



universität
wien

MASTERARBEIT / MASTER'S THESIS

Titel der Masterarbeit / Title of the Master's Thesis

„External Perception of the EU in the Eastern
Partnership Countries and Russia“

verfasst von / submitted by

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angestrebter akademischer Grad / in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree

Master of Arts (MA)

Wien, 2018 / Vienna, 2018

Studienkennzahl lt. Studienblatt /
degree programme code as it appears
on
the student record sheet:

A 066 824

Studienrichtung lt. Studienblatt /
degree programme as it appears on
the student record sheet:

Masterstudium Politikwissenschaft

Betreut von / Supervisor:

Univ.-Prof. Markus Wagner, PhD

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Abbreviations

AA	= Association Agreement
cf.	= confer (lat = "compare")
CFSP	= Common Foreign and Security Policy
Cogn mobil	= Cognitive mobilisation
DCFTA	= Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Agreement
EAEU	= Eurasian Economic Union
EaP	= Eastern Partnership
ECU	= Eurasian Customs Union
ed(s).	= editor(s)
EEAS	= European External Action Service
ENP	= European Neighbourhood Policy
EPC	= European Political Cooperation
EU	= European Union
GDP	= Gross Domestic Product
ibid.	= ibidem (lat = "the same")
NGO	= Non-Governmental Organisation
OLS	= Ordinary Least Squares
PD	= Public Diplomacy
qtd. in	= quoted in
TEU	= Treaty on European Union
UfM	= Union for the Mediterranean
UN	= United Nations
USSR	= Union of Soviet Socialist Republics
VFP	= Visa Facilitation Programme
VIF	= Variance Inflation Factor
WTO	= World Trade Organisation

1. INTRODUCTION

The European Union has tried to play a greater role in the international sphere in recent years. Since the enlargement of the EU in 2004/2007, Brussels focuses especially on the relations with countries who became new neighbours in the East. The ultimate goal of the EU is to create a stable and prosperous region on its eastern borders (European Commission 2003: 3). As we know, this attempt has not been very successful so far, considering major crises in the last decade like the war in Georgia in 2008 or the on-going situation in Ukraine. One problem of the Union is that foreign elites as well as the general public often do not understand its goals and actions. As put by Lynch:

[...] people outside Europe are not certain what the Union stands for or whether it matters. [...] The EU must speak to the world clearly, and it must start listening to what the world thinks about it. (Lynch 2005: 11).

Therefore, it seems crucial to listen to the people who live in this region and learn what they think about the European Union and why they do so. While internal perceptions have been tracked since the regular Eurobarometer surveys were established in the 1970s, opinion polls from foreign countries on attitudes towards the EU have only recently been seriously considered. The number of academic publications on external perceptions is still quite low.

The following research questions will guide us through this thesis and are the outcome of the research interest:

- I. *What factors determine the public external perception of the EU in the countries of the Eastern Partnership (Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, Moldova, Ukraine) and Russia?*
- II. *To what extent do these factors resemble each other or differ in the examined countries?*

These questions will be answered by two main means: First, a review of literature on public perceptions will help to create hypotheses. These hypotheses will then be tested using quantitative methods. Ultimately, descriptive statistics about the public image of the EU and multiple regression models with several predictors will be produced.

Scholars have worked with perceptions in the International Relations since the 1950s. The theoretical basis for this interest is the image theory, that assumes people act based on how they perceive the world and not with regards to how the world actually “is”. Unfortunately, there is

no commonly recognised definition of the term “perception” in the literature dealing with perceptions of international actors. This can be explained by the heterogeneity of the approaches in the studies of (external) perception and the various foci on media, elites or citizens (cf. Mišík 2013: 446). Nevertheless, a coherent definition for this central term is necessary.

For the purpose of this study, perceptions are defined as the “result of the subjective or psychological cognition of the observer rather than the objective reflection of the object that is being observed” (Shiming, 2010: 269, qtd. in: Chaban/Holland 2014: 8).

In the international sphere, perceptions can be defined as follows:

From the international relations perspective, perception is a constellation of features that cluster together in a meaningful way [...], focussing on the subjective notions of ‘self’ and ‘other’ that mutually shape images and expectations of actors, influenced by various factors (e.g. values, culture, personal experiences). The reaction to one’s otherness can translate into positive or negative attitudes (European Commission 2015: 13).

On the one hand – following this definition – the evaluation of the “other” matters: Perceptions are shaped by the perceived qualities of the actor being judged. In addition, perceptions are influenced “by the perceived developments both within an international actor and outside it” (Chaban, Holland 2014: 8). More precisely, global concerns, such as security issues or climate change, are a relevant factor in shaping the external views on the EU. On the other hand, the “self” plays a crucial role: perceptions can be cohort-specific and therefore depend on the social group an individual belongs to (e.g. elites, the general public, students, migrants, etc.) (cf. *ibid.*). External perceptions are “divergent on different issue-areas” and time can impact them. The time-dimension that affects external perceptions can be: 1) short, as a response to an event, 2) the result to a longer period of time (25-50 years), or 3) a historic event, like cultural developments over centuries (cf. European Commission 2015: 14).

Perceptions measured so far have tended to be in one of three types: elite opinion, public opinion and media. A very recent and still-underused source for perceptions studies is social media content (cf. Chaban/Holland 2015: 677). This paper focuses on public opinion as the primary resource for its analysis.

Since the dependent variable used in this study asks for the “image” people have of the EU (see description of variables in the appendix), we should find a short definition for the term that is closely related to the concept of perception. Images in the theory of international relations in political science “are patterns or configurations of coherent beliefs about the character, intentions, motives, and emotions attributed to or associated with the outgroup as a whole” (Alexander/Brewer/Livingston 2005: 782).

These different images people have, are created through their “own identity, place and perspective in the world” (Harris 2010: 159). In other words, the image is dependent on where a person is located, what social group they belong to, etc.

To summarise, this paper defines external perception as individual attitudes of the public in a country outside the European Union towards it.

From a European perspective, one may wonder why it should be necessary to examine the opinion of a public outside the EU. Why should this matter for Brussels and the Europeans? Lucarelli names five reasons for scholars to examine external public perceptions of the European Union: **First**, it challenges the EU’s own understanding of itself, since others often have quite different assessments. For instance, while the EU is often described as a normative actor promoting positive values, those outside may have a different perception. **Second**, European identity is being constructed in interaction with others who have a certain perception of the EU, so it is important to understand the perceptions that drive those interactions. **Third**, it helps to get a broader understanding of the EU’s role in the world. **Fourth**, it can contribute to increased effectiveness of EU actions towards external partners. **Finally**, studying external perceptions can help overcome Eurocentric views in literature, if opinions of non-Europeans are also considered (cf. Lucarelli 2014: 2). As Bachmann and Müller (2015: 6) argue, the EU has a “problematic history of positioning itself as a ‘better’ global actor and of trying to export its model of political-economic organisation”. Listening to others can open up different perspectives on this standing.

Chaban and Holland add another reason why perceptions studies are crucial for the European Union:

As the Union does not possess any of the traditional advantages of statehood, the importance of international perception for the EU is arguably higher than for a state actor [...] and perceptions of the EU’s importance is the key for a visible international profile [...] (Chaban/Holland 2015: 682).

In line with Lucarelli’s second reason, the two scholars note that a positive image of the EU can trigger citizens’ pride and a better identification with the EU. This may lead to an increase of legitimacy of the Union (ibid). Political identity is not only constructed inside – through sharing of common values or a common past – but also through the meaning others attach to the EU on the global stage. Hence, the EU’s role in the world is not only determined by itself, but to a large extent by the position outsiders see it in (cf. Elgström/Chaban 2015: 17/20). In

addition – echoing Lucarelli’s fourth point, understanding outside perspective can help to improve communication and foreign policy actions (cf. Chaban/Holland 2010: 128).

Referring to Lucarelli’s first point, Tsuruoka (2008: 7) introduces the term “expectation deficit” for the gap between the EU’s own understanding of itself as major power in various fields versus the perception of other actors. This deficit can be observed particularly in relations with global players like the United States, Russia or Japan. They might acknowledge the EU’s capabilities in terms of economy and international trade, but often have little awareness of the EU as a foreign policy or security actor.

In this sense, the thesis’ goal is to contribute to a better understanding of the outsiders’ opinion of the European Union. This also means that the focus of this paper will still be from an EU perspective. Hence, the assessment of the EU is the core of this thesis. However, it is even more important what conclusions Brussels could draw from the results.

The regional focus on the eastern neighbours is justified by various reasons. First, the proximity of the countries to the European Union border makes it more likely that the opinion of the people living there can significantly affect the building of the EU identity (cf. Bretherton/Vogler: 133).

Second, the selection of countries ensures a certain comparability between them since all are struggling to become fully developed democracies. In addition, they share a Soviet/communist past and therefore almost 70 years of common history. Third, with the exception of Russia, all states participate in the Eastern Partnership framework with the EU. Fourth, Ukraine, Georgia, Moldova, Armenia and Azerbaijan have had territorial conflicts with Russia. Armenia and Azerbaijan have had additional conflicts with each other. Only Belarus stands out with stable borders since the end of the Soviet Union. Fifth, the high tensions in the region due to the Ukraine crisis and the mutual sanctions between Brussels and Moscow made the EU focus its foreign policy on the region to the east of its border. This crisis has affected the relations of Brussels with all countries in this region and has also changed the public attitudes towards the EU of the people living there.

There are major cleavages in the nature of the relationship between the EU and Russia. On the one hand, some countries have signed Association Agreements with the Union in the last few years. On the other hand, there are countries in the region that have moved away from Brussels and have close ties with Russia. This rivalry between Brussels and Moscow for the region is an important reason why Russia is included in the sample of countries for the study in this thesis.

Although Russia does not participate in the Eastern Partnership (EaP) it is still considered an important player by the EU with influence on the development of the partnership with the region. All countries included in the EaP have either close political and economic relations with Russia as with Belarus and Armenia, or they are simply dependent on Russia's energy like Ukraine or Georgia. The latter two countries are also facing violent, pro-Russian separatist movements on their territory. Many citizens of these countries have close contacts with their huge neighbour through family ties or a common language. This makes it impossible to analyse the EaP without considering Russia and its interdependence with the participating countries. Hence, this study includes the six countries of the Eastern Partnership – Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia and Moldova – plus Russia.

Since the context of relationships with both Brussels and Moscow matters in this region, country's standpoint in this rivalry will be discussed. The different circumstances might explain a country-level variation in the explanatory variables for the perception of the EU, as the hypotheses will state later.

In order to understand relations of the Union with all seven countries in the last two decades it is necessary to address the actorness of the EU on the international stage as well as the development of the framework of the European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP), that ultimately led to the creation of the EaP. Therefore, the first step of this thesis is to provide some background information about the international role of the EU and the development of its neighbourhood policy.

Then, different theories on International Relations will be discussed, and I will argue that constructivism is the most suitable theory to analyse external public opinion on the EU. Following, it is important to address theories of public opinion. One chapter will be devoted to the concept of political support towards an object like the European Union. Next, the development of foreign policy attitudes will be in the centre of attention. Another part describes the academic literature on external perceptions that has been published so far.

After all of this, I present four major approaches that have been found in the literature to have the most explanatory power regarding public attitudes towards the EU. These are utilitarian considerations, the cueing theory, cognitive mobilisation and identity-driven evaluations. These approaches are the basis for the creation and operationalisation of hypotheses, which will be presented next. Thereafter, I will describe the research design and explain why a country's

relations with the EU and Russia respectively matter. Then, I will describe the methods of this paper.

The last chapter before discussing empirical evidence will be devoted to the data used to conduct the analysis of external perceptions in Russia and the Eastern Partnership countries. This thesis must address the fact that data from semi-democratic or authoritarian regimes can be problematic. I will then set out how the data of the seven countries should be interpreted differently regarding relations with the EU and Russia. The Eurobarometer will be described, since the used data – the European Neighbourhood Barometer – is based on this survey, and the main characteristics of the European Neighbourhood Barometer will be named. Following this, I will describe how the hypotheses can be operationalised using this dataset. A comprehensive list with all details of the dependent and the independent variables can be found in the appendix. The empirical part of this paper will start with descriptive statistics showing the general attitudes towards the European Union of the people in the seven countries. Furthermore, the pre- and post-Ukraine crisis orientation towards the EU will be compared in order to make visible the opinion shifts. Next, regression models identify the effect of different sets of independent variables on the perception of the EU. Finally, the summary of findings chapter sums up the main outcomes of this thesis and the conclusion connects the results with the discussed theoretical concepts and offers some options for Brussels to interpret these outcomes for their own purposes.

1.1. EU as an international actor

The European Union can be described as a unique actor regarding its combination of state and non-state characteristics. Davis Cross (2010) uses the term “quasi-federal entity” to label this quality of the Union. Additionally, the EU is widely defined as an international giant in economic terms, while its foreign policy capacities are commonly seen to be of minor importance (cf. Bachmann/Müller 2015: 3).

With the Treaty of Lisbon in 2007 the EU tried to strengthen its actorness on the international scene resulting in major changes to the Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP). In spite of reforms before 2007, the foreign policy of the EU remained fragmented and insufficiently coherent. Hence, the Lisbon Treaty brought several institutional and legal improvements. First, the EU was given its own legal personality, a move to increase the EU’s visibility for external partners. The pillar system disappeared and instead of unanimity, a qualified-majority voting system was introduced on most matters of foreign policy. The Common Foreign and Security

Policy was incorporated into the Treaty on European Union. Furthermore, the Lisbon Treaty created two new important actors on the international stage for the EU: The High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy and the President of the European Council. Both officials were intended to ensure a more coherent foreign policy (cf. Fröhlich 2014: 13-15). In addition, the European External Action Service (EEAS) became the administrative tool for the High Representative, charged with handling external communication and coordination (European Commission 2015: 15).

1.1.1. EU and Public Diplomacy

After the Treaty of Lisbon the EU focused more on its Public Diplomacy (PD) efforts. Public Diplomacy is defined as “the process by which international actors seek to accomplish the goals of their foreign policy by engaging with foreign publics” (Cull 2008: 31). Therefore, unlike traditional diplomacy, PD addresses the citizens of foreign states rather than diplomats or other high officials. If applied effectively, it can affect the public perception of the PD’s origin country or organisation in a positive way. PD means not only trying to influence public opinions, but also to listen to a foreign population. It is then a sort of “two-way communication” (Chaban/Vernygora 2013: 69).

The EU used to show rather poor performance in PD as a result of unsuccessful information campaigns and unclear responsibilities (Courtier 2011: 70). With the Lisbon Treaty, the EU tackled this issue by investing more money into its image abroad. The European Commission defines Public Diplomacy as follows:

It seeks to promote EU interests by understanding, informing and influencing. It means clearly explaining the EU’s goals, policies and activities and fostering understanding of these goals through dialogue with individual citizens, groups, institutions and the media (European Commission 2007: 13).

For the 2014-2020 period, the EU budget contains more than 950 million Euro for activities in partner countries, 85 million Euro are reserved for PD in these countries. This money is used to create partnerships with local stakeholders, engage with the civil society and students, set up cooperation with different organisations and support cultural exchanges (cf. European Commission 2014). In this way, the EU tries to promote key EU policies and core values globally (cf. EEAS 2016). If the foreign public finds these norms attractive, the opinion towards the EU should ameliorate. Consequently, at least in theory, the governments are also more willing to create a positive relationship with the Union (cf. Davis Cross/Melissen 2013: 5).

The European Union invests in PD in neighbouring countries that are covered by the framework of the European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP), which will be in the focus of the next chapter. There are several tools that the EU uses to get in touch with the civil society of these countries and a range of programs for students, business owners, NGOs, journalists and many other groups (cf. Kirova n.d.).

Despite these efforts, the image of the EU has faced several problems in recent years, such as the Eurozone crisis in 2010-2012 and migration issues beginning in 2015 (cf. Davis Cross/La Porte 2016: 257). In addition, the EU finds it necessary to challenge alleged disinformation campaigns from Russia since the outbreak of the Ukraine crisis (cf. European Union 2015: 0). In fact, the Directorate-General for External Policies of the European Parliament admits in an analysis of the EU's communication skills that EU communications "have often been faceless, anonymous, technocratic, unemotional" (Directorate-General for External Policies 2016: 30).

This study's goal is not to assess whether the Public Diplomacy of the EU performs well, which would require a different approach. However, this thesis can be used as a tool to find out where efforts in the Eastern Partnership Countries plus Russia can be focused for the greatest impact. Any patterns that arise among people that view the Union more negatively could allow the EU to better focus their PD efforts. As was mentioned earlier, listening to a foreign public constitutes an important part of PD. This study will go beyond mere listening and will try to interpret the results of an opinion survey in a sense that could help to improve PD.

1.1.2. The European Neighbourhood Policy

The European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP) is a key part of the EU's foreign policy. In 2003, the European Commission argued that the ENP should "avoid drawing new dividing lines in Europe and promote stability and prosperity within and beyond the new borders of the Union" (European Commission 2003: 3). Its aim is to create a "ring of friends" around Europe (Gstöhl 2017: 3). Article 8 of the Treaty on European Union formulates the desired result of the Neighbourhood Policy as follows:

The Union shall develop a special relationship with neighbouring countries, aiming to establish an area of prosperity and good neighbourliness, founded on the values of the Union and characterised by close and peaceful relations based on cooperation (European Union 2016: Article 8).

The necessity to establish a new approach with the neighbours emerged in the course of the accession of 10 countries to the European Union in 2004. As a consequence, the European borders shifted eastwards and an intensified cooperation with the new neighbours was needed.

The idea was to offer more attractive instruments for a closer relationship than the existing association agreements (cf. Kratochvíl/Tulmets 2010: 71).

From the beginning, the ENP was seen as an alternative for accession. Because Eastern European countries like Ukraine or Moldova lack a membership perspective – at least in the short- and middle-term, the ENP should provide other incentives to cooperate with the EU (cf. Schimmelfennig 2015: 19).

Although the ENP offers no membership perspective, its instruments are very much modelled on the enlargement process. This concerns already known methods like benchmarking, monitoring, reporting and political conditionality as well as technical and financial assistance (cf. Gstöhl 2017: 3). The EU applies these approaches in Partnership and Cooperation Agreements, Association Agreements, Country Reports, Action Plans and many other instruments (cf. Weidenfeld/Wessels 2016: 189).

The EU constitutes the biggest financial source in its neighbourhood. For the 2007-2013 period the European Neighbourhood and Partnership Instrument budget contained 11.2 billion Euro, for the 2014-2020 period over 15 billion Euro (cf. Manoli 2017: 133).

The history of the European Neighbourhood Policy began in the late 1990s, when the Eastern enlargement of the EU became more concrete. In this time, the EU started to talk about a policy of “Wider Europe” with the aim of preparing countries for a potential accession perspective. The EU launched the Common Strategies in 1999 to enhance the relation with Russia and Ukraine. In the South the EU applied the Common Strategies in Mediterranean and Arab Countries in the aftermath of the second Intifada and the terrorist attacks of 2001 (cf. Kratochvíl/Tulmets 2010: 61-62). In fact, the so-called “Barcelona process” started a policy of dialogue and association with Mediterranean countries as early as 1995 (cf. Bergmann 2015: 329). On the eastern dimension, the EU especially looked for a new strategy towards Belarus, Moldova and Ukraine (cf. Kratochvíl/Tulmets 2010: 63)

In 2003, the “Wider Europe” concept was rebranded, resulting in the birth of the European Neighbourhood Policy (cf. *ibid*: 66). While the former concept had included Russia, Moscow refused to be part of the newly established European Neighbourhood Policy. The Kremlin pointed to its unique geopolitical position and rejected such a common approach. Hence, the EU had to create a different relationship with Russia, which ended in the launch of the Four Common Spaces (cf. Bergmann 2015: 331). This framework does not expect Russia to converge to European standards as is the case for the ENP countries. The Four Common Spaces

refer to negotiations and agreements on an equal level on the basis of shared values and interests (cf. Giusti 2017: 73; Gstöhl 2017: 93).

