migration policy**

EU external migration policy developed from the 1999 European Council in Tampere in response to shortcomings of Union policies to control immigration and asylum (Boswell 2003). Its general policy objectives have since been refined and updated in multi-annual programmes, lately in Stockholm (CEU 2009), and backed by around €1billion of EU-funding between 2001 and 2010 plus another €175million until 2013 (CEC 2006: pp.6-10; 2010: p.143).

Especially in its relations with neighbouring countries, migration policy has become a EU priority. Its hierarchical intentions mean that policy objectives are relatively undifferentiated between NMS in this internally motivated external policy field. Multi-annual action plans state objectives like improving asylum systems, strengthening border control

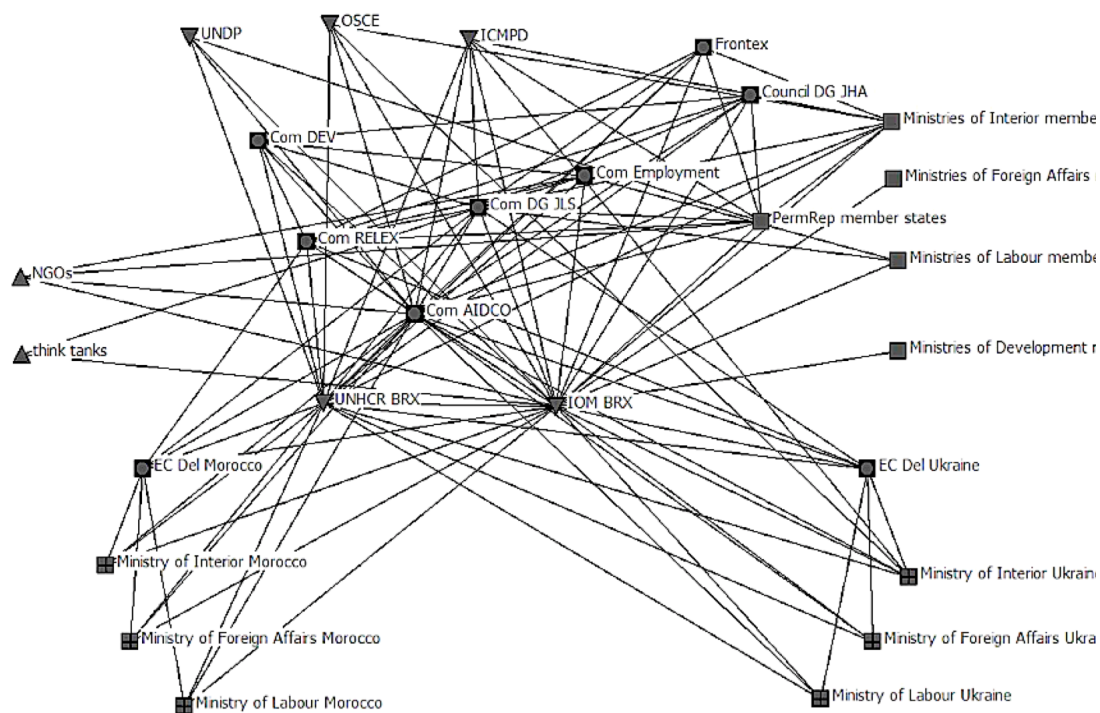


capacities, enhancing document security, readmission programmes and limited initiatives to cooperate on labour migration and linking migration and development policy. Even in Morocco where the EU programme is broadest and touches lightly on migration and development and labour migration initiatives that are not addressed in Ukraine, it follows the aim to restrict migration into EU member states (Wunderlich 2010: pp.254-260). The undifferentiated nature of EU policy objectives also reflects in the structure of the implementation network as illustrated in Figure 1. The policy content seems to have little effect on the Brussels side of communication links in the implementation network for different NMS as portrayed in the case of Ukraine and Morocco.

