



PRESS RELEASE OF WORKING PAPER 1.5

POLITICAL AND POLITICAL ECONOMY LITERATURE ON THE ENP: ISSUES AND IMPLICATIONS

January 2012

OBJECTIVE

This working paper deals with the political dimension of the ENP. It analyses the rationale and motives behind the establishment of the ENP and the historical and political-economic dynamics that have shaped its structure, priorities and instruments. Through a critical review of the political and international relations literature on the topic, it reviews a number of issues that have been addressed in the academic literature. This press release will give a brief overview of the most important conclusions of the working paper. Since the goal of this report is only to provide an overview of existing research in order to inform the SEARCH project, policy implications of this report are not further explored.

MAIN RESULTS

This working paper deals with the political dimension of the ENP. It analyses the rationale and motives behind the establishment of the ENP and the historical and political-economic dynamics that have shaped its structure, priorities and instruments. Through a critical review of the political and international relations literature on the topic, it discusses how the ENP reflects the functioning of the EU as a normative power seeking to shape institutional and political-economic structures in its external periphery and to what extent it represents a projection of EU-centred interests to this periphery seeking to guarantee political and economic stability inside and across its borders. Issues of path dependence are central in this analysis, as the ENP is considered to exhibit strong continuities from the process of accession conditionality

applied during the so-called Eastern Enlargement. In turn, this poses a number of limitations to the policy. Conditionality without accession, what in the literature is referred to as "all but institutions" or "conditionality-lite", weakens the transformative power of the EU and its ability to instigate policy and institutional convergence across its borders. Added to this is an inherent tension between the wider normative objectives of the EU as a democratising force and narrower interests relating to security and economic integration / access to markets (including access to energy resources).

The ambiguity of the process, the reluctance of the EU to commit to a specific status/destination for its neighbouring countries and the internal fragmentation of the ENP along bilateral ('advanced status', 'special relations', etc) and regional lines (Union for the Mediterranean, Eastern Partnerships, Black Sea Synergy, etc), despite its seemingly unified framework, is also seen as a double-edged sword: on the one hand allowing the EU to adapt its policy approach to country-specific circumstances but on the other hand weakening the internal coherence and external consistence and credibility of the policy and of the neighbourhood process at large – also allowing recipient countries to engage in the process on a selective a-la carte fashion. Within this context, the ability of the ENP to stimulate economic development and convergence in its external periphery becomes questionable, as the process of economic integration becomes fragmented and commitment to reforms the may be deemed necessary for economic development to become balanced and sustainable becomes weaker and subject to domestic, for the neighbourhood countries, political and political-economic contingencies.