After the Rose Revolution in Georgia in 2003, the member states decided to include the South Caucasus countries – Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia – into the ENP. Hence, the ENP initially should be directed exclusively towards eastern neighbours. While this was the preference of countries like Sweden and Poland, member states like Spain, Italy and in particular France wanted to focus on the Mediterranean Neighbourhood. Finally, the ENP embraced 16 countries in the East and South: Algeria, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Egypt, Georgia, Israel, Jordan, Lebanon, Libya, Republic of Moldova, Morocco, Syria, Palestine, Tunisia and Ukraine (cf. Kratochvíl/Tulmets 2010: 67).

During the French EU Presidency, former president Nicolas Sarkozy called for a relaunch of the Barcelona Process, that ultimately led to the creation of the “Union for the Mediterranean” (UfM) in 2008. Parallel to this, the Czech Presidency in 2009 resulted in the establishment of the “Eastern Partnership” (EaP) (cf. *ibid*: 70).

Apart from the creation of the UfM and the EaP, the ENP has undergone two major strategic reviews. One responded to the outbreak of the “Arab spring” and the revolutions in several Arab countries in 2011. The EU wanted to focus more on the promotion of a development of a sustainable democratic system and fostering support for a civil society in the partner countries. The 2015 revision was triggered by the Ukraine crisis and led to a more differentiated approach towards the often very distinct interests of the countries embraced by the ENP (cf. Gstöhl 2017: 4).

1.1.3. The Eastern Partnership

In June 2008, the European Council emphasised the need for a differentiated approach for the countries east of the Union’s border while respecting the character of the ENP as coherent policy framework. The EaP should go even more in depth regarding the relations with the neighbouring countries in the east and countries close to the EU respectively. This included Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, the Republic of Moldova and Ukraine (European Commission 2008: 2-3). After the outbreak of the Russian-Georgian war in September 2008 the European Council demanded to accelerate the establishing of the EaP (cf. Lustigová 2014: 8-9). In the 2009 Prague Eastern Partnership Summit, when the EaP was finally established, the participants defined the main goal: With this Partnership, the EU wants to “accelerate political association and further economic integration between the European Union and interested

partner countries” (Council of the European Union 2009: 6). On the one hand, the EU underlines the political message of solidarity it sends with the EaP; on the other, this partnership should support democratic and market-oriented reforms in the partner countries. Similar to the ENP approach, it was and is believed that these plans should serve the stability, security and prosperity of the EU and its neighbours (cf. European Commission 2008: 2-3). It is noteworthy that the Commission also mentions Russia in its Communication concerning the EaP in 2008: “The Eastern Partnership will be pursued in parallel with the EU’s strategic partnership with Russia” (ibid: 3).

Since the Prague Summit, Eastern Partnership summits have been held every two years with meetings of heads of state or government. Meetings at the level of senior officials have been organised twice a year (cf. Lustigová 2014: 12).

We can distinguish between multilateral and bilateral approaches. The latter dominates in the framework of the EaP, which should ensure a differentiated approach with respect to the different circumstances and conditions found in each country. Bilateral instruments include Association Agreements up to Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Agreements (DCFTA), visa liberalisation agreements, etc. The multilateral concept regards common challenges in the whole region and focuses on the following four themes: democracy and stability, economic integration, energy security and contacts between people (cf. ibid: 2014: 10). Russia has participated in some of the multilateral projects (cf. Böttger 2015: 336).

The launch of the ENP and in particular of the EaP has triggered concerns in Russia since all countries involved used to be part of the Soviet Union and are still viewed as a high priority for Moscow. In 2010, Russia responded with the start of its own integration project, namely the Eurasian Customs Union (ECU) and the Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU). As Delcour and Wolczuk argue, the EaP is based on positive conditionality and voluntary choice while Russia also uses coercive means to hinder integration with the EU. In this sense, the authors note the existence of an “unanticipated rivalry and incompatibility between the two projects, which compels post-Soviet states to choose between them” (Delcour/Wolczuk 2017: 188).

2. THEORY

2.1. International Relation theories

There are several theories in International Relations, some of which have also been applied to the European Union's foreign policy. This chapter briefly summarises the main points made by the most important theories regarding the EU as an international actor, namely realism, institutionalism, liberalism and constructivism. I claim that the latter approach is the most suitable theory in International Relations for underlining the importance of external perception studies in the international context. Constructivist ideas emphasise why Public Diplomacy efforts of the EU – which includes knowing about perceptions beyond its borders – are an important factor in shaping the global environment.

It is probably most difficult to explain the development of the European Union from a realist perspective (cf. Jørgensen 2015: 76). The realism model argues that states act in the international sphere as egocentric rational actors and conceptualise the international environment as anarchy. Only a clear hegemony of one country is able to provide global stability (cf. Schimmelfennig 2017: 86-87). Realism is better in explaining hard military power and less in conceptualising a normative actor like the EU (cf. Aydin-Düzgit 2015: 142). Importantly, realistic approaches exclusively focus on the role of states (cf. Manners: 877) and ignore citizens and their opinions. In this sense, this theory is clearly not useful for the purpose of this study.

Similarly, institutionalists put rational states in the centre of their focus and consider the international environment anarchy (cf. Schimmelfennig 2017: 91). Yet, they assume that global insecurity can be reduced due to a high level of interdependence and using institutions. Interdependence minimises the military threat and necessitates cooperation. Institutions increase the will to cooperate between states (cf. *ibid*: 112). Analogously, the regime theory expects international regimes to be instruments for states to realise their interests. These regimes can reduce the costs for “negotiating, monitoring, and enforcing cooperative agreements” (Zangl 2014: 79). Still, the focus on self-interested states excludes the approach from being used for this study.

In sum, realism and institutionalism are too state-centred and therefore not applicable for this thesis.

Contrary to realism and institutionalism, liberalism denies the existence of national interest. According to this approach there are a lot of different state and societal actors that have a great variation of objectives. The state acts in its foreign policy according to the result of the domestic process of consensus-building (cf. Schimmelfennig 2017: 140). Hence, foreign policy can be seen as an extension of domestic policy (cf. *ibid.*: 144).

The notion of “two-level games” by Putnam develops the liberal argument of a connection between the domestic level and international relations. This approach claims that national executives have to play on two grounds simultaneously. First, they need to satisfy domestic actors, such as interest groups or the parliament and constituents, when negotiating with global partners. Second, they need to achieve results for positive foreign policy developments (cf. Putnam 1988: 434-436). In other words, negotiators on the international level have to consider the national level at any stage since domestic actors like the parliament may have to ratify decisions on the global stage (cf. Tilly: 161).

The liberal approach seems to be more relevant for studies focusing on public opinion. Yet, it only considers the public within the own country. There is no mention of the importance of a foreign population to influence international relations. In this sense, Public Diplomacy efforts do not fit into this concept. In addition, liberalism – like realism and institutionalism – is a rationalist theory and concentrates on the utilitarian interests of actors. Meanwhile it ignores socialisation models, where ideas, norms and identities play a crucial role (cf. Gstöhl 2017: 5). Yet, shaping identities and converging common ideas and norms is one of the main goals of Public Diplomacy within the framework of the Eastern Partnership. This is why external perceptions matter in international relations. Therefore, the above-mentioned theories cannot explain, why states and the EU invest in Public Diplomacy in the Neighbourhood. This has to be conceptualised by a different approach.

According to constructivists, social and political realities are at least partially constructed through the understandings actors have of their environment. In other words, individual perceptions matter since realities only exist in the subjective way that they are viewed (cf. Hay 2015: 105). In this sense, the role of the EU on the global stage is not a given fact. Rather, it is built by the perception of other actors in the international environment. Furthermore, people act towards objects on the basis of what they think of an object (cf. Wendt 1992: 306-307).

In the constructivist logic, there is a reciprocal process between perception and identity. The external image others have of the EU influences the way Europeans view their international role (cf. Davis Cross/Melissen 2013: 6). Therefore, the way the EU is perceived by external

states or a foreign public affects the way the Union and its citizens see themselves. In addition, this perception of others and EU actors of the European Union determines the way international actors and the EU behave in the international field. In the words of Davis Cross and Melissen constructivism:

[...] gives credit to the notion that foreign publics' perceptions are crucial to determining state behaviour and outcomes in international relations. The external image of an actor—which PD seeks to promote—is comprised of the package of norms that reflect its identity, values, and policies (Davis Cross/Melissen 2013: 4).

While external perception is important for the forming of an identity, from a constructivist perspective the EU tries – using PD – to change the values, norms and identities of a foreign public. If the change of identity is successful, it may also alter actors' interests on the international level. Therefore, the executives of a state may also be more willing to cooperate with the EU if its populations adopt European ideals (cf. Ulbert 2014: 255).

Furthermore, the fact that constructivists state that interests and the way people orient themselves towards their environment are not given but socially constructed, underlines the importance of public perception studies. And, of course, it is important to realise that these perceptions of the world are shaped by people's own identities (cf. Harris 2006: 159; Mäkinen 2013:1). Therefore, we need to look at individual characteristics of citizens to understand their orientations. This is the very essence of the research questions above.

In the context of international relations, the main idea of constructivism is that the probability of cooperation and peace increases when the ideas of international and societal actors are closer (cf. Schimmelfennig 2017: 185). It is therefore crucial to know about the attitudes of foreign countries' populations and to try to convince them of one's own values in order to achieve a stable international environment. Hence, the constructivist world view is most suitable to explain the importance of public opinion studies and also of a foreign public more generally.

2.2. Theories of Public Opinion

Public opinion means “[t]he political values, attitudes, or opinions of the general public of a country or other political unit, usually understood to include voting patterns and other political behaviour” (Lipset 1995: 1027). The term “public” can have two related senses. First, as an adjective, it refers to “opinions that relate to matters of common interest”. Second, “[a]s a noun, “it describes a collective that shares such mental representations[...]”. Public opinion research can then be understood as “practices aimed at ascertaining shared mental representations about matters of public concern” (McFarland/Perrin 2011: 88).

For a long time, political theorists assumed that a functioning democracy exists only if the public possesses a high degree of political information. Today, due to the mass media expansion especially after 1945 and the digital developments in recent years, people are more exposed to political news. In addition to that, more people are better educated at least in western democratic societies. However, it is contested among political scientists whether the expansion of TV and internet have produced rather positive or negative results for the democratic process. Some find a trivialisation of information, others argue that this led to greater political sophistication (cf. Dalton 2014: 16-22).

The history of scientific polling began around the period of the Second World War and is connected with the name George Gallup. He created the Gallup poll in 1936 and the *Public Opinion Quarterly* two years later. The time after 1945 was characterised by greater availability of polling data and the growing of a public opinion industry (cf. Holsti 1992: 441-442). First – in line with the considerations of Gallup – polls were thought to be used as a tool to give citizens a voice in government. Later however, public opinion became only a descriptive way to reflect people's views (cf. Korzi 2000: 56). With the emergence of the Internet, the number of public opinion polls has multiplied again (cf. Hillygus 2011: 962).

In general, research distinguishes between individual characteristics and the broader context that explains variation in public attitudes. The former refers to qualities like gender, age, education and social class. For instance, Dalton proposes seven major individual factors that may influence voting choice: Education, age, gender, political efficacy, left/right attitudes, political party attachments and membership in a union or business group (cf. Dalton 2014: 68). In addition, political context – for example different political systems or the relationship of a citizen's country with the European Union– affect citizens' decisions (cf. Schlipphak 2013: 591). "Contextual influences can be rooted in various social, economic, and political phenomena that structure people's political experiences" (Anderson/Dalton 2011: 4). Therefore, it is necessary not only to look at characteristics of individuals, but also at the political context in which they live. This is why in a later chapter we will have a short overview of the political systems, political culture and – most importantly for the topic of this paper – the relations with the EU. Put differently, it is possible that people with the same individual traits may have different political views on the EU. Due to the political attitude of the country towards the EU in which they live, one might have a positive feeling towards the EU, while others might have negative opinions. Considering the context of a country in which a survey is taking place,

seems particularly important since the outbreak of the Ukraine crisis. Events related to this crisis were followed by a large rise of (media) propaganda in all countries concerned. In addition, this led to a different media coverage of the EU and its sanctions against Russia. While, for example, Ukrainian media hoped for further sanctions and took over an anti-Russian rhetoric, Russian media started a very clear anti-Western campaign.

2.2.1. Concepts of Political Support

For the purpose of this paper, it is necessary to deal with the concepts of political support. The dependent variable is the public external image of the EU in seven countries. In other words, we want to find an explanation as to why people support or oppose the European Union.

The most influential work in this area was written by David Easton. His theoretical concept of political support from 1965 and 1975 is still being cited by various scholars to this day (cf. Bückner/Kleiner 2014: 7).

To start with, Easton uses the definition of support by the Webster dictionary, which is defined “as upholding something by aid, countenance or adherence; the active promotion of the interests or cause of an object; defending something as valid, right, just or authoritative; or giving it assistance” (Webster 1968, qtd. in: Easton 1975: 436). Yet, for the purposes of social science, the author develops a broader concept of support. First, there are underlying attitudes such as a person only supports a political object if he or she has favourable attitudes towards it. Second and in a broader sense of the definition, political support can be understood as positive and negative evaluations. “In short, in its common usage support refers to the way in which a person evaluatively orients himself to some object through either his attitudes or his behavior” (ibid.). Political support then refers to the evaluation of a political system and its constitutive parts (cf. Tiemann/Treib/Wimmel 2011: 20). Niedermayer and Westle (1995: 48) define evaluations “as any position a person has regarding a particular object in terms of a positive/negative continuum”. Another influential concept of political culture by Almond and Verba (1963: 13) that is similar to that of political support defines political culture as “the particular distribution of patterns of orientation toward political objects among the members of a nation”. Easton’s concept is referring to political science, the culture term more to a socio-psychological approach (cf. Niedermayer/Westle: 44).

The basic idea of Easton is that people evaluate political objects at least in two ways.

Some types of evaluations are closely related to what the political authorities do and how they do it. Others are more fundamental in character because they are directed to basic aspects of the system (Easton 1975: 437).

Easton therefore distinguishes between two modes of support: specific and diffuse.

One condition for specific support is that people are aware of political authorities and their actions. Here, they evaluate different decisions and policies of these authorities. They must also be able to connect the actions of the political elite with their own needs and demands. According to the author, support can be given already if a person believes that actions have met his/her demands even if he/she has little trust in the authorities. In addition, support does not need to be directed towards specific actions but can emerge due to the evaluation of the general performance of a political object. Still, Easton considers this as specific support, since the people evaluate the behaviour, even if not every single action. This kind of support is exposed to quick changes from positive to negative (or vice versa) evaluation based on perceived benefits or disadvantages (ibid.: 437-439).

Diffuse support is defined as follows by Easton: “[I]t refers to evaluations of what an object is or represents – to the general meaning it has for a person – not of what it does”. This kind of support is more long-term based than the specific one. Emotions and affections play an important role. Even if a person is not satisfied by the recent performance, there is no quick reconsideration of the assessment. The support is directed towards an office as a whole, not towards incumbent authorities (Kuechler 1991: 278). To illustrate this, the evaluation of government activities relates to specific support. A general attachment to one’s nation or political community refers to diffuse support (cf. Dalton 2014: 257).

In addition to these two modes, Easton finds three objects towards which support can be directed: The political community, the regime and the authorities (cf. Easton 1965: 445). The community denotes a basic attachment to a nation and a country’s political system beyond its political institutions (cf. Dalton 2014: 257). It refers to a feeling of solidarity, a certain loyalty to a community (cf. Tiemann/Treib/Wimmel 2011: 20). Regime support in the Eastonian sense means attitudes towards the government and political institutions, but not their officeholders. It also involves procedures of governing, such as principles of pluralist democracy and support for a parliamentary system. Finally, support for authorities describes views of the incumbents of political office (cf. Dalton 2014: 257).

The described model of political support by Easton has been used in many studies as theoretical basis. Furthermore, the concept has been modified several times. Lindberg and Scheingold (1970, qtd. in: Boomgaarden et al. 2011: 244) distinguish – in line with the Eastonian model – between affective and utilitarian support rather than diffuse and specific. Scharpf (1999) introduces the distinction of input and output-oriented legitimisation. According to

Boomgaarden et al. (2011: 244) “[o]utput-oriented legitimization can be seen as rather utilitarian and specific [...], whereas input-oriented legitimization relates to diffuse and affective political support”. In addition, Tsuruoka (2008) develops a similar approach in his study about external perception of the EU in the US and Japan. He mentions endogenous and exogenous sources for the evaluation of the EU. On the one hand, exogenous sources denote to the performance of the EU – i.e. a rather specific definition. On the other hand, endogenous sources cannot really be influenced by the EU since they include very general beliefs (cf. Tsuruoka 2008: 9-10).

Yet, the concept has not only been widely reinvented but has also been the object of criticism. For Niedermayer and Westle (1995: 37) the different modes of support are not clearly defined. For instance, they argue that diffuse support has different forms depending on the object it is directed at. Regarding the political community diffuse support denotes an “affective feeling of identity or loyalty” (ibid.). With respect to the regime they find diffuse support to be subdivided in ideological and value-based beliefs and “trust or sympathy as a spillover from ideological or even instrumental evaluations of outputs” (ibid.). Hence, it somehow overlaps with the concept of specific support for political authorities.

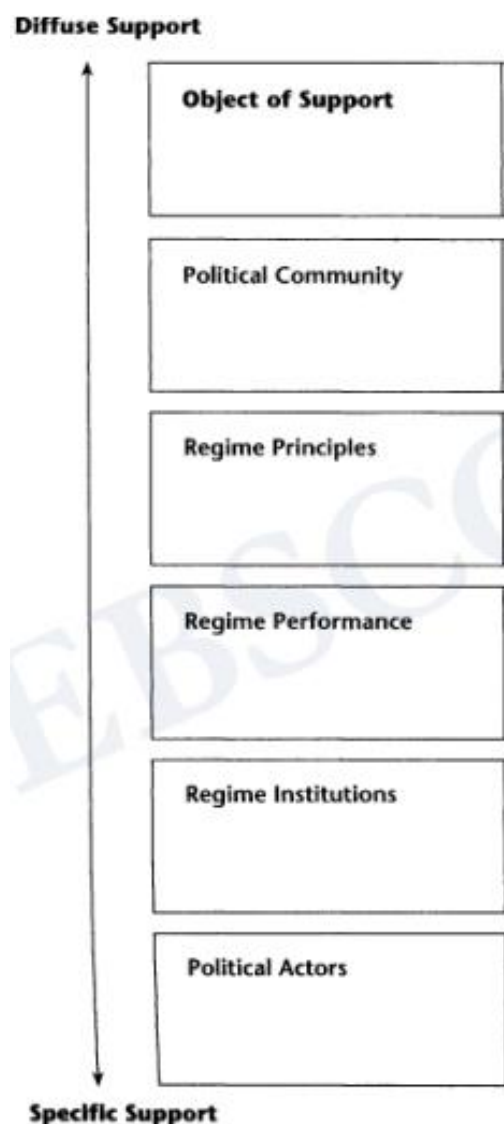
Another criticism of the concept of Easton arises not from the distinction between diffuse and specific support, but that this also means a separation of emotional/affective (diffuse) and evaluative/cognitive (specific) attitudes. This separation can be justifiable analytically but is rarely observable in reality. People tend to mix their emotional and evaluative assessment of a political object (cf. Kuechler 1991: 279-280).