Interpreting network structures as the one in Figure 1 make further methodological considerations necessary. The visualisation of implementation networks through SNA software homogenises ties between different actors in form and content and presents them as static. Although the situation at the time of data collection may be overrepresented, the visualised network is not a “snapshot” because inter-organisational relations are relatively stable and EU project implementation lasts more than three years. Notwithstanding its limitations the method has the benefit of making networks tangible, casting the view beyond individual relations and evaluating inter-organisational relations within the network as a whole (Marin & Wellman 2010). Qualitative accounts of network interactions allow context sensitive interpretation of social networks (Hollstein 2010: pp.17-18). While quantitative SNA helps to highlight central relationships within the overall network, semi-structured interviews with network members provides systematic and substantial accounts of how actors perceived inter-organisational relations that were contrasted with each other to help interpret quantitative accounts.<sup>1</sup>

Figure 1 shows that the communication links in implementation network to Ukraine and Morocco are largely split along administrative authority. The EU’s links with both countries do not obviously differ despite different political and migration patterns. DG EuropeAid Co-operation Office (AIDCO) occupies a central position as the main implementation arm and financial watchdog for external cooperation programmes. It is responsible for centrally managed instruments such as B7-667, AENEAS and the Thematic Programme for Migration and Asylum that allow targeted migration projects abroad. DG AIDCO functions as information hub between former DG Freedom, Security and Justice (JLS) as the lead DG for external migration policy with a unit of nine officers and DG External Relations (RELEX) responsible for external relations and the networks of 112 Commission Delegations on the one side and implementers in NMS on the other side. Given its administrative capacities and role to programme, co-

Figure 1: Established interorganisational communication links in implementation network of EU external migration policy (towards Ukraine and Morocco)



Source: Own illustration based on surveys and interviews, Brussels December 2007

ordinate and control EU external project output DG AIDCO is more central to the network than DGs RELEX and JLS, who are primarily concerned with policy development but have little involvement in implementation. Other DGs are only involved in policy input and peripheral to communication links in the network such as DGs Development (because of its geographical remit) and Employment (as an almost exclusively internal DG).<sup>2</sup> Non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and think tanks in Brussels are sidelined. In contrast, Delegations are clearly visible as relays between the political DGs RELEX and JLS with Moroccan and Ukrainian state actors some of whom directly liaise with DG AIDCO through individual EU projects. The position of member states and IOs stand out as additional insights from the visualised network.

Member state actors are marginal without direct connection to either implementers in NMS or at EU level apart from links with DGs RELEX and JLS as the central policy developers. In fact, policy experts in the Commission confirmed that member states lack overview of funds and instruments available at EU level and their attention to migration issues is geographically and thematically selective.<sup>3</sup> Council DG JHA is similarly marginal to the network than member states' permanent representations. Given that there are only three migration experts in Council DG JHA, they focus on the preparation of decisions and not on implementation.<sup>4</sup> This confirms the notion that policy-makers such as member states' interior

ministries focus more on decision-making than following up their decisions and subsequent action (Brunsson 1989). Implementers in the Commission are thus far largely undisturbed by EU policy-makers when implementing projects and driving Europeanization processes abroad.

A surprising insight is the high connectedness of specialised IOs in Brussels and with actors in NMS. Not embedded in the administrative structures on either side but operating between them, IOM and UNHCR are not only relays or information hubs. They are also potential communication brokers in the network with best access to information and the capacity to use it for their own interests. In terms of degree centrality, IOM's Brussels office is well positioned to gain information from all sides with 96 percent of all possible communication links to other actors in the network. UNHCR's EU office has 78 percent of possible links in comparison to 81 percent for DG AIDCO and 56 for DG JLS as the next highest. In terms of betweenness centrality, 37 percent of all attempts of network actors to connect with one another through established communication channels would have to go via IOM (UNHCR 14 percent, DG AIDCO 16 percent, DG JLS 5 percent) which indicates their potential for brokerage (on centrality concepts see Freeman 1979). Since visualisation and quantifications can only indicate actors' relative importance, their relations and effects on the implementation process and policy output are scrutinised in more detail below. The following sections analyse communication links in Brussels and non-member states before turning to alternative links through IOs.