In addition, the Easton’s concept is limited to *political* orientations towards an object. However, people also have non-political and social attitudes. Hence, they might assess the image they have of people in other countries rather than the characteristics of a political system. This is especially true regarding the evaluation of objects in the international environment like the citizens’ assessment of the NATO or the EU (Niedermayer and Westle 1995: 42).

To overcome this hard separation of diffuse and specific support that often does not reflect reality, Norris (1999) and Dalton (1999) suggested a model that describes the transition from diffuse to specific support as a continuum with five different levels (see figures below). These levels range from diffuse to specific support in terms of different objects towards which the support is directed. The clearest diffuse support concerns the political community. On the other side, political authorities are the object of the purest specific support. Between these opposite poles – going from more diffuse to more specific objects – lie regime principles, regime

performance and regime institutions. Regime principles mean support for the values of the political system and can be measured by the agreement that democracy is the best form of government. Regime performance denotes to the satisfaction with the actual work of democratic governments. This dimension can be operationalised by asking for approval of the way democracy works. Regime institutions refer to trust in private and public institutions (cf. Bellucci/Memoli 2012: 11-12). The reason for this further differentiation for Norris is her perception that people often believe in democratic principles but are more critical regarding the actual performance of a democratic government (cf. Norris 1999: 11).

Figure 1. Levels of Political Support (Norris)



Source: Norris 1999: 10

Figure 2. Levels of Political Support (Dalton)

Level of analysis	Affective orientations	Instrumental evaluations
<i>Community</i>	National pride	Best nation to live in
	National identity	
<i>Regime</i>		
Principles	Democratic values	Democracy best form of government
Performance	Participatory norms	Evaluations of rights
	Political rights	Satisfaction with democratic process
Institutions	Institutional expectations	Performance judgements
	Support for parties	Trust in institutions
	Output expectations	Trust in party system
<i>Authorities</i>	Feelings towards political leaders	Evaluations of politicians
	Party Identification	

Source: Dalton 1999: 58

Using the concept of Easton, authors dealing with the public perception of the EU (within the EU) seem undecided what mode and object they should focus on in their examination. Some argue that the general perception of the EU¹ or assessment of further European integration belong to the category of diffuse support (Tiemann/Treib/Wimmel 2011: 21; Magalhães/Sanders/Tóka 2012: 258). Others categorise matters of further European integration as specific support. In addition, it is disputed whether this kind of support is directed towards the regime or the community (Boomgaarden et al. 2011: 245)

The question is how to categorise the question and dependent variable of this study (“In general, does the European Union conjure up for you a very positive, fairly positive, neutral, fairly negative or very negative image?” (GESIS 2014: 5)) in a way that the concept helps analytically.

This question is formulated in a general manner and one could therefore be inclined to categorise it as diffuse support. Nevertheless, the support for the European Union can have very different forms as we will see in a later chapter more clearly.

I argue that support for the EU – as measured with the question about the image of the EU mentioned above – does not have to be exclusively diffuse or specific support (or anything in-between). By contrast, people may evaluate the EU according to rational assumptions, e.g. their economic benefit of a good relationship between their country and the EU. This would refer to

¹ Similar to the dependent variable in this thesis

a rather specific notion of support. Yet, some might also include more diffuse considerations in their general image of the Union. For example, they might identify themselves as Europeans and therefore support the EU. Others could use both evaluative economic and affective identity-related reasons to form an opinion of the Union.

Regarding the object towards which the support of a foreign public is directed, I argue that – using the mentioned question as measure – this support concerns the community. Yet, I use the adapted definition of Niedermayer and Westle who rename it “political collectivity”:

The ‘political collectivity’ can be defined as that aspect of internationalized governance which consists of its members seen as a group of countries and their peoples, bound together by a political division of labour. It denotes those entities which participate in a common political structure and a common set of political processes within a common territory (Niedermayer/Westle 1995: 41).

The advantage of this definition is that it does include both political and social attitudes towards the EU. In the case of a public outside the EU, it is likely that they often do not assess the political system or the performance of the EU. Instead, they might think of images they have of Europe or even only single countries within the Union.

To conclude this chapter, the empirical analysis will clarify whether the support for the EU shows a more diffuse or specific tendency – or even both at the same time.

2.2.2. Foreign Policy Attitudes

For a long time, researchers thought of foreign policy attitudes of mass public as random and disorganised opinions. In many studies in the United States after 1945, foreign policy thinking has not been found to be structured along ideological, partisan or class lines. Scholars assumed that foreign policy topics are remote for citizens and that they are too indifferent to form opinions (Hurwitz/Peffley 1987: 1099, 1101). This so called “Almond-Lippmann consensus” had three main assumptions about public opinion in foreign policy issues:

(1) it is volatile and thus provides inadequate foundations for stable and effective foreign policies, (2) it lacks coherence or structure, but (3) in the final analysis, it has little if any impact on foreign policy (Holsti 1992: 439).

More specifically regarding these points, first, Almond and Lippman stated that the mass public is neither sufficiently interested nor informed on foreign policy issues. Second, with the growing data available in the 1950s and 60s, they also concluded that mass beliefs lack coherence especially on foreign affairs. Third, studies claimed that there is no real impact of public opinion on the foreign policy of a state (cf. *ibid*: 443-444).

Only after the Vietnam war, this thinking has changed and activated new research on the foreign policy attitudes of the public (cf. *ibid*: 439). Concerning the three assumptions of the “Almond-

Lippmann consensus” post-Vietnam research found different, more optimistic results regarding the public’s attitudes towards foreign affairs. After 20 years of professional data collection, studies suggested that public opinion is not that volatile. Rather, changes of moods are not irrational, but explicable. According to Hurwitz/Peffley (1987: 1102) a methodological problem was the reason for the finding that citizens’ attitudes on matters of foreign policy are unstructured. Opinions are not clustered along traditional liberal-conservative lines, but people use multiple dimensions to organise their foreign policy thoughts. Consequently, American researchers then differentiated the attitudes of the people along categories like isolationism, internationalism or militarism (cf. Hurwitz/Peffley 1987; Goren et al. 2016). With respect to the effect of mass attitudes on foreign affairs, influence of the public was found to be decisive in various occasions beginning with the protests against the bombing of Vietnam (cf. Inglehart 1970a: 764; Holsti: 1992: 452).

A third approach to the discussion about the nature of public opinion and foreign policy is less optimistic, but still acknowledge public opinion structure. It is stated that mass attitudes are predictable, but only due to the fact that they follow their leaders’ opinions. Scholars of this approach argue that the public is “rationally ignorant” about politics, especially regarding foreign affairs. The formation of public opinion is a top-down process. Yet, other authors claim that not only elites affect citizens’ attitudes, but social peer groups are at least equally influential (cf. Kertzer/Zeitsoff 2017: 545-546).

In summary, it seems clear that foreign policy issues are less observed by the public than domestic events (cf. Dalton 2014: 122). Still, as Eichenberg (2016: 15) tries to illustrate:

“[...] [P]eople may not know much at all about the internal politics of Syria, but they are likely to have some predisposition about their country becoming involved in the Syrian civil war.”

The same is probably true for people in countries outside the EU. They might not know the political system of the Union in detail, but they will have an idea of, for example, what relations their country has with Brussels. This is why in a later stage the relation of all observed countries with the EU will be shortly examined.

In addition, it can be stated that public opinion on foreign affairs is a contested, but fruitful area of research. Its influence on decision makers is a crucial reason to investigate mass attitudes towards foreign issues. Even if the impact of the citizens’ views on the elites is lower in non-democratic countries, as assumed by Inglehart (1970: 764), public opinions about international organisations are a relevant topic.

2.2.3. External Perception of the EU as new field of study

As was mentioned in the introduction, the public image of the EU has been scrutinised since the 1970s with the establishing of the Eurobarometer. Studies about public attitudes towards Europe and factors affecting these attitudes have multiplied especially after the rejection of the Maastricht Treaty in 1992 in a referendum in Denmark. While before the European elite thought of an “permissive consensus” for the integration project – i.e. no need to consider public opinion on this issue – now the term “Euroscepticism” and its reasons attracted major academic interest (cf. De Vries/Hobolt 2016: 414-415).

The field of studies on EU’s external perception is even younger. Only in the early 2000’s researchers started to enter this field.

The first reflections of Ortega (2004, “Global Views of the European Union”) were “rather conceptual than empirically driven”. The author did not use empirical data for his conclusions, but analysed policy documents (cf. Chaban/Holland 2015: 676-677). Chaban and Holland have conducted a lot of perception studies in the recent years. They especially focused on the Asia-Pacific area (cf. Chaban/Holland 2010: 129). They identify four main types of perception analysis: public opinion, elite opinion, media coverage and social media (cf. Chaban/ Holland 2015: 683).

Fruitful studies were conducted by Lucarelli (2007) and Lucarelli and Fiaromonti (2010). They examined 16 countries and 5 international organisations and used different methods to collect data like opinion polls and media observation. Another important “founder” of the perception studies is Elgström and his as well as co-authors’ project on perceptions in multilateral negotiations based on elite opinions. Most of the studies were especially interested in the change of the image of the EU following the implementation of the Lisbon Treaty in 2007 and outbreak of the global financial crisis. Due to the rising importance on the global stage, many studies focused on perceptions of the EU from emerging powers like China, India or Russia (cf. Chaban/ Holland 2015: 677-679). Other examples for perception studies of the EU in Russia are Secieru’s (2010) longitudinal study on the media framing of the EU in Russia and the examination of the image of the Union in Russian media, general public and elites by Gulyaeva (2013).

Studies of external perception using public opinion polls were very rare due to its high costs until 2009. Then, a number of projects focused on the image of the EU among citizens in neighbouring countries. A project supported by EuropeAid examined 15 members of the European Neighbourhood Policy. The Pew Global Attitudes Project as well as a

PIPA/Globescan/BBC World Service polls-project looked at the evolution of EU assessment over time (cf. Chaban/ Holland 2015: 680).

While the European Union itself observes the opinion of its citizens since the 1970s, it has started much later to consider views from outsiders. After the collapse of the Soviet Union and the democratisation of many countries in Central and Eastern Europe, the Central and Eastern Eurobarometer was the first survey by the Commission with question about attitudes towards Europe and the European Communities (cf. Hofrichter/Weller 1990: i). From 2000 to 2004, the European Commission carried out surveys in the 13 candidate countries of that time with questions about trust in the European Union, its institutions and policies (cf. European Commission 2004).

With the clearer focus on Public Diplomacy actions – especially with the emergence of the ENP – the European Commission recognised the importance of perceptions and published an extensive study on the image of the EU and its policies abroad (cf. European Commission 2015). In addition, the EU Neighbours portal was launched recently. The portal is part of the OPEN Neighbourhood Programme, funded by the European Union, set up in November 2015 and built on the former Regional Communication Programme. “The OPEN Neighbourhood Programme seeks to raise awareness, increase knowledge and understanding of the European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP)” (EU Neighbours). The Open Neighbourhood Programme comprises three projects. Two of them observe the EU support in first, the Southern Neighbourhood and second, in the Eastern Neighbourhood. A third project for the entire Neighbourhood provides training for journalists (cf. EU Neighbours). The Flash Eurobarometer 450 in 2017 – part of the Eurobarometer series by the European Commission – explicitly examined the views from outside the EU in several states around the world (cf. EU Open Data Portal).

Although in the past two decades a significant number of papers on external perceptions of the EU has been published, Chaban and Holland (2013: 5) state that the topic is still under-researched. “[T]he field is characterised by fragmentation, missing data and an absence of a dominant paradigm” (Chaban/Holland 2015: 683). This study will contribute to the filling of this research gap.

3. EXPECTATIONS

In order to create hypotheses regarding the research question this paper will consider theoretical and empirical findings of studies that have dealt with the perception of the European Union from inside and outside. Since the field of external perceptions of the EU is a rather new one, it is useful to benefit from knowledge generated by the many works on the public opinion about the Union within its borders. In a further step, it will be explained how this thesis employs the different theoretical assumptions

There are many factors that may influence the external perception of the European Union. In the beginning, it is useful to explain some overarching categories and dimensions of variables that may occur in this kind of public opinion research.

First of all, researchers have focused on different levels of influence on the public view of international organisations. As already mentioned we can distinguish between two main different kinds of effects –the micro or individual level and the macro, aggregate or country level. Cross-level studies combine these two approaches (cf. Gábor/Henjak/Sanders 2012: 186). In addition, longitudinal or time series studies examine the effect of historic events and the change in perceptions over time.

Country-level studies argue that people hold the national or supranational government responsible for different economic and political developments. Concerning the economic dimension, this regards the inflation rate, unemployment or the GDP index (cf. Dalton/Eichenberg 1993; Keuleers 2015). With respect to the European Union, the benefit from trade with the EU or the dependency on European development assistance have been used as explanatory variables (cf. Garry/Tilles 2009; Schlipphak 2013). On the political arena, one can argue that major events like referenda about the adoption of new EU treaties in single countries influence the public opinion about the Union (cf. Dalton/Eichenberg 1993: 514).

Individual-level studies focus on personal characteristics and opinions of citizens. This can be demographic variables like age and occupation or personal economic considerations. Many studies combine both aggregate level and individual variables in order to test both approaches in one study.

This thesis considers the individual level – although the creation of the hypotheses and the interpretation of the results will be based on contextual factors of each country as well. Yet, country level factors are not included in the regression analysis due to the nature of the used dataset. Following academic discussions on the greater importance of individual factors in EU perception studies, this should not minimise the explanatory power of this study. It is argued

that people have too little information to consider country-level factors in their view on the European Union. This was found to be true within the Union (cf. Schlipphak 2013: 594; Keuleers 2015: 815) and is probably even more the case outside its borders.

3.1. Explanatory theories for the public perception of the EU

There are several theoretical approaches regarding the factors that could influence the perception of the EU – at least within countries of the EU. Since there is still a lack of theoretical background with respect to external views, this study relies on theories concerning the image of the EU within the Union and adapt it accordingly.

Reviewing the literature on perception of the European Union, it becomes evident that four theoretical models have been applied in studies most frequently and successfully. First, utilitarian approaches have been theorised and confirmed to be relevant for the public image of the EU. Second, cueing models that assume people assess the supranational Union through different (national) proxies have been found to be relevant. Third, cognitive mobilisation that refers to political knowledge and sophistication of citizens is expected to be a predictor. Fourth, identity-driven motivations are cited in various papers to influence the perception of the EU (cf. Hooghe/Marks 2005; Jacobs/Pollack 2006; Boomgaarden et al. 2011; Schlipphak 2015; De Vries/Hobolt 2016).

3.1.1. Utilitarian approaches

The European Union predominantly used to be an economic project in the first decades of its existence. The economic integration was the most important goal until the 1990s. Consequently, scholars examining the perception of the EU and the integration project concentrated on utilitarian explanations. Yet, economic variables have proven to be relevant not only until the 1990s, but still play a key role in perception studies today (cf. De Vries/Hobolt 2016: 420).

In this context, scholars identify four socioeconomic models that may explain different economic assessments of the EU: Economic-Voting-Model, Economic-Benefits-Model, Policy-Appraisal-Model, Economic-Perceptions Model. These different models are based on two major differentiations. First, economic considerations can rely on “objective” macroeconomic indicators or on the subjective perception of the citizens. Second, people may build their assessments on egocentric (i.e. own benefit) or sociotropic (i.e. collective benefit) deliberations (cf. Tiemann/Treib/Wimmel 2011: 34).

The Economic-Voting-Model states that people hold the government responsible for good or poor economic developments. Hence, their support is dependent on the economic performance of a country. Similarly, the Economic-Benefits-Model is based on sociotropic reasoning. However, it is complemented by subjective perceptions of the country's benefits caused by European integration.

While these two models mostly rely on sociotropic beliefs, other approaches have shifted to a more egocentric perspective. The Policy-Appraisal-Model claims that citizens gain a different benefit from European integration dependent on their personal socioeconomic situation. Those with higher resources of human capital – i.e. more educational and occupational skills – are more likely to benefit from a liberalisation of the EU single market. In addition, wealthier people can profit more easily from capital liberalisation (cf. Gabel 1998b). Economic losers of such developments – mostly those with a lower degree of education and lower occupational status – assess the EU more negatively according to this approach (cf. Hooghe/Marks 2005: 421). In other words, citizens are expected to do a cost-benefit calculation of an EU membership or further integration and assess the EU accordingly (cf. Gábor/Henjak/Sanders 2012: 169). In particular, the education variable has consistently been confirmed to affect the view on the European Union (De Vries/Hobolt 2016: 420).

Finally, the Economic-Perception-Model – similar to the former model – criticises the use of objective economic indicators like economic growth, inflation or unemployment. Results based on this approach show that the subjective evaluations of the economy have much more explanatory power (cf. Tiemann/Treib/Wimmel 2011: 34-41).

In fact, studies including these and other macro level factors like the reception of high fiscal transfers or the indirect benefit from more trade and economic development have demonstrated mixed results (cf. De Vries/Hobolt 2016: 420). The reason behind this finding could be that citizens have too little knowledge about the national economic benefit. Therefore, scholars proposed the inclusion of the individual perception of one's own and the country's economy as explanatory variable rather than "objective" economic indicators (cf. Gabel/Whitten 1997: 92; Hooghe/Marks 2004: 416; Schlipphak 2015: 354).

Since all these utilitarian considerations have been created for the perception of the EU within its borders, we should also take a look at the experiences regarding external views.

There are studies supporting the instrumental assumption derived from experiences in Western Europe. Authors considering the assessment of the EU in post-communist countries have found economic perceptions of the own household and country to stand in significant relation to the

image of the EU (cf. Jacobs/Pollak 2006; Müller 2014; Schlipphak 2015: 355). In addition to educational and occupational skills that make people more pro-European in the sense that they have a greater ability to benefit from market integration Rohrschneider (2006: 150) argues that age plays a role as well. In his argumentation, educated and younger society members are more flexible to adapt to and profit from emerging opportunities.

Several authors argue that especially in Central and Eastern Europe people use perceived economic benefits and opportunities as proxies to evaluate the EU. Since inhabitants of this region have less trust in democratic institutions, they focus on economic perspectives to assess a political system (cf. Anderson n.d.: 15; Dahlberg/Linde/Holmberg 2015: 31). Furthermore, due to the relative poverty in these countries citizens emphasise the importance of economic opportunities in their opinion-forming process (cf. Guerra 2013: 38; De Vries/Hobolt 2016: 423).

Nevertheless, others argue that rational economic considerations play a certain role but that citizens in the post-communist states mainly lack information to make cost-benefit calculations (Rohrschneider 2006: 147-148).

3.1.2. Cueing theory

There are two contradicting theories regarding the way people evaluate the European Union. On the one hand, the performance theory argues that people are aware of political actions and are able to hold the political system or political actors responsible. In addition, they are sufficiently informed to distinguish between national and European politics. Consequently, citizens possess a high level of political sophistication. They directly assess the performance of the Union, when asked about their opinion on the EU. On the other hand and in line with the cueing theory, people lack information on and interest in international or supranational organisations like the European Union. Therefore, they do not directly evaluate the performance of such an actor. In addition, the perception of national events is much more direct. Hence, they use domestic ideological predispositions, domestic organisations and other players as proxies for the assessment of international actors (cf. Anderson 1998: 576-578; Gabel 1998a: 12; cf. Kritzinger 2003: 224; Hooghe/Marks 2005: 420; Tiemann/Treib/Wimmel 2011: 10-11; De Vries/Hobolt 2016: 421-422).

Due to the fact that people beyond the EU borders are expected to have little knowledge of the performance of Brussels, the cueing theory seems to be an adequate model for this study.

There are several theories and studies that use different cues to explain variation in the perception of the EU. People are expected to use their satisfaction with the national political system as proxy. For example, this can be citizens' support for the government. If they are satisfied with the national government about which they have direct knowledge, they should also be more likely to support the – more remote – EU (cf. De Vries/Hobolt 2016: 421-422). Satisfaction with the way democracy works on the national level is another indicator within the domestic political system that has been used by scholars to explain EU perceptions (cf. Sánchez-Cuenca 2000: 153; Bückner/Kleiner 2014: 10). Furthermore, left-right ideology is sometimes seen as explanatory variable. Yet, this argument has not always been confirmed in empirical testing. It has been found to depend on the national political context whether left- or right leaning voters prefer European integration (cf. Hooghe/Marks 2005: 425; Tiemann/Treib/Wimmel 2011: 49). Citizens are also said to follow their preferred party's preference. Supporters of pro-European parties might express more pro-European feelings (cf. Gabel 1998b: 343; Hooghe/Marks 2005: 425). Social peer groups could also be used by individuals to form an opinion about the European Union (cf. Dalton 2014: 29; Kertzer/Zeitsoff 2017: 543). Finally, media are a crucial source for citizens to get information about political issues. Hence, media coverage is theorised to serve as a cue for people's evaluation of political objects. Depending on a predominant positive or negative mentioning of the EU, people might follow the lead of such information (cf. De Vries/Hobolt 2016: 422).

In empirical testing of the cueing approach the results have been different and quite contradicting. Some authors found that national cues are transferred linearly to the European level. Put differently, people who were satisfied with the political system of their country generally showed higher levels of support for the European Union (cf. Anderson 1998; Gábor/Henjak/Sanders 2012). Other scholars identified a different causal relationship by stating that the transfer of support from the national to the European level can also work the other way around. This means that – for instance – a negative evaluation of domestic politics can lead to a positive assessment of the EU (cf. Sánchez-Cuenca 2000; Kritzinger 2003). The paper of Gábor, Henjak and Sanders claims to resolve this problem by introducing two different kinds of cueing logic: transfer cueing suggests that people extend their evaluations on the national institutions to the supranational sphere, implying a positive relationship between attitudes towards domestic and European political systems. Substitution cueing is happening when citizens have a positive (negative) view of their national system but assess the EU negatively (positively) (cf. Gábor/Henjak/Sanders 2012: 188).

Transfer cueing implies that people with trust in the political system show positive attitudes towards both national and European institutions. This can have two reasons. First, authors assume that this effect occurs due to the extrapolation of trust in general. Second, this causality can “be the result of position-taking by citizens” (Schlippach 2015: 357). Hence, individuals just copy the position of parties or governments (cf. *ibid.*).

The substitution cueing approach contains the assumption that people who are not satisfied with their domestic political system might put more hopes in a supranational level that could solve their national problems. First, this can be the case on the individual level when people subjectively dismiss the working of national institutions. Second, high levels of corruption or unemployment on the country level can fuel mistrust in the domestic and hope in the European level (cf. Kritzinger 2003: 226).

As argued above people in Eastern Europe, especially outside the EU, generally have a low level of knowledge about the Union. Hence, cueing is expected to be an important predictor for EU perception.

In particular, satisfaction with democracy has demonstrated to influence the image of the EU in post-communist countries (cf. Müller 2011: 75; Guerra 2013: 39). In countries with an accession perspective, it has been argued that people regard the Union as possibility to overcome national problems. This is even more important since citizens in Eastern Europe often have negative attitudes towards their domestic political system (cf. Guerra 2013: 43). This would mean a case of substitution cueing.

In contrast, scholars have stressed that party cues are less important in the post-communist context. It is said that party democracy is not as developed as in Western Europe and that there is a huge mistrust towards political parties (Jacobs/Pollack 2006: 90; Guerra 2013: 39). In addition, people in authoritarian countries tend to follow the view of their country’s leaders rather than parties (Rogov 2016). This is amplified by the fact that the media in post-soviet countries are mostly controlled by the state (Rogov 2017: 13).

3.1.3. Cognitive mobilisation

As mentioned above it depends on the level of knowledge of the citizens on political matters whether performance or cueing approaches are more reasonable. This knowledge variable has been conceptualised as cognitive mobilisation with its own effect on the perceptions of the European Union.

Cognitive mobilisation increases the ability of individuals to receive and understand political messages from a remote political system like the EU (cf. Inglehart 1970b: 48). If the degree of cognitive mobilisation increases, people are more familiar with and less frightened of the supranational dimension of the Union (Gabel 1998b: 335).

The concept of cognitive mobilisation relies particularly on the level of political knowledge, which is in turn connected to educational skills (Inglehart 1970b: 48). It further includes the level of political engagement, often measured as the frequency of political discussion and the personal tendency to take the opinion leadership in debates (cf. Tiemann/Treib/Wimmel 2011: 43). Hence, people with higher education and more engagement in political debates possess a higher degree of cognitive mobilisation and consequently tend to have a more positive image of the EU.

In addition, media consumption can affect the degree of cognitive mobilisation. In line with the cognitive mobilisation approach, regular exposure to news information in general raises the political sophistication of people. As a result, this social group is able to understand the European level better and tend to assess the Union more positively. The positive influence of media exposure was found to be valid in particular for citizens with low levels of education (cf. Inglehart 1970: 53; Stoeckel 2013: 32; Conti/Memoli 2016: 3).

3.1.4. Identity-driven and value-based motivations

The last set of explanatory variables for the perception of the European Union concerns identity-driven, cultural and value-based orientations. In this research field scholars have applied several dimensions of such attitudes to explain EU support.

Most importantly, there is a broad consensus in the literature stating that identity plays a significant role. People who strongly identify with their own nation may perceive the European Union and its integration policy as threat to their own culture (cf. Hooghe/Marks 2005: 423). On the other side, results have underlined that those with a positive attachment to Europe have a better view of the Union and European integration (cf. De Vries/Steenbergen 2013: 132-133). Interestingly, people can also have multiple identities and feel attached to both national and European culture (Hooghe/Marks 2005: 423; Isernia et al. 2012: 113). A person with strong national feelings does not automatically turn away from Europe. In some cases national identity can even reinforce support for the EU (cf. Hooghe/Marks 2004: 416). By contrast, people with an exclusive national identity – i.e. without a European or other identity – are much more likely

to be Eurosceptic. If the national identity includes an attachment to Europe, support for the EU is very possible (cf. Tiemann/Treib/Wimmel 2011: 45; Hooghe/Marks 2004: 417).

The cognitive mobilisation indicator presented above is claimed to be important for the development of values and related to progressive opinions. People with a higher level of education, political awareness and engagement are more likely to adopt cosmopolitan worldviews. Consequently, they are more likely to support a supranational institution like the EU (Gábor/Henjak/Sanders 2012: 169). Others operationalise cosmopolitanism by using a social trust measure. Put differently, people who have general trust in other people are theorised to be prone to open-minded opinions and EU support (cf. Schlipphak 2015: 355).

In contrast, people with clear attitudes against immigration and a feeling of threat to their nation exhibit less pro-European attitudes (cf. Boomgaarden et al. 2011: 252).

Regarding the situation in Eastern Europe, political mobilisation against the Soviet rule was dominated by nationalist argumentation. However, national attachment in this sense does not have to signify anti-EU feelings. On the contrary, people might see the EU as chance to get more independent from Moscow. This may be the case especially in countries whose population is strictly against Russian influence like the Baltic States (cf. Alisauskiene/Rohrschneider/Whitefield 2006: 192). Other countries, such as Russia, perceive the expansion of the EU and NATO as threat to their national independence (cf. Rohrschneider/Whitefield 2006: 10).

In this context, the perception of a hegemonic power in a region can be important in the creation of feelings towards a supranational organisation. In Latin America the United States are often regarded in a negative way. Regional integration can then be seen as opportunity to oppose US influence (Schlipphak 2015: 356). It is assumed that there is a similar pattern in the post-Soviet space. People with negative attitudes towards Russia or the feeling of being threatened by Moscow might have more sympathy for the European model (cf. Müller 2011: 73).

In most countries of the former USSR we find a high degree of ethnic diversity. Therefore, ethnic affiliation could also play a role. When citizens of a minority group believe that European integration or at least a convergence to European standards supports their rights they might have more positive attitudes towards the EU (cf. Rohrschneider 2006: 150).

Furthermore, in countries outside the EU, personal connections to Europe have been treated as explanatory variable for views on the Union. Studies have confirmed that journeys to or longer periods of residency in a European country improve the image of the EU. Having friends or

family in a member state has a similar effect (cf. Beltyukova/Chaban 2014: 68; European Commission 2015: 52). In addition, the knowledge of a European language stands in a positive relationship with EU support (cf. Müller 2011: 72).

3.1.5. Hypotheses

Having discussed theories that try to explain perceptions of the EU on the individual level we can proceed to create hypothesis.

Utilitarian hypotheses: According to the utilitarian approach people with more human capital and a better (personal) economic evaluation are more likely to benefit from relations with the EU and therefore are expected to assess the EU more positively. Yet, people from countries without perspective for an economic integration in the EU might not be influenced as strong as those from countries with closer economic ties by such utilitarian considerations.

H1. A citizen is more likely to have a positive image of the EU:

- *The more he/she is satisfied with the own and the country's economic situation, the higher he/she perceives to be on the social ladder and the more he/she has optimistic economic expectations (H1a).*
- *If he/she holds a higher level of education and occupation (H1b).*

Cueing hypotheses: In line with the cueing theory people do not assess the EU directly but use national institutions as proxies. According to the transfer cueing approach people follow the position of their leadership and media – especially in the context of authoritarian regimes. Conversely, if they are not satisfied with the political system they might hope to overcome this through European integration – as the substitution cueing approach states.

H2. A citizen is more likely to have a positive image of the EU:

- *The more he/she trusts in the national government and media (H2a).*
- *The more he/she is unsatisfied with the way democracy works in the country and the direction of their country (H2b).*

Cognitive mobilisation hypotheses: This approach states that people are able to understand the EU better and to be more in favour of such a supranational organisation, if they have a certain degree of political knowledge and interest in politics.

H3. A citizen is more likely to have a positive image of the EU:

- *The more he/she discusses about politics and tries to persuade others of his/her opinion (H3a).*

Identity-driven hypotheses: In accordance with this theory people who have a national identity are less likely to regard the EU in a positive light while those with a European identity are expected to be more in favour of the Union. Since there is a conflict over the EaP region between the EU and Russia, those citizens who feel attached to Russian culture tend to evaluate the EU more negatively. Furthermore, people with personal experience in the EU or family ties within the Union are more likely to have a positive image of the EU.

H4. A citizen is more likely to have a positive image of the EU:

- *If he/she has no exclusive national identity (H4a).*
- *If he/she has a European identity, experience and/or acquaintances in the EU (H4b).*
- *If he/she has no Russian identity (H4c).*

3.2. Research Design

This comparative study analyses the external perception of the general image of the EU in Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, Moldova, Russia and Ukraine. The basis for the analysis is the public opinion in the states mentioned. Therefore, individual-level factors will be used as explanatory variables. Country-level influences will be considered in a more detailed creation of the hypotheses and the interpretation of the results. Therefore, the next chapter outlines why national contexts matter for this study.

3.2.1. Contextual factors: Relations with the European Union and Russia

As discussed in the chapter about public opinion theories, it is not enough to consider individual characteristics in an analysis on public attitudes towards the EU. In order to create more precise hypotheses it is also necessary to contextualise these characteristics. Since the data used in this study is from 2014, it seems adequate to end the analyses with this year and mostly ignore more recent developments. In particular, there will be a focus on the relations of these countries with the EU. These relations with a citizen's country have been found to be an important predictor of EU attitudes (cf. Schlipphak 2013: 591). I assume that the nature of the official connection between a state and Brussels affects two of the main explanatory theories mentioned above,

namely the utilitarian approach and the cueing theory. Concerning the former approach people of countries with rather developed political and economic relations with the EU might put more hopes in a closer connection to Europe regarding their own benefit. In other words, citizens of countries with visa, association and/or free trade agreements with Brussels possibly expect more personal economic perspectives from good relations with the EU than people from countries that are far away from signing such deals. In line with instrumental considerations, people who are better educated, have better jobs and are younger, are hypothesised to be more pro-European especially in countries that benefit from economic agreements with the EU. This group of people is more likely to have the know-how to exploit such opportunities.

Second, the diplomatic nature of the relations with Brussels is believed to have an impact on the cueing effect. If people use domestic cues – such as the media or the national government – to assess the Union, it should matter what image of the EU the media spreads or what attitudes a country's government has towards Brussels. For instance, I argue that people who trust their government and/or media in a country with rather pro-European officials and media coverage respectively have a better image of the EU.

In addition – since there is a sharp rivalry between Brussels and Moscow about the region in question – the relations of the other seven post-soviet countries with Russia will be included in this description. The cleavages between Brussels and Moscow have especially deepened since the outbreak of the Ukraine crisis. Hence, the standpoint of the countries' leadership relating to this crisis needs to be examined. This is particularly true since this crisis began very shortly before the survey for the dataset used in this study started.

In terms of these contextual considerations above it is necessary to add a hypothesis to the utilitarian and cueing approach respectively.

H1(context). The utilitarian hypothesis is more likely to be true for a citizen if he/she lives in a country with good relations with the EU and higher degree of political and economic integration

H2(context). The transfer cueing effect is positively correlated with the image of the EU if the attitude of a citizen's country towards and the general media coverage of the EU are rather positive. Otherwise there is a negative correlation.

Table 1. Summary of Hypotheses

	Individual factors with positive influence on the EU image	Contextual influence
Utilitarian approach		
H1a	Greater satisfaction with the own and country's economic situation and optimistic expectations.	<i>Depending on the country's relations with the EU.</i>
H1b	Higher level of education and occupation.	
Cueing theory		
H2a	Higher trust in the national government and media.	<i>Depending on the national leadership's orientation towards and media coverage of the EU.</i>
H2b	Lower satisfaction with democracy and direction of the country.	
Cognitive mobilisation		
H3a	More frequent discussion about politics and opinion leadership.	
Identity-driven motivations		
H4a	No exclusive national identity.	
H4b	More identification and experience with Europe.	
H4c	No Russian identity.	

3.2.2. Methods

To answer the research questions stated in the introduction I conduct a quantitative analysis using the secondary data described below. First, descriptive statistics will be produced to present an overview of public perceptions of the EU. Second, multiple linear regressions will be run to test the influence of the different sets of explanatory variables on the dependent variable. The dependent variable will be treated as interval measure in order to conduct a linear regression. Although the exact difference between the answers (very positive, fairly positive, neutral, fairly negative, very negative) cannot be measured, they have semantically comparable graduations – and are thus quasi-interval scales (cf. Jäckel/König/Wenzelburger 2014: 9). After the description of the data I will specify on the conducted regression models.

4. DATA

This chapter aims to describe the data used to answer the research questions of this thesis. However, first it seems necessary to evaluate the quality of surveys in authoritarian countries since it might differ from opinion polls in purely democratic countries. Thereafter, I will present a brief overview of the seven countries' relationship with the EU and Russia. This enables a context-specific interpretation of the data and the results of the regression analyses. In addition, there will be a brief description of the Eurobarometer, which serves as model for the EU Neighbourhood Barometer.

4.1. Public opinion research in authoritarian countries

Public surveys are a major source for political scientists to conduct research on various issues. However, public opinion is only valid where personal attitudes can be expressed freely without fear of harassment. According to the Freedom House index, three countries of the sample in this paper are not free and four of them are only partly free. This classification applies both to 2014 – when the data set used in this thesis was published – and to 2018. Unfree countries are Azerbaijan, Belarus and Russia, partly free Armenia, Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine (cf. Freedom House 2014; Freedom House 2018a). The rating of Freedom House is based on several indicators that are categorised either as political rights (e.g. Electoral Process) or civil liberties (e.g. Freedom of Expression and Belief) (cf. Freedom House 2018b).

There are different problems of polling quality in a non-democratic environment. First, people may not be willing to state their preferences openly since dissenting opinion could be punished (cf. Horne 2011: 6). Second, citizens in authoritarian-led countries are much more likely to be influenced by the elite discourse and the state-controlled media. In addition, if approving the nation's leader is the social norm, this means high psychological costs of opposing such a common view. Rogov (2017: 13) calls this phenomenon in polling the “authoritarian bias”.

Even if there is an authoritarian bias, it is interesting to find out whether people under authoritarian regimes really follow the opinion of the leaders and media when assessing the EU, depending on their support for the government and their media behaviour.

In addition, Horne (2011: 6) argues that survey research that is not overly political is less vulnerable to the authoritarian context. Put differently, questions concerning sensitive political issues in an authoritarian context may not be extremely valid. All other data should be less problematic. This is potentially the reason why the European Neighbourhood Barometer

excludes explicit political questions such as left/right attitudes or party affiliation. In a normal Eurobarometer these questions would have been included.

The validity of the data should also be given due to the fact that the survey was not commissioned by any authoritarian government, but by the European Commission. Although a certain bias can never be excluded, this raises the probability of a quality research.

4.2. Country specifics

First, we will look at the EU-Russia relations since their relationship has a huge impact on the EaP countries and their attitude towards the two competing players in the region. For the purpose of this thesis it is helpful to analyse the EU's relations with Russia in the light of the ENP/EaP. Both are competing in the region and have different perceptions of where the Eastern Neighbourhood ends and the Russian sphere of influence begins (cf. Kazharski/Makarychev 2015: 329). Russia feels threatened by the engagement of Brussels in the region through the Eastern Partnership. As a reaction, Russia, together with Belarus and Kazakhstan created the Customs Union in 2010 and the Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU) in 2015 (cf. *ibid*: 337). The EU perceives this as counter-model to its own integration model and not compatible with EU integration (cf. Bergmann 2015: 333).

Russia defines the relations with countries in the region as a kind of “domestic external policy” (Giusti 2017: 70). Since the break-up of the Soviet Union, Moscow has invested in cultural links with former Soviet republics by financing educational, linguistic and social programmes. If necessary, it also used energy or its military power as leverage. Russia heavily criticised the establishment of the EaP, which it regards as attempt to exclude its interests from the post-soviet space. It has never participated in such a framework and prefers bilateral negotiations with member states. The Four Common Spaces have never developed due to ongoing tensions between Moscow and Brussels. This concerns the Russian-Georgian war in 2008 or the accusation by Moscow that the West incited the so-called Colour Revolutions in some Eastern and South Caucasus countries (cf. *ibid.*: 70-78). Nevertheless, both players are big trade partners with the EU receiving energy resources from Russia and Moscow being dependent on these revenues (cf. Fröhlich 2014: 247). In addition, Russia is a key player for the EU to achieve its security goals in the region as well as globally (cf. Schmidt-Felzmann 2015: 598).

The most important factor determining the relations between the two actors in recent years has been the Ukraine crisis. Since the annexation of Crimea and the ongoing tensions in eastern parts of Ukraine several restrictive measures on both sides have been imposed (cf. Fischer 2017:

413). Russia's leadership expresses very clear anti-western rhetoric. Anti-western and pro-regime media coverage has extremely risen in the mostly state controlled media (cf. Medvedev 2015: 2).

Belarus used to be the closest ally of Russia ever since the end of the Soviet Union (cf. White et al. 2002: 187). Yet, energy conflicts and the military conflicts of Russia with several former soviet countries made Minsk rethink these relations. On the one hand it is still very dependent on Russia, on the other hand it acknowledges that a closer relationship with the EU could be useful in economic terms (cf. Bendiek 2008: 5; Fiodarau 2014: 2). Furthermore, the leadership tries to play a mediating role since the outbreak of the Ukraine crisis and does not simply support Russia's position. This somehow eased the tensions with the West (cf. Sahm 2015: 2). However, the relations with Brussels are overshadowed by a long history of sanctions against Minsk. The EU implemented travel bans and financial restrictions against individuals as a response to undemocratic elections, the authoritarian governing by the president and the oppression of the Belarusian population. Only in 2013 the EU started to lift some of these sanctions (cf. Kempe 2013a: 215; Preiherman 2017: 2-3). Due to these issues Belarus participates only in some programmes of the multilateral dimension of the EaP. At least, negotiations on visa liberalisation started in 2014 (cf. Böttger 2015: 334). Belarus joined the Russian led Customs Union in 2010 and the Eurasian Economic Union in 2015 (cf. Khitakhunov/Mukhavediyev/Pomfret 2017: 61). This is a clear sign that the country is still strongly associated with Russia and has no preference for a European integration in the near future. The Belarusian media is tightly controlled by the regime and Russian channels are very popular (cf. Jarolimek 2009: 113-114).