### **Assessing the grapevine: Communication links in EU external migration policy**

#### ***Communication links of Commission Directorates General and non-member states***

Commission Delegations and DGs are limited in their capacity to establish and exploit communication links to counter uncertainty about the implementation context. Delegations programme yearly cooperation with state actors, liaise with implementers, monitor and evaluate projects. Although Delegations are the Commission's sensors and mouthpieces vis-à-vis national authorities, they largely rely on the implementation capacity and information from their NMS counterparts for what are challenging, complex and large scale interventions to regulate migration flows or run functioning asylum systems. However, with one policy officer supported by a couple of project administrators, Delegations' capacities are limited for JHA matters (out of which migration policy is only one alongside other priority areas such as

counterterrorism and organised crime).<sup>5</sup>

In Brussels, Commission DG JLS is jointly responsible with DGs RELEX and AIDCO to analyse the migration situation, identify opportunities for cooperation and approve project proposals from state agencies, NGOs and IOs. However, DGs JLS and AIDCO lack funding and staff capacities to visit NMS, identify possible cooperation partners, participate in bilateral negotiations or monitor projects. Despite occasional email or telephone contact with Delegations,<sup>6</sup> continuous information filters otherwise through DG RELEX, whose broad vision of relations with NMS makes migration not its main focus.

The installation of migration contact points and specialised staff circulating between DGs (as observed during this research project) should strengthen communication links at the Commission level. Furthermore, country migration profiles were first introduced as tools to address information gaps with sociological and economic data in 2005. Seemingly-targeted Europeanization processes are however based on mere paper reports rather than a thorough understanding of the complex institutional and volatile migration situation themselves. Therefore, feedback is hindered and existing monitoring and evaluation reports do not usually inform the Commission's programming of interventions due to limited staff capacities.<sup>7</sup>

Despite the functional need for information, communication gaps emerge even in integrated formal structures such as the Commission and make it difficult to address the complex implementation context in NMS. This problem occurred in 2008 when the EU failed to fund a follow-up project to improve the Moroccan asylum service although the 2007 agreement between Morocco and UNHCR offered the opportunity to improve lacking state assistance and address asylum-seekers' needs after more than five years of struggle. The Delegation in Rabat communicated substantial shortcomings in the asylum system to its headquarters. However, Brussels simply assumed that the agreement itself would resolve these shortcomings instead of supporting the continuing implementation of its objectives.<sup>8</sup> Coordination issues between Rabat and Brussels with inadequate feedback and follow-up can hence seriously undermine EU objectives.

The effect of the Lisbon Treaty on this constellation is uncertain although two particular changes raise concerns. Seconded national staff from member states will be working in the new European External Action Service alongside Commission staff in the Delegations. While national staff could raise member states' interest in policy implementation, this would presuppose that the member state's interest in migration relates to the respective NMS. Where a national focus on EU implementation emerges, functioning internal communication structures would have to transmit relevant insights to the responsible level of decision-making. Furthermore, the ENP became part of the remit of DG Enlargement

and is no longer in the portfolio of DG RELEX, which heads the Delegations. Where more actors become involved previously observed tensions between foreign and sectoral policy concerns are likely to multiply and can further complicate existing communication flows.

Since the situation differs between NMS, findings about communication links in EU implementation networks towards Morocco and Ukraine can only be indicative. The literature identifies administrative capabilities, structures and coordination between relevant NMS actors as important mediating factors for EU policy transfer (Lavenex & Schimmelfennig 2009: 804). Where the EU aims at or depends on cooperation with state agencies (such as on asylum procedures, border controls or readmission), central political actors need to approve cooperation. In Morocco, international cooperation depends on the hegemonic Interior Ministry that controls the policy field and other state organisations that might question its migrant control agenda. However, the Ministry's control of the security apparatus can be effectively mobilised once cooperation is agreed. With respect to irregular migration, this has led to restrictive control measures including various expulsions of migrants to Algeria and Mauritania since 2005. In Ukraine in contrast, inter-organisational competition marks a disjointed setup of state actors without meaningful coordination. The Ukrainian asylum service and Interior Ministry are in competition with each other and weak administrative structures and coordination issues caused the asylum system to collapse in 2007. Formal veto players such as the Finance Ministry – responsible for countersigning EU programming agreements – do not hold migration policy expertise. Policy expertise, capacities and effective coordination in NMS are hence crucial for checking migration dynamics, EU budget attributions and policy coherence “on the ground”.<sup>9</sup>

Despite the significant shortcomings mentioned above, communication gaps might be ‘smaller’ in the European ‘neighbourhood’ where EU and individual member states’ relations with NMS are ‘denser’ and actors are more knowledgeable regarding the implementation context than with countries further afield. However given that migration is a cross-border phenomenon and that EU concerns run particularly high regarding illegal migration, the level of interdependence with neighbouring countries is correspondingly higher and so is EU interest regarding migration projects. In consequence, communication gaps with neighbours are likely to matter more for projects from a EU perspective than with other NMS.