In 2013 the Armenian leadership decided to enter the Customs Union with Russia, Belarus and Kazakhstan. This choice brought an end to the negotiations about the Association Agreement and the Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Area with the EU. Armenia also joined the EAEU in 2015 (Böttger 2015: 333). Nevertheless, the Visa Facilitation Agreement entered into force in 2014 (cf. European Commission 2018). The reasons for the path of a Russian integration are threefold. The most important issue refers to security concerns. Russia backs the Armenian position in the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict with Azerbaijan, where Armenia occupies a province in its neighbouring country (cf. Bendiek 2008: 89; Hovhannisyan 2013: 3). In addition, Armenia is economically dependent on Moscow and thousands of labour migrants work in the

Russian Federation. After the accession to the Customs Union Russia immediately lowered gas prices, concluded new military agreements and decreased the pressure on labour migrants (cf. Hovhannisyan 2013: 3).

Armenia's elite used to be divided on the question about closer ties with Russia or the EU. While the opposition stood for less dependence on Russia and more European integration, the ruling elite acknowledged the importance of relations with Moscow (cf. Kempe 2013b: 4). The political system of Armenia in general is concentrated on the president and his clan (Petrosyan 2010: 9). The long-time president stepped back only very recently when mass demonstrations forced him to resign as new prime minister, where he tried to prolong his political career (cf. Roth 2018). The authoritarian character is underlined by the dominance of government-friendly media coverage (cf. Posughyan 2011: 2).

In the context of the Ukraine crisis Armenia mainly supported the position of Russia. While Armenian officials were not as euphoric as Russians about the referendum on Crimea, the country – together with Russia and Belarus – voted against a UN resolution on the territorial integrity of Ukraine in 2014, which declared the referendum as invalid (cf. Ter-Matevosyan 2014: 14).

Azerbaijan tries to take a neutral position between Russia and the European Union. This ambivalence can be seen in its not-yet-decision between the two spheres of influence. This has several reasons. First, Azerbaijan is independent economically due to its natural energy resources (cf. Valiyev 2013: 8-9). These resources make it also easier for the president to rule in an authoritarian manner (cf. Guliyev 2009: 3) and have a tight control over the media (cf. Kazimova 2011: 4). Nevertheless, Azerbaijan wants cooperation with both Russia and the EU. Similar to Armenia, a lot of Azerbaijanis work in Russia, which gives Moscow an important tool for negotiations. However, Baku has so-far rejected any participation in the ECU or EAEU. Furthermore, in the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict Azerbaijan needs support from both Russia and the EU (cf. Kempe 2013b: 316; Alieva 2015: 9). Negotiations on an Association Agreement with Brussels have officially started in 2010, but have never been concluded. In addition, they did not include a DCFTA because a WTO membership is conditional for that. A Visa Facilitation Agreement came into force in 2014 (cf. Böttger 2015: 334).

In the Ukrainian crisis Azerbaijan acts similar as in other issues – it tries to provoke neither the West nor Russia. Still, Baku clearly supports the territorial integrity of Ukraine and voted in favour of the UN resolution in 2014 (cf. Valiyev 2014: 11).

Ukraine and its conflict with Russia and separatist movements in the East of the country is the biggest topic in the region and has a huge impact on the relations of all states with Russia and the EU respectively. Similar to Armenia, the Ukrainian president surprisingly announced in 2013 – a few days before the EaP summit in Vilnius – that Ukraine will not sign the planned Association Agreement with Brussels (cf. Savin 2013: 5). Unlike Armenia citizens carried out massive protests, which finally led to the dismissal of the old president, a new pro-European government and president and the belated signing of the Association Agreement. A Visa Facilitation Programme with the EU entered in force already in 2008 (cf. Böttger 2014: 336). Before these events the relations with the EU had cooled down due to setbacks in the democratisation process (cf. Kempe 2013a: 317). In addition, Russia exerted high pressure on Kiev since the size and geostrategic location of the country made it especially significant for Russia (cf. White et al. 2002: 188). After the Russian annexation of Crimea and the involvement in the separatist actions in the East the support for the EU rose quickly (cf. Shulga 2015: 24). Another effect of the events was the ban of many Russian media outlets in Ukraine that were very influential before (cf. Szostek 2014: 463; 483). However, the media is still in the hands of a few oligarchs and the newly established ministry of Information Policy to counter Russian “propaganda” (cf. Dyczok 2016: 3).

When a pro-European government was elected in 2009 Moldova became the leading country of the EaP regarding its efforts for a further European integration (cf. Maugeais 2017: 399). This was enforced by the inauguration of a president with European preferences in 2012 (cf. Tudoroiu 2016: 660). The Association Agreement including the DCFTA were implemented in 2014 which resulted in a higher export rate to the European Union (cf. Böttger 2016: 389). Moldova not only participates in the Visa Facilitation Programme since 2008 but benefits from visa free travel since 2014 (cf. Böttger 2014: 336). During the Ukraine crisis Moldova backed the Ukrainian territorial integrity (cf. Valiyev 2014: 11).

The response of Russia to the European path was the introduction of import duties and import bans on Moldovan products (cf. Kostanyan 2016: 2). Moldova used to have high export rates to Russia and is dependent on gas supply. Furthermore, Chişinău struggles with the Russian presence in the de facto separated region Transnistria (cf. Büscher 2010: 621). In addition, the media landscape in Moldova is dominated by Russian-language outlets. These media

pronounce less pro-western attitudes than do their Romanian-language counterparts (cf. *ibid*: 611).

Other problems in Moldova are widespread corruption and an unclear national identity. First, many identify themselves as Romanian (cf. Büscher 2010: 583) and only 75% identify as Moldovans (cf. Maugeais 2017: 400). Second, the right-leaning parties tend to prefer Western integration and more independence from Russia, while left-leaning actors desire the opposite (cf. Büscher 2010: 618).

The so-called Rose Revolution in Georgia was the starting point of the country's Western orientation (Kerikmae et al. 2014: 153) and one of the main triggers for the extension of the ENP towards the South Caucasus (cf. Bolkvadze/Naylor 2015: 106). Still, there are some democratic deficits (cf. Sharashenidze 2013: 5) and the media is target of state interventions (cf. Robakidze 2011: 7). Georgia has profited economically from the Association Agreement and the DCFTA with the EU even more than Moldova with a substantial increase of economic interactions (cf. Böttger 2015: 334). The Visa Facilitation Programme is in force since 2014 (cf. Weidenfeld/Wessels 2016: 194).

The relations with Russia are quite problematic especially since the Russo-Georgian war in 2008 and the controlling of the territories Abkhazia and South Ossetia by Russian troops (cf. Kerikmae et al. 2014: 155). Therefore, it scrutinised the developments during the Ukraine crisis with special mistrust towards Moscow (cf. Kakachia 2014: 7). For many the annexation of Crimea and destabilisation of Eastern regions in Ukraine is a repetition of what had happened in Georgia. The Eurasian Union is viewed by many Georgians as attempt to re-establish the Soviet Union (cf. Kempe 2013b: 4).

To sum up, we can imagine Russia and the EU to be two opposite poles of a choice in political and economic integration. While Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine seem to have made their decision towards the European Union, Belarus and Armenia joined the Russia led Eurasian Economic Union. Azerbaijan wants to stay independent as long as possible and keeps its distance to both projects. For a better overview I created a table with important standpoints of the countries. Of course, this represents a simplification, but it is important for the understanding of the hypotheses.

Table 2. Positioning of countries between the EU and Russia

Country	Integration	Association Agreements/visa liberalisation/free trade*	Ruling elites	Media coverage	Ukraine crisis
Rather Pro-Russian countries					
Russia	EEAU	-	Anti-EU	Anti-EU	Pro-R
Armenia	EEAU	Stop of negotiations 11/2013	Rather pro-R	Rather pro-R	Pro-R
Belarus	EEAU	-	Rather pro-R	Rather pro-R	Pro-R/Neutral
Rather neutral country					
Azerbaijan		Negotiations on AA without DCFTA since 6/2010; VFP signed 2014	Rather neutral	Rather neutral	Pro-U/Neutral
Rather Pro-European countries					
Georgia	EU	AA incl. DCFTA, VFP signed 2014	Pro-EU	Pro-EU	Pro-U
Moldova	EU	AA incl. DCFTA, VFP signed 2014; visa free travel since 2014	Pro-EU	Pro-EU	Pro-U
Ukraine	EU	AA incl. DCFTA, VFP signed 2014	Pro-EU	Pro-EU	Pro-U

Sources: Own research; cf. Weidenfeld/Wessels 2016: 194; legend: AA=Association Agreement; DCFTA=Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Agreement; EEAU=Eurasian Economic Union; EU=European Union; pro-R=pro-Russian; pro-U=pro-Ukrainian; VFP=Visa Facilitation Programme

4.3. Eurobarometer

Within the European Union the so-called Eurobarometer is the most important series of public opinion surveys. Since 1974 the European Commission collects data twice a year throughout the European member states. The advantage of this regular survey is that – because key questions are repeated in all questionnaires – it is possible to observe short- and long-term trends (cf. Hewstone 1991: 81). This way, the Eurobarometer surveys are an important tool for the analysis of political and social change. They provide long time series of cross-nationally consistent measures of mass orientation towards important subjects (cf. Inglehart/Reif 1991: 1). We can find three different kinds of Eurobarometer polls. The Standard Eurobarometer measures citizens' opinion about European integration, institutions and policies. It also includes demographic and socioeconomic questions and is published twice a year. The Special Eurobarometer looks at opinions about special topics and is usually incorporated in the Standard Eurobarometer. The Flash Eurobarometer asks questions about very recent topics and mostly includes only several variables (cf. Bethlehem 2018: 11-12).

The Neighbourhood Barometer used in this study was published by the European Commission as well. However, it is not part of the Eurobarometer series.

4.4. EU Neighbourhood Barometer

The EU Neighbourhood Barometer was retrieved from the GESIS – Leibniz Institute for the Social Sciences – that provides data for secondary analysis. GESIS offers all Eurobarometer surveys. According to its self-description, the institute represents „the largest European infrastructure institute for the social sciences” (GESIS 2018).

The EU Neighbourhood Barometer was commissioned by the European Commission and consists of six surveys conducted between 2012 and 2014. The survey covers all sixteen countries included in the European Neighbourhood Policy plus Russia.

The samples were drawn from the resident population in each country, aged 15 years and over, using a multistage probability sampling combined with quota selection in the household. In each country and for each survey approximately 1000 interviews were conducted face-to-face (GESIS 2018).

For this thesis the sixth wave will be used. This has two important reasons. First, this survey was established in autumn 2014 – already after the beginning of the Ukraine crisis. Events connected to this crisis have changed the political circumstances in the region, but also the perceptions of the EU among citizens – as we will see later. Second, the dataset includes questions that are necessary to test all the hypotheses above. In particular, this wave stands out with questions regarding cultural preferences. These are crucial to establish a set of variables to check the identity-based theory. This survey was implemented by a consortium led by TNS opinion between October and November 2014. It covers the population of the seven countries dealt with in this thesis. Its main objectives are:

Assess the current state of, and the evolutions since autumn 2012 in, public opinion in the Eastern partnership countries regarding EU policy and cooperation;

Analyse the image and the level of information that citizens of the Eastern partnership countries have about the EU and compare it to the benchmark set by the previous waves of the survey. (cf. ENPI 2014: 3-4).

Wave 6 of the EU Neighbourhood Barometer includes six overarching topics. First, attitudes towards the European Union provides the dependent variable for this thesis by using the question: “In general, does the European Union conjure up for you a very positive, fairly positive, neutral, fairly negative or very negative image?” (ENPI 2014: 5). This first topic further contains questions about the personal situation and life satisfaction as well as opinions about the own country’s relation with the EU and its benefit from the Union. Second, the cooperation between the EU and the respondent’s country is evaluated by questions regarding

information about and communication from the EU as well as preferred areas of collaboration. Third, the survey asks for trust in various domestic and international institutions. Fourth, this wave is interested in the personal affections due to the global economic crisis. Fifth, wave 6 stands out of the other surveys with questions regarding culture including the own identification with European, American, Russian or national culture. Finally, the survey provides the most important demographic information (GESIS 2014).

4.5. Operationalisation of the hypotheses

The dependent variable in the following analysis was derived from the European Neighbourhood Barometer question “In general, does the European Union conjure up for you a very positive, fairly positive, neutral, fairly negative or very negative image?” (ENPI 2014). The survey participants could choose on a five-point scale ranging from 1 (=very positive) to 5 (=very negative). For the regression model, the scale was inversed (1=very negative, 5=very positive). Furthermore, in all independent variables the scale was inversed to have the positive/endorsing answer at the end of the scale. Except for the dependent variable, I made dichotomous variables out of most of the factors. Only if there was a neutral/middle option in the response to a question I kept three answer possibilities. This way I tried to make the measures of the variables as homogenous and comparable as possible. Still, there are two scale variables in my dataset (age and perceived level in society). For illustration of all the changes, the original and edited scale of all variables can be found in the appendix.

For the dependent variable, the “Don’t know” (=6) answers were added to the “neutral image of the EU” response (=3). In general, whenever there were more than 5 % of “Don’t know” answers these were merged into other responses. In the case of the existence of a neutral answer the “Don’t know” responses were added to them. Otherwise, they were included in the negative answers. For example, for the question about trust in government the “Don’t know” responses were added to the “no trust” responses. If all “Don’t know” answers had been omitted I would have produced too many missing cases for a valid regression model. Yet, it is evident that this approach might change the outcome of the regression. However, this method can be justified by the fact that people in authoritarian countries – as mentioned above – tend not to respond to politically sensitive questions, especially if they have a dissenting opinion to the country’s leadership. More precisely, respondents refusing to clearly answer a question regarding the assessment of the government are more likely to disapprove the leadership and use the “Don’t know” option as a way to avoid possible unpleasant consequences.

The first hypothesis regarding utilitarian approaches is operationalised by the perceived individual and country's economic situation. In addition, the economic expectations for the next year is included. For both variables I created an index of various questions. The perceived economic situation variable includes judgments about the country's economic situation, the personal job situation and the financial situation of the household. For the economic expectations variable I merged questions about expectations on the economic situation in the country, the personal job situation, the financial situation of the household, the employment situation in the country and the expectation of one's life in general. Accordingly, the questionnaire of the used dataset includes a question about the self-placement on a scale from the lowest to the highest level in society. In addition, in the utilitarian logic the human capital plays an important role. Hence, the level of education and occupation are included. The original education variable has a scale measure and asks for the age when one stopped full-time education. This was rescaled to three dummy variables (low, middle and high education). Also, I created four dummies (without job, simple job, qualified job, student) out of the occupation variable, originally incorporating 18 job categories. The European Neighbourhood Barometer includes a question about the perceived benefit from the EU. While this variable would definitely fit into the utilitarian approach, it is too closely linked to the dependent variable. This could lead to biased results and therefore the variable is not included in the set of explanatory factors.

The cueing theory is measured by four variables. First, by the trust of citizens in the country's government, which was changed into a dichotomous variable. Second, by the trust in media. Here, I created an index of trust in the printed press, radio, TV and the Internet and formed a dichotomous measure. Third, the cueing hypothesis is operationalised by the question about the contentment of the direction things are going in the country. Fourth, I use a dichotomous measure of the question about the satisfaction with the way democracy works in the country. Cognitive mobilisation is measured first, by the frequency of discussion and second, by the propensity to persuade interlocutors. For the first variable I formed an index from the question how often the responder discusses about international, national and local political matters. For the second variable I created a dichotomous variable from the question about the frequency a person tries to convince others of the own opinion. In addition, the Neighbourhood Barometer asks for the satisfaction of individuals with the information on and communication of the EU. Furthermore, the barometer inquires whether citizens have knowledge about the financial

support of the EU for their country. Similar to the “benefit from the EU”-variable I did not include these variables due to the possibility of biased results given the similarity to the dependent variable. Generally, I did not use any independent variables for the regression that imply a form of assessment of the EU already in the question to avoid high correlation with the dependent variable.

Finally, the identity hypothesis is operationalised by three dichotomous variables. First, by the identification with the national, European and/or Russian culture. For all of them I produced dummy variables. Second, recent stays in Europe are treated as explanatory factor. Third, a question about the existence of family ties in the EU is used as an independent variable.

Gender and age serve as control variables and were not modified.

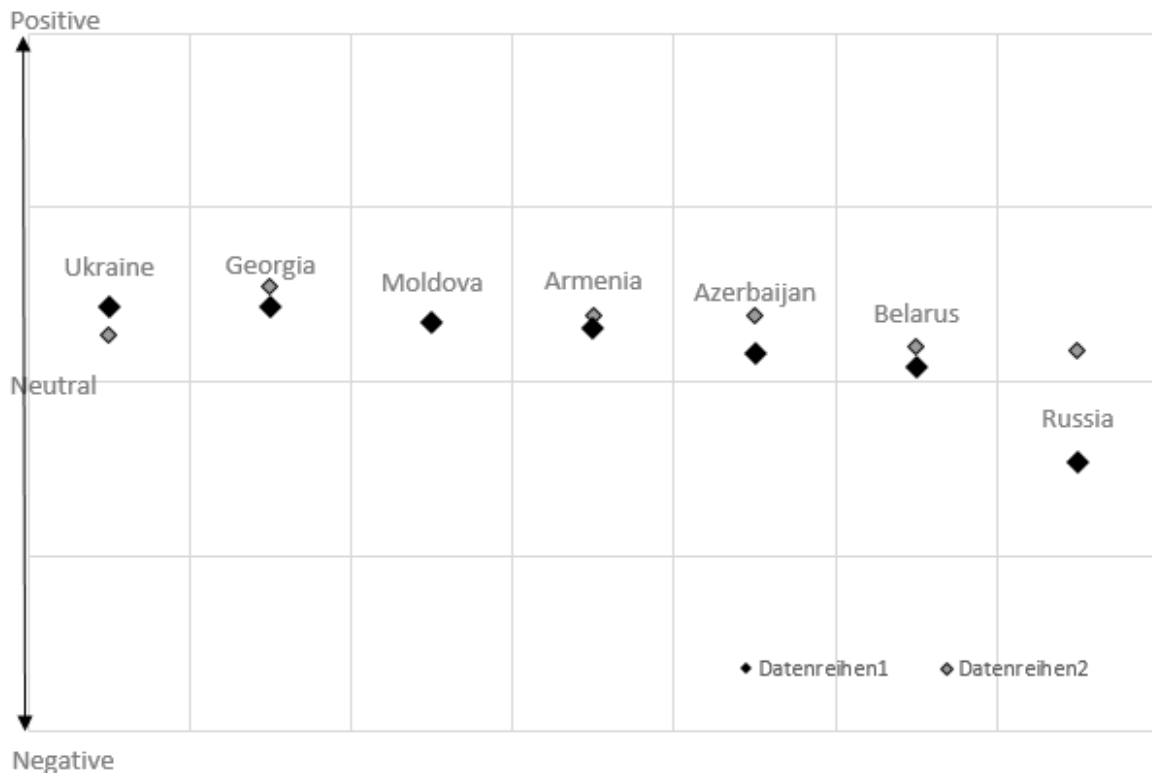
As mentioned above, the exact wording of the questions from the EU Neighbourhood Barometer that were used to operationalise the variables and the measurement scales can be found in the appendix.

After each regression I used regression diagnostics to spot potential errors in the model. Therefore and as recommended by Jäckel, König and Wenzelburger, I checked for multicollinearity, non-linearity, outliers, heteroscedasticity and errors in the normal distribution (cf. Jäckel/König/Wenzelburger 2014: 29). First, I calculated the variance inflation factor (VIF) values for each model to detect potential multicollinearity. Second, I created partial regression plots to check for non-linearity and outliers (cf. Kohler/Kreuter 2012: 289). To find potential heteroscedasticity I conducted the so-called Cook-Weisberg test (cf. Jäckel/König/Wenzelburger 2014: 30). Due to the results in this test that showed high p-values in some of the models I ran all regressions with robust standard errors. Finally, I checked the normal distribution of the residuals by conducting the so-called Shapiro-Wilk test (cf. *ibid*: 33).

5. RESULTS

5.1. Descriptive statistics

Figure 3. EU image in EaP countries and Russia (Mean – 2012/2014)



Source: EU Neighbourhood Barometer 2012 (Wave 1)/EU Neighbourhood Barometer 2014 (Wave 6)

As we can see from the figure above the average perception of the European Union in all countries participating in the Eastern Partnership is at least slightly positive in 2014. Ukrainians and Georgians have the most positive view of the EU, Azerbaijanis and Belarusians have – on average – almost a neutral image. Only the Russian mean image of the Union is clearly on the negative side of the spectrum. As can be seen above, this was not the case in 2012. The perception of the EU has clearly dropped in the two years. This is not surprising given the Ukraine conflict started in the early months of 2014 followed by sanctions and counter-sanctions of the EU and Russia, respectively (cf. TNS opinion 2014: 40). Yet, five of the six EaP countries also show lower support for the Union than in 2012. Only in Ukraine has the mean perception increased to a small extent. In total, the average person in all seven countries together has a more negative view of the EU in 2014 than in 2012. Most likely, the Ukraine crisis and the subsequent conflict between the EU and Russia is the clearest reason for this shift.

However, it is not part of this thesis to explore the mechanisms behind these developments. Still, the figure helps to see what the actual perceptions of the EU in this region looks like.

5.2. Regression results

In this chapter I will present the results of various regression models designed to examine the theories on public perception of the EU. Therefore, I will present the results of the four main approaches one by one. As in the expectations chapter I start with the regression results regarding the utilitarian approach followed by outcomes concerning the cueing, cognitive mobilisation and identity theories. Generally, I ran five different models for each of the seven countries. Four models included only the independent variables of each theory plus the control variables (gender and age). To illustrate, the model to examine the cognitive mobilisation approach included the variables “frequency of discussion”, “opinion leadership” and the controls gender and age. The fifth model is a full model controlling for all independent variables from all theories.

For the purpose of this study I conducted ordinary least squares (OLS) models. However, to check for consistency I ran an additional ordinal logit regression at least for the full regression model. This ordinal logit model underlines the quality of the OLS regression since on the whole the outcomes and the significance levels are the same. The table with the ordinal logit regression results can be found in the appendix.

For better readability, I try to display only results that are relevant for the chapter being dealt with. The comprehensive tables can be found in the appendix. In addition, I highlighted results with statistical significance in bold letters.

5.2.1. Utilitarian approach

As a quick reminder, the utilitarian approach states that individuals with a higher level of human capital such as education and occupation are expected to evaluate the EU more positively. The same is true for people who assess their own and the country’s economic situation and future positively. This is based on the assumption that these people are more likely to be able to benefit from closer relations with the EU given their economic possibilities and higher chances of adapting to new opportunities.

Table 3. OLS model of image of the EU – Utilitarian model

Predictors	Russia	Armenia	Belarus	Azerbaijan	Ukraine	Georgia	Moldova
Economic situation	0.326**** (0.098)	0.016 (0.118)	-0.025 (0.079)	0.277*** (0.092)	0.253* (0.149)	0.261** (0.106)	0.237** (0.116)
Economic expectations	-0.061 (0.074)	0.148** (0.072)	-0.045 (0.071)	0.017 (0.081)	0.390**** (0.069)	0.164*** (0.058)	0.499**** (0.071)
Level in society	0.059*** (0.021)	0.022 (0.020)	-0.006 (0.019)	0.043** (0.018)	0.047** (0.021)	0.067**** (0.018)	0.002 (0.023)
Higher education	0.095 (0.076)	-0.081 (0.078)	0.011 (0.064)	0.127 (0.086)	-0.010 (0.080)	0.160** (0.063)	0.068 (0.083)
Without job	-0.023 (0.093)	0.011 (0.094)	-0.017 (0.081)	0.186** (0.083)	0.104 (0.102)	0.068 (0.075)	0.131 (0.091)
Qualified job	-0.020 (0.093)	-0.045 (0.115)	0.234*** (0.081)	0.020 (0.111)	0.047 (0.115)	0.144 (0.098)	0.404**** (0.117)
Student	0.216 (0.141)	0.029 (0.153)	0.088 (0.111)	0.326** (0.148)	0.098 (0.147)	0.146 (0.129)	0.258* (0.135)
Gender	0.082 (0.070)	0.096 (0.076)	0.043 (0.056)	0.084 (0.066)	-0.074 (0.075)	-0.163*** (0.058)	0.010 (0.074)
Age	0.002 (0.003)	-0.007*** (0.002)	-0.014**** (0.002)	-0.004* (0.002)	-0.002 (0.003)	0.002 (0.002)	-0.003 (0.003)
Constant	1.975**** (0.233)	3.167**** (0.217)	3.753**** (0.186)	2.668**** (0.244)	2.493**** (0.219)	2.530**** (0.191)	2.127**** (0.255)
Observations	881	970	960	957	893	957	835
R^2	0.038	0.034	0.096	0.051	0.059	0.086	0.111
Adjusted R^2	0.028	0.025	0.087	0.042	0.049	0.077	0.101

Source: EU Neighbourhood Barometer 2014, wave 6. Own calculations.

Standard errors in parentheses

* $p < 0.10$, ** $p < 0.05$, *** $p < 0.01$, **** $p < 0.001$

The table above displays mixed results regarding the confirmation of the instrumental approach. Broadly speaking, the tendency of the effects implicates a positive relationship between the instrumental factors and the image of the EU. In particular, the economic situation and expectation variables as well as the social level factor display a significant effect in at least four of the seven countries. In Ukraine, Georgia and Moldova both the economic situation and expectation have a significant influence. In the former two states this is also the case for the perceived standing in society. This result supports the contextual hypothesis that the utilitarian impact is higher on people in countries with closer political and economic relations to the Union. Still, also in Russia and Azerbaijan the economic situation and level in society variable have a statistically significant positive effect on the image of the EU.

The level of education and occupation show very few significant effects on the image of the EU. In line with the instrumental idea, having a qualified job clearly seems to have a significant impact on the assessment of the EU at least in Belarus and Moldova. In addition, younger people tend to be more supportive of the EU in three of seven countries; the biggest effect can be observed in Belarus. Younger people are theorised to adapt more easily to and benefit from closer ties with the EU.

Nevertheless, all these results must be seen in a relative perspective when looking at the table below. These rows include the full models of all countries. They do not display all factors but are just an extract of the complete table and are therefore controlling for all variables from the other three approaches. Among the set of factors only the level in society variable has a statistically significant effect in more than half of the cases. Yet, we can see a slightly negative correlation between the level in society and the image of the EU in Belarus, which cannot be explained by the discussed theories.

Table 4. OLS model of image of the EU – Full models (extract: Utilitarian variables)

Predictors	Russia	Armenia	Belarus	Azerbaijan	Ukraine	Georgia	Moldova
Economic situation	0.264*** (0.102)	0.000 (0.122)	0.166* (0.086)	0.133 (0.097)	-0.007 (0.136)	0.059 (0.106)	-0.115 (0.105)
Economic expectations	-0.080 (0.069)	0.120* (0.073)	-0.008 (0.070)	-0.028 (0.089)	0.063 (0.064)	0.066 (0.059)	0.190*** (0.063)
Level in society	0.042* (0.022)	0.014 (0.020)	-0.036* (0.020)	0.031* (0.018)	0.015 (0.019)	0.059**** (0.018)	-0.002 (0.021)
Higher education	0.051 (0.072)	-0.106 (0.079)	0.008 (0.062)	0.130 (0.087)	-0.018 (0.071)	0.106* (0.063)	-0.053 (0.076)
Without job	-0.013 (0.093)	-0.008 (0.094)	-0.012 (0.080)	0.190** (0.086)	0.059 (0.091)	0.030 (0.075)	0.124 (0.081)
Qualified job	-0.027 (0.088)	-0.074 (0.116)	0.079 (0.082)	0.008 (0.115)	-0.010 (0.105)	0.083 (0.099)	0.290*** (0.104)
Student	0.138 (0.140)	0.055 (0.153)	-0.092 (0.117)	0.287* (0.154)	0.068 (0.132)	0.136 (0.129)	0.132 (0.126)

Source: EU Neighbourhood Barometer 2014, wave 6. Own calculations.

Standard errors in parentheses

* $p < 0.10$, ** $p < 0.05$, *** $p < 0.01$, **** $p < 0.001$

To sum up, the utilitarian theory seems to be at least partly supported in the first model. However, this is not the case if we hold all other independent variables constant. There is too little evidence to confirm the approach in this study.

5.2.2. Cueing approach

The cueing theory states that citizens do not directly assess the European Union but use national proxies to make judgements. Hence, their opinion about the EU is based on their evaluation of domestic institutions such as the government or media. In addition to this transfer cueing approach, the substitution cueing theory argues that individuals who disregard the national political system have a better view of the European Union. This is because they hope to overcome domestic constraints, e.g. low standards of democracy, by an approximation to the EU.

Table 5. OLS model of image of the EU – Cueing model

Predictors	Russia	Armenia	Belarus	Azerbaijan	Ukraine	Georgia	Moldova
Trust in government	-0.386**** (0.075)	-0.116 (0.080)	-0.280**** (0.072)	-0.211* (0.117)	0.468**** (0.067)	0.174*** (0.065)	0.327**** (0.067)
Trust in media	0.499**** (0.086)	0.438**** (0.102)	0.123 (0.082)	0.157* (0.094)	0.255*** (0.089)	0.316**** (0.083)	0.049 (0.079)
Direction of country	-0.075* (0.039)	0.098** (0.050)	-0.063 (0.040)	0.119** (0.049)	0.394**** (0.043)	0.181**** (0.040)	0.598**** (0.038)
Democracy satisfaction	0.262**** (0.068)	-0.011 (0.078)	-0.019 (0.061)	0.283**** (0.067)	0.242**** (0.072)	0.079 (0.059)	0.093 (0.080)
Gender	0.072 (0.061)	0.102 (0.070)	0.054 (0.054)	0.184*** (0.066)	-0.018 (0.063)	-0.150*** (0.056)	-0.005 (0.062)
Age	-0.001 (0.002)	-0.007**** (0.002)	-0.014**** (0.002)	-0.007**** (0.002)	-0.006**** (0.002)	-0.002 (0.001)	-0.005*** (0.002)
Constant	2.559**** (0.126)	3.230**** (0.131)	3.904**** (0.104)	2.992**** (0.167)	2.640**** (0.120)	3.078**** (0.102)	2.277**** (0.123)
Observations	992	1003	1034	1007	1000	1002	970
R ²	0.074	0.047	0.109	0.050	0.238	0.090	0.281
Adjusted R ²	0.068	0.041	0.104	0.045	0.233	0.085	0.277

Source: EU Neighbourhood Barometer 2014, wave 6. Own calculations.

Standard errors in parentheses

* $p < 0.10$, ** $p < 0.05$, *** $p < 0.01$, **** $p < 0.001$

At first glance it is obvious that there is a much higher percentage of significant results in the cueing model. It seems that this model is a better fit to explain variation in perceptions of the EU than the utilitarian one.

Having a closer look at the first factor – namely trust in government – reveals very interesting results that are very much in line with the theoretical considerations. On the one hand, in countries that have close and friendly relations with Brussels a positive view on the own government seems to be transferred to the assessment of the EU. In other words, citizens of

Ukraine, Georgia and Moldova have a better image of the EU if they are content with their own leadership. This is a clear example of transfer cueing. On the other hand, people in the other four countries assess the EU more negatively if they have trust in their own government. Only in Armenia the outcome is not statistically significant at the stated significance levels, but we can still see a certain tendency. Therefore, citizens of these countries who support the domestic leaders seem to follow the government's rather negative or distant relationship with Brussels. Contrary to the trust in government variable, media trust achieves the same effect across all countries. Only in Moldova there is no clear tendency. Citizens of all the other states seem to have a better perception of the EU if they rely on the media. This is relatively surprising given the rather negative coverage of EU topics in Russia and other countries. In this case trust seems to be generally transferred from the national to the European level.

Those Russians who think that things go in the right direction in their country tend to assess the European Union more negatively. Yet, they are the exception in this set of cases. In Armenia, Belarus and Azerbaijan this factor seems to have almost no effect. By contrast, people in Ukraine, Georgia and Moldova have a better opinion of the EU if they are also content with the direction of their country. This may be explained by the fact that Russia is trying to build its own sphere of influence through the establishment of the Eurasian Economic Union and clearly distances itself from the EU. People who approve of this choice, support the EU less. The same is true in an opposite logic for the rather pro-European governed countries. If citizens are in favour of the way their country points towards a closer cooperation with the EU, they also have a better image of the Union.

People satisfied with the way democracy works in their country are generally more likely to support the EU. This is the case in four out of seven cases and both in rather pro-European countries and Russia. In contrast to the stated hypothesis, people who assess the democracy in their own country negatively do not see the Union as a way to overcome this problem. In fact, people who are not satisfied with the democracy they have in their country are also less supportive of the EU.

Table 6. OLS model of image of the EU – Full models (extract: Cueing variables)

Predictors	Russia	Armenia	Belarus	Azerbaijan	Ukraine	Georgia	Moldova
Trust in government	-0.313**** (0.079)	-0.161* (0.083)	-0.255**** (0.072)	-0.158 (0.127)	0.381**** (0.075)	0.140** (0.068)	0.245**** (0.072)
Trust in media	0.467**** (0.090)	0.402**** (0.109)	0.111 (0.084)	0.200* (0.107)	0.176* (0.099)	0.243*** (0.085)	0.022 (0.086)
Direction of country	-0.143*** (0.047)	0.068 (0.052)	-0.074 (0.047)	0.073 (0.053)	0.313**** (0.048)	0.139*** (0.042)	0.460**** (0.046)
Democracy satisfaction	0.143** (0.073)	-0.007 (0.082)	-0.013 (0.062)	0.265**** (0.073)	0.178** (0.081)	0.056 (0.061)	0.174** (0.085)

Source: EU Neighbourhood Barometer 2014, wave 6. Own calculations.

Standard errors in parentheses

* $p < 0.10$, ** $p < 0.05$, *** $p < 0.01$, **** $p < 0.001$

If we control for all other variables included in the full model the general tendency explained above still holds true. Some factors have a weaker effect holding all other variables constant, others have an even clearer impact. For instance, while no effect occurs for the democracy satisfaction variable in the cueing model in Moldova, it has a statistically significant effect in the full model. Conversely, the direction of country variable seems to be a slightly smaller predictor for the perception of the EU in the model controlling for all variables.

In total, the cueing approach is a reliable predictor of the perception of the European Union. All factors tested in the model above demonstrate significant results in more than half of the seven cases. In particular, trust in the domestic government and media is used as a proxy to assess the Union.

5.2.3. Cognitive Mobilisation approach

Theoretical assumptions state that people who regularly discuss politics are more likely to have an idea and understanding of the European Union. Being informed is theorised to lead to the result that citizens assess the EU more positively.

Table 7. OLS model of image of the EU – Cognitive mobilisation model

Predictors	Russia	Armenia	Belarus	Azerbaijan	Ukraine	Georgia	Moldova
Frequency of discussion	-0.263**** (0.054)	0.076 (0.056)	-0.090* (0.050)	0.076 (0.063)	0.112 (0.068)	0.113*** (0.043)	0.026 (0.065)
Opinion leadership	0.047 (0.067)	0.075 (0.075)	0.035 (0.055)	-0.085 (0.073)	0.156** (0.076)	0.145** (0.059)	0.269**** (0.076)
Gender	0.025 (0.065)	0.145** (0.071)	0.017 (0.055)	0.172** (0.069)	0.033 (0.073)	-0.127** (0.059)	0.043 (0.074)
Age	-0.000 (0.002)	-0.009**** (0.002)	-0.015**** (0.002)	-0.007**** (0.002)	-0.006**** (0.002)	-0.002 (0.002)	-0.007*** (0.002)
Constant	3.017**** (0.131)	3.426**** (0.137)	3.878**** (0.113)	3.307**** (0.139)	3.394**** (0.160)	3.306**** (0.112)	3.388**** (0.173)
Observations	956	994	982	913	953	991	908
R ²	0.024	0.028	0.089	0.020	0.018	0.027	0.027
Adjusted R ²	0.020	0.024	0.086	0.015	0.014	0.023	0.022

Source: EU Neighbourhood Barometer 2014, wave 6. Own calculations.

Standard errors in parentheses

* $p < 0.10$, ** $p < 0.05$, *** $p < 0.01$, **** $p < 0.001$

The table of the regression analysis reveals surprising results. Citizens of countries with rather pro-European governments and a closer political and economic relationship with the EU are more likely to be in favour of the Union if they regularly discuss politics and/or tend to lead in such conversations. This is totally in line with the theoretical expectations. However, people in Russia and Belarus tend to view the European Union more negatively when they frequently discuss politics. I can only cautiously try to interpret these surprising outcomes. Russian and Belarusian citizens could be influenced by the generally negative tone when it comes to the EU in their domestic political arena and media. In other words, people in these two countries might predominantly discuss the EU in a rather negative light. Therefore, they might reinforce their negative feeling towards Brussels when they talk about politics regularly.

Table 8. OLS model of image of the EU – Full models (extract: Cognitive Mobilisation variables)

Predictors	Russia	Armenia	Belarus	Azerbaijan	Ukraine	Georgia	Moldova
Frequency of discussion	-0.287**** (0.060)	0.057 (0.058)	-0.174**** (0.049)	0.022 (0.065)	0.052 (0.064)	0.056 (0.044)	-0.010 (0.059)
Opinion leadership	0.015 (0.072)	-0.016 (0.078)	-0.056 (0.055)	-0.100 (0.073)	0.157** (0.075)	0.077 (0.057)	0.126* (0.068)

Source: EU Neighbourhood Barometer 2014, wave 6. Own calculations.

Standard errors in parentheses

* $p < 0.10$, ** $p < 0.05$, *** $p < 0.01$, **** $p < 0.001$

These results of a negative relationship between the frequency of discussion and the assessment of the EU in Russia and Belarus are confirmed by the full model. The effects are even bigger when holding all other variables constant. However, we cannot observe any significant impact in all other countries. Yet, people who try to persuade their discussion counterparts of their opinion are more likely to be in favour of the EU in Ukraine and Moldova.

In sum, the testing of the cognitive mobilisation theory does not show clear effects among most of the countries. Nevertheless, the results are quite interesting given that theoretical considerations have only foreseen a positive relationship between cognitive mobilisation and the image of the EU so far. This thinking might need to be changed.

5.2.4. Identity approach

As a short recap the identity theory assumes that people who feel close to Europe tend to have a more positive view of the EU. Conversely, citizens with a strong affect towards their own nation are theorised to assess the Union rather negatively. Given the fight for hegemony in the region between Brussels and Moscow, people with a strong personal inclination towards Russia are also expected to assess the EU more negatively.