### ***Alternative communication links: the role of international organisations***

Only rarely is the role of IOs conceptualised for Europeanization processes in NMS. The EU mobilises IOs to increase the legitimacy of its interventions. However, IOs are not only

‘agents of EU-ization’ as implementers of EU projects because they depend on member states’ funding. IOs are also balancing EU advances through their mandates and broader membership including sending and transit countries of migrants to the EU (Lavenex 2007). As established organisations with their own agendas, IOs can also act autonomously beyond the delegated authority of their member states (Barnett & Finnemore 2004; Loescher 2001). Regarding implementation processes, IOs’ roles are best described as agents and catalysts of Europeanization.

In order for IOs to become communication relays and/or brokers within an implementation network certain external and internal conditions need to be fulfilled. The previous section highlighted that a lack of effective communication links between relevant EU and NMS actors creates structural holes in the network. Lack of expertise and coordination between NMS actors as well as limited capacities and information deficits in Delegations and Commission headquarters worsen their effects. Consequently, structural holes between the EU and NMS actors provide opportunities for alternative communication links to inform EU policy implementation and reduce uncertainties. In order for IOs to bridge structural holes, they need extensive administrative resources that allow information gathering at all end and strategic communication links for implementation.

Since organisations are concerned with their own survival, IOs are not only interested in legitimising their actions and responding to their mandates and members’ demands. IOs are also proactive to maintain and where possible expand their overall capacities (e.g. staff, representations, areas of activity, finances) so that they can improve their possibilities to exist into the future. Daily activities can hereby become ‘decoupled’ from their original mandates (Meyer & Rowan 1977).

The following analysis focuses on IOM and UNHCR as the main IOs in the policy field and EU implementation network to exemplify how they can bridge structural holes and use inter-organisational communication links for their own interests. UNHCR gets involved in asylum capacity-building or providing status examinations while organising legal support and other direct services to asylum-seekers with help of local NGOs. IOM engages in diverse areas such as border management, anti-trafficking, labour market programmes and diaspora relations. Although both organisations have acquired a crucial role for EU external migration policy in bringing funding, expertise, beneficiaries and implementers together since the late 1990, IOM’s broader and more flexible mandate as well as its superior administrative capacities make it more “successful” than UNHCR.

The Commission was IOM’s fourth largest funding body, contributing US\$63.9million or eight percent of its operational budget in 2009.<sup>10</sup> Given that 96.5 percent

of IOM's budget is based on project funding, the following statement of an IOM official squares: 'We rely on EU-funding. Offices can be opened or closed depending on the operational budget coming in'.<sup>11</sup> Financial dependence ensures that communication links to the Commission do not break off and that IOM is not too critical of EU policy objectives. It interprets both its mission statement and EU objectives broadly to make it not only a flexible service provider to its donors but also a proactive seeker of funding opportunities to expand its activities and sustain its staff. With US\$126.1million, the Commission is also UNHCR's second largest donor in 2009 corresponding to 8.0 percent of its governmental donor contributions.<sup>12</sup> Despite financial dependence for its operations, UNHCR can claim a more independent standing vis-à-vis the EU as guardian of the 1951 Geneva Convention and its 1967 protocol.

IOM and UNHCR bridge structural communication holes between state actors in NMS, NGOs and EU organisations by means of their widespread representations in almost every country on the globe. Their networks provide supreme access to information and links to the EU, governmental and non-governmental actors. With 460 field missions and 7,000 staff implementing 2,360 projects worldwide in 2010 following its official website, IOM is the policy specialist. IOM's extensive capacities in comparison to UNHCR and the Commission become apparent in Ukraine where it has 120 staff compared with 20 for UNHCR and only one JHA expert at the Delegation. Neither member states with their limited embassy staff and limited geographical experience nor NGOs can match IOM's capacity and expertise. How do these capacities play out for IOM and UNHCR in the implementation networks? What effect do they have on policy output and the implementation process?