Table 9. OLS model of image of the EU – Affect model

Predictors	Russia	Armenia	Belarus	Azerbaijan	Ukraine	Georgia	Moldova
Affect towards Europe	0.445**** (0.062)	0.188** (0.077)	0.337**** (0.058)	0.316**** (0.081)	0.613**** (0.069)	0.341**** (0.070)	0.634**** (0.071)
Affect towards nation	-0.495*** (0.160)	0.110 (0.172)	-0.009 (0.106)	-0.374** (0.185)	0.356** (0.173)	-0.028 (0.104)	0.207* (0.113)
Affect towards Russia	-0.452** (0.215)	0.031 (0.079)	-0.130 (0.083)	-0.149* (0.085)	-0.413**** (0.064)	-0.121* (0.064)	-0.342**** (0.074)
Been to Europe	0.265** (0.121)	0.041 (0.138)	0.333**** (0.070)	0.309 (0.189)	0.402**** (0.117)	0.170 (0.249)	0.316**** (0.082)
Family in Europe	0.055 (0.114)	0.066 (0.072)	-0.012 (0.072)	0.067 (0.087)	0.044 (0.086)	0.168** (0.070)	0.364**** (0.068)
Gender	0.069 (0.061)	0.107 (0.072)	0.016 (0.052)	0.124* (0.065)	-0.024 (0.066)	-0.169*** (0.057)	0.001 (0.065)
Age	-0.000 (0.002)	-0.009**** (0.002)	-0.011**** (0.002)	-0.005*** (0.002)	-0.002 (0.002)	-0.000 (0.002)	-0.005** (0.002)
Constant	3.183**** (0.199)	3.410**** (0.189)	3.498**** (0.119)	3.602**** (0.199)	3.113**** (0.201)	3.479**** (0.127)	3.118**** (0.147)
Observations	992	1003	1034	1007	1000	1002	970
R ²	0.092	0.034	0.149	0.042	0.145	0.046	0.173
Adjusted R ²	0.086	0.028	0.144	0.035	0.139	0.039	0.167

Source: EU Neighbourhood Barometer 2014, wave 6. Own calculations.

Standard errors in parentheses

* $p < 0.10$, ** $p < 0.05$, *** $p < 0.01$, **** $p < 0.001$

At first glance we can see from the table above that the affect model includes various variables with a high potential to predict the individual assessment of the EU. Most strikingly, people with a feeling of cultural proximity to Europe are more likely to approve of the EU in all examined countries. This is the factor with the clearest effect amongst all variables. In Ukraine – the country with the most evident effect of this variable – feeling close to Europe increases the logistic probability of a more positive evaluation of the EU by .61 compared with a person without an affect towards Europe.

As theorised the variable including affect towards Russia shows the exact opposite effect. People who feel close to Russian culture tend to have a more negative opinion of the European Union. This is especially the case in Russia, Ukraine and Moldova. These clear results underline the impact of the struggle for regional influence. Those who feel close to Europe are in favour of the EU, while those who are more attached to Russia dislike the Union.

The effects of the variable regarding a national affect are more ambiguous. While people who feel close to their nation's culture tend to perceive the EU more negatively in Russia and Azerbaijan, the opposite impact occurs in Ukraine and Moldova. Hence, the hypothesis that

people with a rather national identity assess the EU more negatively cannot be confirmed for all countries. It is important to note that there are only very few people in the sample who feel not culturally close to their country. Consequently, the regression results regarding this variable have to be interpreted with great caution. This low number of respondents without a feeling of cultural attachment to their nation may explain why – with the exception of Azerbaijan – no country displays statistically significant results in the full model below.

Having been in a country of the EU in the last twelve months has a positive relationship with the assessment of the Union. We can see statistically significant results in four of seven countries in the model above and in three cases in the full model. However – similar to the variable regarding affect towards the nation – very few people indicate a stay in the EU in the past year. Hence, the results have only limited significance.

People who have or had relatives in the EU are more likely to have a positive image of the EU in Georgia and Moldova. In all other countries we cannot see a significant effect.

Table 10. OLS model of image of the EU – Full models (extract: Cognitive Mobilisation variables)

Predictors	Russia	Armenia	Belarus	Azerbaijan	Ukraine	Georgia	Moldova
Affect towards Europe	0.363*** (0.066)	0.194** (0.081)	0.350*** (0.061)	0.246*** (0.084)	0.346*** (0.077)	0.178** (0.074)	0.426*** (0.077)
Affect towards nation	-0.254 (0.160)	0.122 (0.174)	0.016 (0.108)	-0.472** (0.194)	0.180 (0.186)	-0.050 (0.108)	0.112 (0.123)
Affect towards Russia	-0.481** (0.194)	-0.019 (0.082)	-0.041 (0.087)	-0.135 (0.084)	-0.171** (0.066)	-0.148** (0.064)	-0.367*** (0.075)
Been to Europe	0.281* (0.143)	0.071 (0.148)	0.398*** (0.080)	0.056 (0.201)	0.312** (0.128)	0.216 (0.249)	0.126 (0.079)
Family in Europe	0.090 (0.120)	0.050 (0.073)	0.028 (0.076)	0.133 (0.096)	0.087 (0.087)	0.118* (0.069)	0.207*** (0.072)

Source: EU Neighbourhood Barometer 2014, wave 6. Own calculations.

Standard errors in parentheses

* $p < 0.10$, ** $p < 0.05$, *** $p < 0.01$, **** $p < 0.001$

The full model results basically confirm the outcomes of the model further above. Yet, as mentioned the affect towards the nation variable is less influential when holding all factors constant. Regarding the national affect variable, it would be interesting to see if people with an exclusive national identity are less supportive of the EU than people with a national and European one. Theory suggests that people with a strong affective feeling towards their nation, but not towards Europe tend to have a more negative opinion of the EU. Unfortunately, for this

sample such an analysis cannot be conducted. This would not lead to valid results given the very low number of people without a national affect.

In summary, the identity approach is a powerful predictor of the public perception of the EU. In particular, affect towards Europe and Russia serve as significant, albeit contradictory variables to explain variation in the individual assessment of the EU. Furthermore, stays in the EU or family ties in a country in the Union have at least partly a positive relationship with the image of the EU.

5.2.5. Summary of findings

After the presentation of the main results of the analysis I want to sum up the main findings. Therefore, I show the full regression model below including all variables from each theory plus the control variables. For a better overview I present only the statistically significant results. This way we can see more clearly which theoretical approaches have variables with statistical explanatory power.

Table 11. OLS model of image of the EU – Full models (Reduced version)

Predictors	Russia	Armenia	Belarus	Azerbaijan	Ukraine	Georgia	Moldova
UTILITARIAN							
Economic situation	0.264*** (0.102)		0.166* (0.086)				
Economic expectations		0.120* (0.073)					0.190*** (0.063)
Level in society	0.042* (0.022)		-0.036* (0.020)	0.031* (0.018)		0.059*** (0.018)	
Higher education						0.106* (0.063)	
Without job				0.190** (0.086)			
Qualified job							0.290*** (0.104)
Student				0.287* (0.154)			
CUEING							
Trust in government	-0.313*** (0.079)	-0.161* (0.083)	-0.255*** (0.072)		0.381*** (0.075)	0.140** (0.068)	0.245*** (0.072)

Trust in media	0.467**** (0.090)	0.402**** (0.109)		0.200* (0.107)	0.176* (0.099)	0.243*** (0.085)	
Direction of country	-0.143*** (0.047)				0.313**** (0.048)	0.139*** (0.042)	0.460**** (0.046)
Democracy satisfaction	0.143** (0.073)			0.265**** (0.073)	0.178** (0.081)		0.174** (0.085)
COGNITIVE MOBILISATION							
Frequency of discussion	-0.287**** (0.060)		-0.174**** (0.049)				
Opinion leadership					0.157** (0.075)		0.126* (0.068)
AFFECT							
Affect towards Europe	0.363**** (0.066)	0.194** (0.081)	0.350**** (0.061)	0.246*** (0.084)	0.346**** (0.077)	0.178** (0.074)	0.426**** (0.077)
Affect towards nation				-0.472** (0.194)			
Affect towards Russia	-0.481** (0.194)				-0.171** (0.066)	-0.148** (0.064)	-0.367**** (0.075)
Been to Europe	0.281* (0.143)		0.398**** (0.080)		0.312** (0.128)		
Family in Europe						0.118* (0.069)	0.207*** (0.072)
CONTROLS							
Gender				0.123* (0.072)		-0.154** (0.060)	
Age	0.005* (0.003)	-0.006** (0.002)	-0.011**** (0.002)				
Constant	3.326**** (0.295)	2.730**** (0.280)	4.111**** (0.230)	3.031**** (0.330)	2.118**** (0.284)	2.368**** (0.222)	1.835**** (0.250)
Observations	850	962	913	875	852	946	784
R ²	0.189	0.062	0.206	0.096	0.280	0.149	0.371
Adjusted R ²	0.170	0.042	0.189	0.074	0.263	0.130	0.355

Source: EU Neighbourhood Barometer 2014, wave 6. Own calculations.

Standard errors in parentheses

* $p < 0.10$, ** $p < 0.05$, *** $p < 0.01$, **** $p < 0.001$

Since I did not mention the control variables in the chapters above I will now start summarising them. It is difficult to deduce any general statement from the analysis since both age and gender display inconsistent and barely significant results. Only citizens in Armenia and Belarus are in line with the theoretical assumption that younger people are more in favour of the EU. Russian respondents contradict this hypothesis by showing the opposite tendency. This is a quite unusual result since most studies found that young people are more pro-European.

Gender does not influence the public perception of the EU in most countries. In Azerbaijan women tend to be more pro-European, in Georgia men. In other countries, there is no significant difference between men and women assessing the EU. Therefore, no general direction of the influence of gender is found.

Regarding the utilitarian approach we can see in the reduced version of the full model that there is hardly any pattern. In very few cases variables have a statistically significant influence on the independent factor. In Ukraine, not a single variable has significant results.

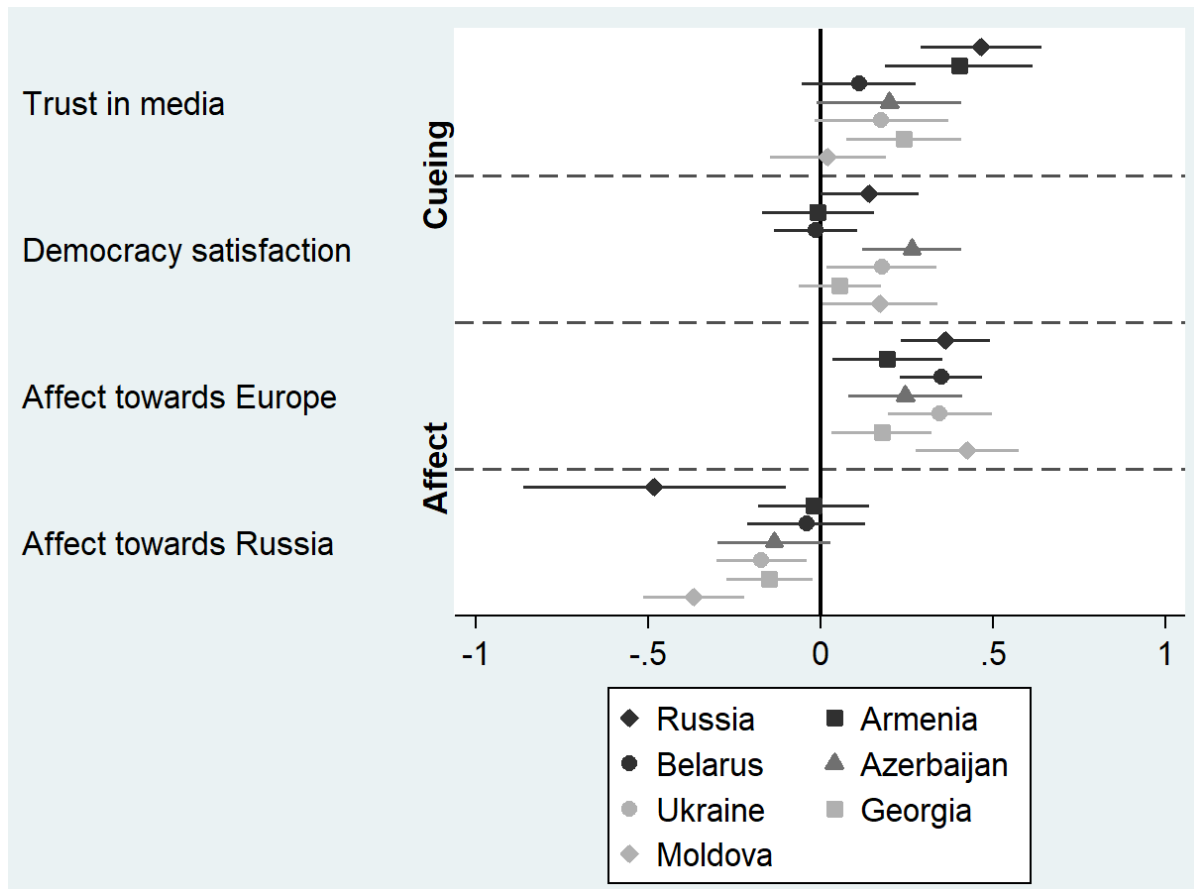
The outcomes of the cueing approach fit much better in the theoretical considerations. Nevertheless, the effects have different tendencies depending on the relationship between a country and the European Union. Thus, people who support their government and are satisfied with the direction of the country are less likely to support the EU in Russia, while the opposite is true in neighbouring Ukraine. This can be seen as an outcome of the different approach of the respective political leadership towards Brussels.

The cognitive mobilisation analysis shows quite contradicting results. On the one hand, citizens of Russia and Belarus tend to view the EU more negatively if they frequently take part in political debates. On the other hand, people in Ukraine and Moldova possess a better image of the EU when leading on discussions. Yet, these variables indicate statistically significant results only in very few cases.

Finally, the affect model includes a few variables that support the identity approach. People with a feeling of cultural proximity to Europe, recent experience in Europe and family ties in the European Union tend to be more supportive of the EU. However, citizens with an inclination towards Russian culture seem to assess the EU more negatively. All of this is in line with the theoretical assumptions. Only the affect towards the own nation could not be tested to a satisfying degree given the small number of respondents who do not feel close to their country's culture and therefore too little variation to make meaningful statements.

The chapters and tables above give a comprehensive answer to the first research question of this thesis, namely “[w]hat factors determine the public external perception of the EU in the countries of the Eastern Partnership and Russia”. The second research question asks: “To what extent do these factors resemble each other or differ in the examined countries?”. To illustrate the response to this question I created two figures. One of them presents the main similarities, the other the main differences regarding the effects of examined factors on the public perception of the European Union.

Figure 4. Most similar effects (all countries)



Source: EU Neighbourhood Barometer 2014, wave 6. Own calculations.

The figure above displays the predicted effects of the full regression model of the image of the EU in all seven countries including the 95% confidence interval.

The cueing variable trust in media has a clear positive tendency in all countries on the assessment of the EU. Only in Moldova there is no clear visible effect. Although the coverage on EU issues is very different in the seven countries from being quite anti-EU in Russia to EU friendly in Ukraine and Georgia the belief in the quality of media products increases the tendency to see the EU in a positive light.

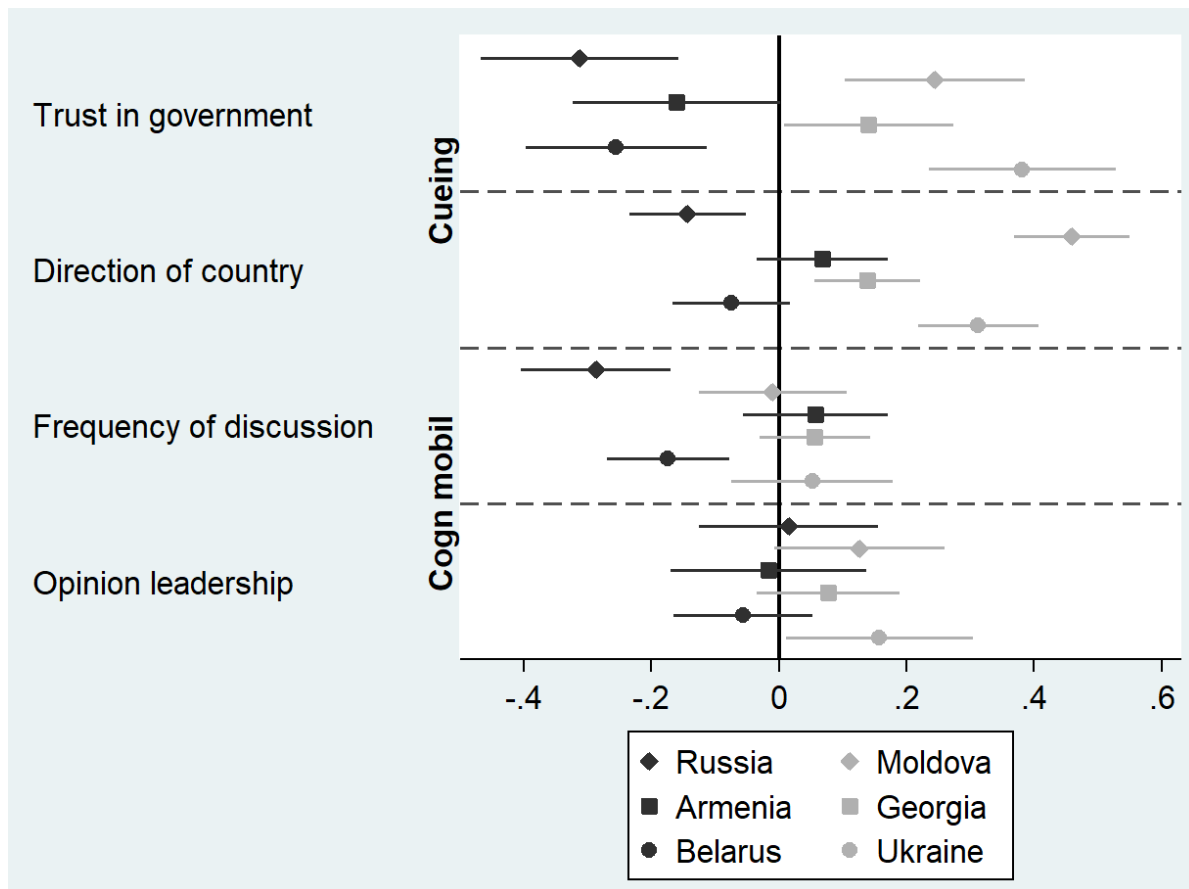
If people are satisfied with the way democracy works in their country this has also a positive effect on the image of the EU – both in rather pro-European and Eurosceptic countries. Hence, in contrast to what is claimed by the substitution cueing approach people do not want to overcome problems in the own country's political system, but if they believe in the functioning of domestic democracy they also tend to have more pro-European attitudes. However, there is almost no impact of this variable in Armenia, Belarus and Georgia.

Besides the cueing approach there are also two factors with very similar impact across all examined countries among the identity-driven variables. The clearest effect among all variables can be observed in the affect towards Europe variable. All seven cases show high significant effects. In other words, a person who feels close to European culture is also more likely to have positive feelings towards the European Union. This relationship between the independent and explanatory variable is not particularly surprising given that feeling close to Europe overlaps with having a positive opinion about the European Union. However, it is remarkable that the effect is so obvious among all countries.

Contrary to the variable above people with a feeling of cultural proximity to Russia are much less likely to have a positive view of the EU.