### **International organisations between Brussels...**

Information gathering through IOM's and UNHCR's global networks helps to follow local developments, design project proposals and set up joint operations. They broaden their existing experience in terms of approaches, procedures, local context and contacts and build up ever more expert knowledge that they can feed through their communication links into the implementation process. Representations in Brussels help IOM and UNHCR to carry their policy proposals straight into the centre of the network to the Commission. Personal networks are also fostered by recruitment of Commission officials to their Brussels representations as I observed in various cases. When UNHCR and IOM are invited to provide advice and expertise to EU institutions, this provides feedback loops between their experience in implementation and EU policy development. For example, IOM runs EU-funded 'trial'

versions of circular labour migration between Columbia and Spain since 2007.

Professional and personal networks build up expertise about the complex competitive EU bidding system and implementation requirements that many NGOs are lacking. Since considerable administrative and financial resources are needed for the 18-month application process with an average success rate of one in six, established communication links with major donor governments make it easier for IOM and UNHCR to mobilise the required 20 percent of co-financing for EU projects.<sup>13</sup> Their superior communication links therefore provide them with advantages that fit with the Commission's preference for dealing with "more professional" and financially secure organisations as evaluation reports reveal (ECRE 2008: 18-19). Consequently, between 2001 and 2006 IOM and UNHCR secured every third project under thematic instruments of external migration policy in competitive bidding. Approximately 120 NGOs, IOs and other governmental agencies were left to share the rest of the funding amongst each other.

IOM's pro-activeness and broker role paired with the Commission's disconnectedness from implementation in NMS produce at times unease amongst its staff and national donors.<sup>14</sup> These reservations are based on the Commission's apparent lack of control over implemented action and its dependence on IOM for project implementation because no other competitor has comparable communication links and access to resources in order to can carry out comparatively elaborate migration interventions in NMS.<sup>15</sup> IOM's proactiveness becomes apparent in the wide interpretation of its mandate. For example, IOM is providing support to EU Election Observation Missions in NMS. In order to justify these activities, IOM constructs complex narratives that election support activities help democratisation and peace-building, contribute to economic development and ultimately increase the engagement of diasporas and incentivise their return. In conclusion, the reader learns that election support enhances migration management (IOM n.d.) in an apparent attempt to link 'decoupled' practices to its widely interpreted mandate (Meyer & Rowan 1977).

In contrast, UNHCR's mandate as guardian of international refugee law make the EU receptive for critical comments because it provides legitimacy at the planning stage and valuable first-hand information (Klaauw 2002). However, even UNHCR's direct communication links to Brussels do not guarantee mutual understanding and the Commission's lack of exposure to direct information from NMS can cause unrealistic expectations about project feasibility. For example, the EU-funded project 'Improving asylum management' in Ukraine had the aim to improve legislation and reception facilities in line with international standards, to train officials and to provide an asylum database. While the Commission claimed that UNHCR did not deliver and considered the project a failure,



underlying obstacles to implementation were: (1) UNHCR's draft legislation was not tabled in the Ukrainian parliament; (2) high turnover in state agencies hindered staff training; (3) property disputes between ministries made planned facilities unavailable; and (4) while UNHCR provided equipment, the government did not put personnel in charge to use it.<sup>16</sup>

UNHCR's perception of the implementation *problematique* is hereby interesting. UNHCR sees itself as a 'mediator' for 'channelling funding' and 'not [as] the implementer of projects'. A senior UNHCR official stated, 'The ultimate responsibility for implementation lies within the government. If the government fails to implement, the project fails. For the Commission, UNHCR is the implementation partner as the contracted party. For them, the government is the beneficiary.'<sup>17</sup> This example underscores that organisational sense-making and communication are crucial for targeted Europeanization processes. Firstly, the work of the Delegation did not prevent that unrealistic expectations took over in Brussels. Secondly, monitoring and evaluation did not manage to control project output and thirdly, communication links between UNHCR and the Commission failed to produce mutually acceptable accounts about project performance and objectives. This highlights the contextual uncertainties as well as the complexities and interdependencies in the implementation process that place Europeanization processes in NMS often beyond EU control.

### **... and non-member states**

IOM and UNHCR have officially been charged to organise and facilitate the transfer of experience between EU and NMS government officials. The EU finances multilateral consultative processes such as the Söderköping Process in Eastern Europe since 2001 hosted by UNHCR or the '5+5 Dialogue' in the Mediterranean since 2002 hosted by IOM. These initiatives highlight that the EU recognises the importance of establishing and maintaining communication flows in a structured way. Although the effects of the Council's (2009) call for greater dialogue and coordination with NMS are as yet unclear, communication gaps are likely to persist given the observed limitations of EU influence, new EU actors, lacking NMS capacities and coordination issues on both sides. EU capacity-building exercises in NMS have struggled to address these issues since the beginning of implementing EU external migration policy in 2001. The escalating migration crisis of fleeing migrant workers and asylum seekers from Tunisia and Libya shows the EU's limitations regarding implementation and its reliance on IOM and UNHCR as central implementers to address the migration situation in NMS.

Despite occasional communication failures, the success of IOs to bridge structural holes often translates into success to find funding for their own operations. For example,

where state actors are not willing to cooperate, the Commission invites specifically intermediaries such as UNHCR and IOM for ‘joint management’ of projects on its behalf.

Far from only being reactive to Commission approaches, IOs profit from the ‘strength of weak ties’ (Granovetter 1983) between Brussels and NMS due to their widespread and fine-tuned communication links. IOM and UNHCR manage to mount projects “through the backdoor” that fall under EU objectives and channel EU-funding to NMS authorities and NGOs. Under the European Neighbourhood Policy Instrument, the largest budget line for projects in neighbouring countries, local authorities need to launch an official request for cooperation. If the requested project matches the EU country strategy then financial support is usually granted. Local authorities are however often unaware of funding opportunities and procedures and therefore approach IOM for advice and consultation on designing projects.

Cooperation with IOM also runs in the opposite direction. IOM representations suggest projects to local authorities that are in line with EU-funding objectives using their knowledge of the local context. In order to attract funding for its own representations and for future expansion, IOM generates interests in projects by lobbying for support from local authorities. For example, IOM created awareness among local authorities about “inadequate” medical facilities in Ukrainian asylum reception centres, proposed to fill this gap, advised them on the EU-funding application and carried out the project.<sup>18</sup> Similarly, IOM held seminars with Moldovan authorities to explore the use of remittances and links with the Moldovan Diaspora in which IOM made concrete proposals such as the installation of a ‘Ministry of Diaspora’. IOM then drafted a project for the authorities that attracted EU-funding.<sup>19</sup> IOM therefore introduces problem perceptions and simultaneously proposes solutions by means of its superior communication links that might otherwise not have ended up on the agenda of local actors. This underscores the importance of IOs as intermediaries in intergovernmental communication on migration as a base for policy transfer and socialisation (Thouez & Channac 2006: 384-385). In a similar vein, UNHCR contributes to spreading EU problem perceptions among NGOs in NMS by channelling EU-funding and engaging them in actions and policy objectives that they hitherto resented. The constructed nature of problem perceptions, solutions and interpretation of EU policy objectives puts the notion of objectifiable ‘fit’ and ‘misfit’ with local context in question and underlines social constructivist notions that IOs can fix meaning (Barnett and Finnemore 2004).

## **Conclusions**

The NMS context poses challenges that limit EU control over implementation processes and

policy output more than in member and accession countries. Under these conditions, inter-organisational communication and network structures are crucial mediating factors in addressing uncertainties about cooperation partners and other information deficits. Empirical research in the area of external migration policy shows that the structure of communication links opens up opportunities especially for IOs to bridge communication gaps between NMS and Brussels. This allows them to ‘manage’ implementation knowledge and shape output confirming the influence of implementers on policy. In specific, IOM and UNHCR are important intermediaries as relays, information hubs and brokers of Europeanization in NMS.

The grapevine metaphor contributes to Europeanization studies because it highlights communication links as a precondition for implementation and sets focus on structures beyond the analysis of individual actor relations and the narrow realm of interactions between state actors. SNA provides helpful tools to identify crucial actors, trace communication networks and set focus on actor relations rather than properties. Implementation dynamics indicate that Europeanization in NMS corresponds to conceptualisations of bottom-up implementation as an interactive process in which policy is not set in stone in Brussels but constantly negotiated. Although policy objectives follow the broader direction of EU documents, implementers have considerable leeway to shape policy output beyond EU control. If this is the case in centrally managed EU programmes in a priority policy area such as external migration policy then Europeanization is unlikely to follow a hierarchical process controlled by Brussels in other external policy areas where programmes are decentralised or seen as less important.

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## Notes

<sup>1</sup> Among others, semi-structured interviews explored actors’ influence on EU implementation dynamics, relations with other implementers and their experience with programming, monitoring, evaluation and feedback. In addition, each interviewee was asked to fill in a survey how important they rated their links with other implementers. Interview coding was carried out via qualitative data software NVIVO. Interviews and survey combined provided data about communication links that was processed via UCINET and Netdraw for quantitative social network analysis. Data and copies of the interview schedule and survey are available from the author.

<sup>2</sup> In 2010, DG JLS was split into DG Justice and DG Home Affairs, which bears responsibility for migration policy. DG Development is responsible for policies towards African, Caribbean and Pacific countries while DG RELEX covers all other states. Due to its responsibility for the ENP as the main area where external migration policy is implemented,

focus is set on DG RELEX.

<sup>3</sup> Interviews DG RELEX, 7 December 2007 and AIDCO, 11 December 2007.

<sup>4</sup> Interview Council DG JHA, 10 December 2007.

<sup>5</sup> Interviews Commission Delegations Ukraine, 20 April 2008 and Morocco, 21 November 2008.

<sup>6</sup> Interviews DG AIDCO and JLS, 4 December 2008 and Commission Delegation Morocco, 21 November 2008.

<sup>7</sup> Interview DG AIDCO, 4 December 2007.

<sup>8</sup> Interview UNHCR Morocco, 2 December 2008 and Commission Delegation Morocco, 21 November 2008.

<sup>9</sup> Interviews Commission Delegations Ukraine, 20 April 2008 and Morocco, 21 November 2008, DG AIDCO 11 December 2007, IOM 3 April 2008 and UNHCR 2 December 2008.

<sup>10</sup> Including contributions from EU member states, IOM's dependence is even greater with a total of USD219.8million or 22 percent following IOM's Financial Report 2009, pp. 4, 44.

<sup>11</sup> Interview IOM Brussels, 19 December 2007.

<sup>12</sup> Contributions of EU member states and the Commission amount to 39.8 percent of the governmental contributions with US\$636million (UNHCR, Donors 2009, <http://www.unhcr.org/pages/49c3646c26c.html>, retrieved 24 July 2010).

<sup>13</sup> Interview IOM Brussels, 19 December 2007.

<sup>14</sup> Interviews DGs RELEX and JLS, 7 December 2007 and Italian Embassy to Morocco, 19 November 2008.

<sup>15</sup> Interviews DG JLS, 7 December 2007 and IOM Brussels, 19 December 2007.

<sup>16</sup> Interviews UNHCR Morocco, 12 December 2007 and Ukraine, 17 April 2008.

<sup>17</sup> Interview UNHCR Ukraine, 17 April 2008.

<sup>18</sup> Interviews IOM Brussels, 19 December 2007 and Ukraine, 3 April 2008.

<sup>19</sup> See [http://www.iom.md/materials/press\\_060628.html](http://www.iom.md/materials/press_060628.html) and [http://www.iom.md/materials/13\\_diaspora\\_seminar\\_recommend\\_eng.pdf](http://www.iom.md/materials/13_diaspora_seminar_recommend_eng.pdf), [http://www.iom.md/materials/press/press\\_release\\_03\\_07\\_2008\\_eng.pdf](http://www.iom.md/materials/press/press_release_03_07_2008_eng.pdf)

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