This cleavage between the two identity variables highlights the ongoing polarisation between European and Russian integration. Feeling closer to Russia is a reason to dislike the EU. This is a clear sign for Brussels to use their soft power skills to work on a less polarised debate. Feeling close to Russian culture must not be a motive to have a negative perception of the EU. Hardly surprising the effect is especially obvious in Russia, although including a comparably big standard error. The clearest polarisation can be seen in Moldova. Evidently, there is a big cleavage between people feeling closer to Europe or Russia. Those with affective feelings towards Moscow have a rather negative image of the EU. The opposite is true for people feeling closer to Europe. This cleavage might be explained by the existence of Russian and Romanian speaking citizens. Also in Ukraine and Georgia we can observe a similar division.

Figure 5. Most polarising effects (Russia/Armenia/Belarus vs Ukraine/Georgia/Moldova)



Source: EU Neighbourhood Barometer 2014, wave 6. Own calculations.

The figure above shows the most polarising effects among six of the seven countries. Looking at the results, Azerbaijan is not included because it does not fit into this polarisation seen above. In addition, it makes visible the division between countries with a rather European integration perspective and those states being closer to Russia. Azerbaijan tries to adapt a rather neutral position.

Trust in government has the most polarising effects among all others. On the one hand, those who trust the political leadership in Russia, Armenia and Belarus seem to adopt their rather negative attitude towards Brussels. On the other hand, people in Moldova, Georgia and Ukraine follow their government in viewing the EU positively – if they are rather favourable towards the country's leadership.

With the exception of Armenia, the same is true for citizens who support the way things are going in their country. Moldova stands out with a clear positive effect, followed by Ukraine.

People in Russia and Belarus have a more negative perception of the EU if they believe in the chosen way of the country.

Polarisation can also be found in the two cognitive mobilisation variables, although in a less consistent way. Interestingly, people who frequently discuss politics in Russia and Belarus tend to assess the EU more negatively than those who rarely or never do so. This could imply that the discussions have a rather anti-European tone. This is contrary to the theoretical assumption that political interest increases the level of knowledge about the EU, takes away uncertainty and fear of the remote EU and consequently displays Brussels in a more positive light. In all other countries there is no or a small positive effect of political discussion, but this is far from being statistically significant.

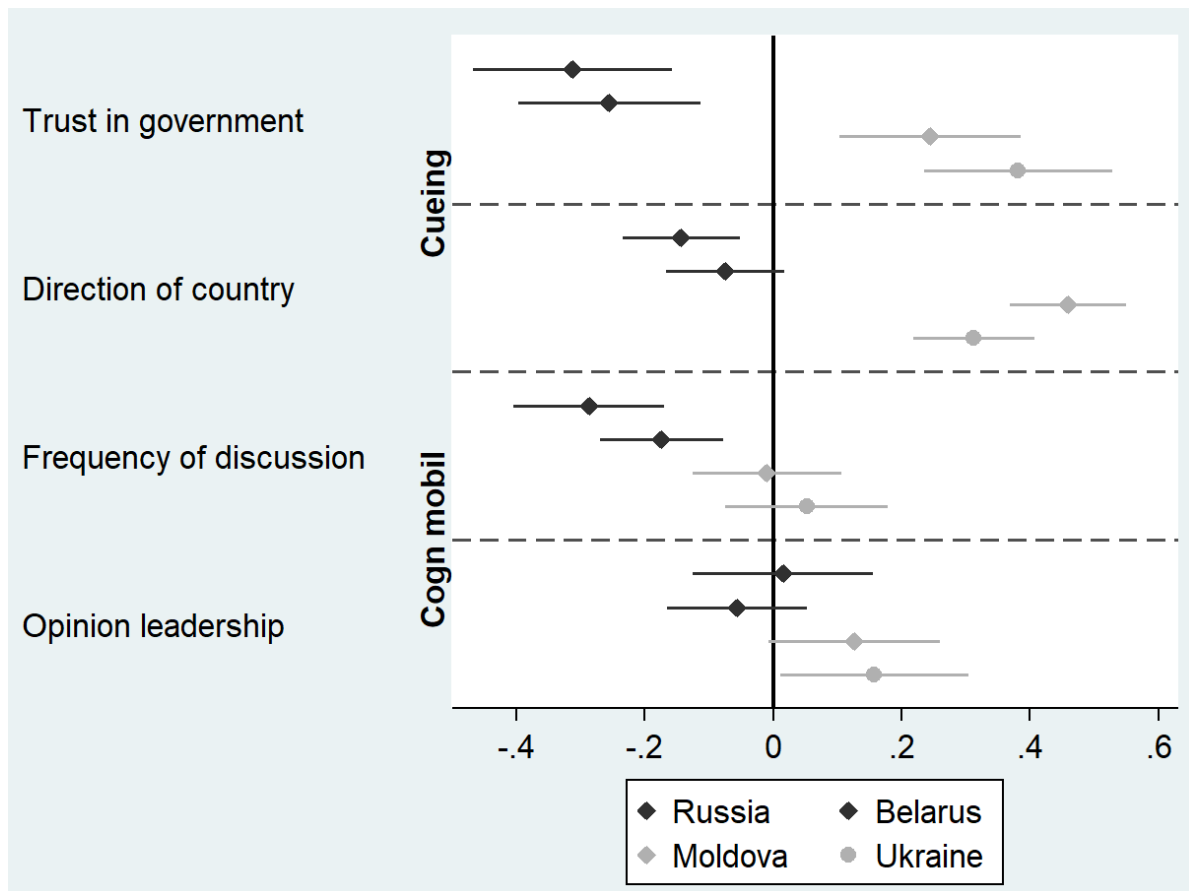
People with a tendency to lead in discussions tend to view the EU more positively – but only in the pro-European countries Georgia, and especially in Moldova and Ukraine. However, the effect is not big in any of these states. In the other countries there is no clear effect at all.

In sum, people who discuss politics are less likely to favour the EU in countries with a rather anti-European leadership. Almost no effect can be seen in other countries. By contrast, people who try to persuade interlocutors of their opinion are more likely to assess the EU positively in rather pro-European states. Again, no clear effect is observable in other countries.

It is very interesting to note that the cueing approach includes two factors with a similar effect in all countries and two factors with polarising impact on the perception of the EU. Hence, we cannot generally say that trust in domestic institutions is transferred to the European level. In the case of trust in media and democracy this seems to be true. However, the country-specific context matters when it comes to trust in the national government and the satisfaction with the course of a country. Hence, it is important to consider contextual factors that might influence the direction of the effect on the perception of the EU.

For illustration purposes, the figure below depicts the four countries with the most evident cleavage. The polarisation is more clearly visible if we include just Russia plus Belarus on the one side and Moldova plus Ukraine on the other. The people of these four countries are affected very differently by these two cueing and two cognitive mobilisation variables.

Figure 6. Most polarising effects (Russia/Belarus vs Moldova/Ukraine)



Source: EU Neighbourhood Barometer 2014, wave 6. Own calculations.

6. CONCLUSION

This thesis began by asking for the effects that influence the public perception of the European Union and the similarities and differences among the examined countries. In the results chapters above, I answered these questions. In my concluding words, I will try to sum up the main outcomes of this study and provide answers to these additional questions: What implications do the results have for the theoretical concepts like diffuse and specific support described in the first part of this thesis? What should the EU aim for and change in the Public Diplomacy approach in order to improve its image abroad?

Generally, we have seen that the EU has a less positive image in 2014 in the examined seven countries than it had before the outbreak of the Ukraine crisis. Especially in Russia, we can observe a clear decrease of support for the EU. Still, in the other six countries more people have a positive than negative view of the Union.

The main focus of the analysis was to identify factors that explain variation in the image of the EU in a public outside the EU. With the help of ordinal logit regression analysis, I tested four theoretical concepts that were found to be the most used theories in the literature regarding perception of the European Union. These were the utilitarian, cueing, cognitive mobilisation and identity approach.

The results for the utilitarian theory were quite disappointing. Contrary to the hypotheses, people outside the EU – at least in the Eastern Partnership countries and Russia – tend not to be more supportive of the Union if they have a higher education, a more qualified job or optimistic economic expectations. People there do not use instrumental cost-benefit calculations of how much they could benefit from closer relations with the EU. Nevertheless, this is in line with the assumption that people in the post-Soviet countries lack information to make meaningful utilitarian considerations.

Quite contrary to the utilitarian approach the assumptions made by the cueing theory could be confirmed by the analysis. People use national proxies like the government, media and democracy satisfaction to assess the EU. However, the mechanism of the cueing variables varies. On the one hand, people follow the government approach towards the EU to evaluate whether the EU should be seen positively or negatively – at least when they trust in their leadership. This confirms the expectation that people in countries with a rather authoritarian regime follow their government on political preferences. On the other hand, they generally extend trust in media and satisfaction with democracy to the European Union.

Similar to the utilitarian variables the frequency of discussions on political issues and the tendency to try to persuade interlocutors of one's opinion are rather poor explanatory factors. The assumption does not hold true that political awareness raises knowledge about the EU and therefore makes it to a less remote political object that can be supported. On the contrary, in Russia and Belarus discussions about politics seem to amplify reservations towards Brussels. Regarding the evaluation of the EU, citizens of Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, Moldova, Russia and Ukraine are united in their tendency to assess the EU via feelings of cultural proximity. When an individual perceives to be closer to Europe, he/she is much more likely to have a positive image of the EU compared to a person who perceives being close to Russia. The struggle between the EU and Russia about regional hegemony seems to be part of the thinking of the citizens in the region. Who is pro-Russian must be anti-EU and vice versa.

Given these different outcomes within the four theories tested we can now state to what extent citizens of the seven countries show rather specific or diffuse support. Citizens in the seven non-EU countries are very much influenced by their personal sense of belonging to European or Russian culture. This is a very affective decision making. Using Norris' and Dalton's five-level-scale this factor belongs to "Political Community" (cf. Dalton 1999/Norris 1999), which is the clearest example of diffuse support in their model (see chapter 2.2.1 Concepts of Political Support). Furthermore, people are evaluating the EU indirectly through domestic proxies. In particular, they follow their political leadership and transfer trust in media to the European level. Additionally, citizens' satisfaction with the way democracy works in the country influences their image of the EU. In the model of Norris and Dalton these factors refer to regime performance and regime institutions. These are located largely in the middle between diffuse and specific support. However, European institutions or democracy are not directly assessed, but the EU via domestic objects. Therefore, this is a form of indirect evaluation and means a more diffuse than specific kind of support. More specific support such as economic considerations to assess the EU – as tested via the utilitarian variables – have an impact only in a few countries and not in a generalisable way. In addition, political awareness or cognitive mobilisation that should increase knowledge about the EU do hardly influence people's image of the EU.

Hence, when it comes to the perception of the EU people rely more on national proxies and affective feelings than rational contemplation or knowledge-based decisions. This can be explained in the context of limited access to information about the EU in these countries and the strong and predominant discourse about Brussels shaped by the political leadership.

Furthermore, we should not forget that support in the case of the dependent variable and its question about the image of the EU is directed towards the political collectivity – as defined in the theoretical part. This is already a sign that support is rather diffuse, while it would be more specific when directed towards political actors or institutions.

Apart from the four theories (utilitarian, cueing, cognitive mobilisation, identity) the analysis found that country-specific context matters. As expected, the direction of some effects within the cueing approach depends on the political context. As mentioned above, people who trust their government in pro-European countries are more supportive towards the EU. Citizens who equally trust their national leadership in countries with reserved feelings towards Brussels among the political elite tend to have a less positive image of the EU. Similarly, agreeing with the course of a country influences the image of the EU differently depending on the country. To some extent the effect of cognitive mobilisation seems to be dependent on the relations between a country and the EU – even if in a much less consistent way. Still, people in Russia and Belarus, who already have the most negative image of the EU among the examined countries reinforce this feeling when discussing about politics. People in Ukraine and Moldova, however, become more supportive when taking over an opinion leadership in debates. In contrast to my hypothesis, the political context and the EU-country relations have no impact on utilitarian considerations. This assumption seemed to be supported only in the model that does not control for all variables. In the full model this cannot be confirmed.

In total, only two out of four theoretical expectations could be largely confirmed by the analysis in this paper. Most of the theories are grounded in studies about the internal rather than the external perception of the EU. The findings from within the EU are therefore only partly transferable to countries outside the Union. Hence, it seems necessary to invest more in the theoretical and empirical work on the perception of the EU by people outside the European Union.

Nevertheless, there are a few lessons that can be learned by the European Union and its Public Diplomacy efforts when interpreting the results of this thesis.

First and most importantly, Brussels should pay attention to the fact that there is a big cleavage between people feeling close to Russia and those having stronger ties in Europe. The EU must take stronger actions to end this polarisation. Many people in the region have close cultural, linguistic or personal connections to Russia. This should not be a reason to dislike the European Union. Brussels must make it clear to the people of the region that neither the European

Neighbourhood Policy nor the Eastern Partnership is directed against Moscow. If the EU manages to sell these policies as inclusive and not dividing act it is much more likely to overcome the polarisation. However, this seems to be quite illusionary as long as the huge tensions regarding the conflict in Ukraine do not disappear. Hence, the EU must strengthen its efforts to resolve this crisis.

Second and given the finding that people trust their affective feelings more than their evaluative considerations to assess the EU, Brussels should continue its decision to put more money and efforts into Public Diplomacy. Statistical facts about the benefits of the Union do not result in support of the people outside the EU for Brussels. Yet the EU must work harder to evoke a general positive feeling towards Brussels. Public Diplomacy can help the Union become a more attractive actor for the citizens of the Eastern Partnership countries and Russia. It is vital for the EU to appeal to the sentiments of these people, rather than just to rational concerns. The European Union must reach the heart of the people, not so much their brain.

Third, people who believe in the democratic path of their nation and trust their media tend to have a better perception of the EU. This could mean the EU should put even more efforts into democracy building in the region and try to improve the conditions for independent and trustworthy media. Both seems to correlate with a positive attitude towards Brussels.

Finally and in a general sense, it is crucial from a constructivist perspective to improve the EU's image in the region. The more people have a favourable view of the EU, the more it is likely that the country's leadership will also act in a positive way towards Brussels. In addition, constructivists argue that identity shapes the way the world is perceived. As we have seen, feeling close to European culture means more support for the EU. Hence, it is helpful for Brussels to emphasise the common ground between the region and Europe so that people there feel as Europeans and consequently tend to regard the Union in a more positive light.

There is definitely much more the EU has to do to improve its image abroad – but the lessons learned presented above can contribute to a better understanding and a better assessment of the EU in the future.

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Table 12. Wording of questions in the EU Neighbourhood Barometer wave 6 from which the dependent and independent variables are derived.

Variable	Description	Original measure	Edited measure
DEPENDENT VARIABLE			
Image of the EU	In general, does the European Union conjure up for you a very positive, fairly positive, neutral, fairly negative or very negative image?	Ordinal [1=Very positive...5=Very negative]	Ordinal [1=Very negative...5=Very positive]
INDEPENDENT VARIABLES			
UTILITARIAN APPROACH			
Economic situation	How would you judge the current situation in each of the following? The economic situation in (OUR COUNTRY) Your personal job situation The financial situation of your household	Ordinal [1=Very good...4=Very bad]	Dichotomous [1=Good] Index of all variables
Economic expectations	What are your expectations for the next twelve months: will the next twelve months be better, worse or the same, when it comes to...? The economic situation in (OUR COUNTRY) Your personal job situation The financial situation of your household The employment situation in (OUR COUNTRY) Your life in general	Ordinal [1=Better 2=Worse 3=Same]	Ordinal [1=Worse 2=Same 3=Better] Index of all variables
Level in society	On the following scale, step '1' corresponds to "the lowest level in the society"; step '10' corresponds to "the highest level in the society". Could you tell me on which step you would place yourself?	Ordinal [1=The lowest level in the society...10=The highest level in the society]	Ordinal [1=The lowest level in the society...10=The highest level in the society]
Education	How old were you when you stopped full-time education?	Scale	Dummies: Dichotomous [1=Low education] Dichotomous [1=Middle education]

8. APPENDIX

Occupation	What is your current occupation?	18 job categories, 3 overarching categories (non-active, self-employed, employed)	Dichotomous [High education] Dummies: Dichotomous [1=Without job] Dichotomous [1=Simple job] Dichotomous [1=Qualified job] Dichotomous [1=Student]
CUEING			
Trust in government	For each of the following national bodies, please tell me if you tend to trust it or tend not to trust it. The (NATIONALITY) government	Dichotomous [1=Tend to trust 2=Tend not to trust]	Dichotomous [1=Tend to trust]
Media trust	For each of the following medias, please tell me if you tend to trust it or tend not to trust it. The printed press Radio TV The Internet	Ordinal [1=Totally trust...No trust at all]	Dichotomous [1=Tend to trust] Index of all variables
Direction of country	At the present time, would you say that, in general, things are going in the right direction or in the wrong direction, in...? (OUR COUNTRY)	Ordinal [1=Right direction 2=Wrong direction 3=Neither the one nor the other]	Ordinal [1=Wrong direction 2=Neither the one nor the other 3=Right direction]
Democracy satisfaction	On the whole, are you very satisfied, fairly satisfied, not very satisfied or not at all satisfied with the way democracy works in (OUR COUNTRY)?	Ordinal [1=Very satisfied...4=Not at all satisfied]	Dichotomous [1=Satisfied]
COGNITIVE MOBILISATION			
Frequency of discussion	When you get together with friends or relatives, would you say you discuss frequently, occasionally or never about...? International political matters National political matters	Ordinal [1=Frequently...3=Never]	Ordinal [1=Never...3=Frequently] Index of all variables

Local political matters			
Opinion leadership	When you hold a strong opinion, do you ever find yourself persuading your friends, relatives or fellow workers to share your views? Does this happen...?	Ordinal [1=Often...4=Never]	Dichotomous [1=Tend to persuade]
IDENTITY			
Cultural affect	Personally, to what extent do you feel close to ... European culture Russian culture The culture of (OUR COUNTRY).	Ordinal [1=Very close...4=Very far]	Dichotomous [1=Rather close]
Been to Europe	Have you visited or lived in a country in the European Union in the last 12 months?	1=Yes, visited for business 2=Yes, visited on holiday 3=Yes, lived and/or worked 4=Yes, to study] 5=No	Dichotomous [1=Yes]
Family in Europe	Do you have any relatives (parents, children, grandchildren etc.) who currently live or have lived in the past in a country in the European Union?	1=Yes, for work 2=Yes, for study 3=Yes, for other reason 4=No	Dichotomous [1=Yes]
CONTROLS			
Gender	Gender.	Dichotomous [1=Male 2=Female]	Dichotomous [1=Female]
Age	How old are you?	Scale	Scale

Table 13. OLS model of image of the EU – Full models

Predictors	Russia	Armenia	Belarus	Azerbaijan	Ukraine	Georgia	Moldova
UTILITARIAN							
Economic situation	0.264*** (0.102)	0.000 (0.122)	0.166* (0.086)	0.133 (0.097)	-0.007 (0.136)	0.059 (0.106)	-0.115 (0.105)
Economic expectations	-0.080 (0.069)	0.120* (0.073)	-0.008 (0.070)	-0.028 (0.089)	0.063 (0.064)	0.066 (0.059)	0.190*** (0.063)
Level in society	0.042* (0.022)	0.014 (0.020)	-0.036* (0.020)	0.031* (0.018)	0.015 (0.019)	0.059**** (0.018)	-0.002 (0.021)
Higher education	0.051 (0.072)	-0.106 (0.079)	0.008 (0.062)	0.130 (0.087)	-0.018 (0.071)	0.106* (0.063)	-0.053 (0.076)
Without job	-0.013 (0.093)	-0.008 (0.094)	-0.012 (0.080)	0.190** (0.086)	0.059 (0.091)	0.030 (0.075)	0.124 (0.081)
Qualified job	-0.027 (0.088)	-0.074 (0.116)	0.079 (0.082)	0.008 (0.115)	-0.010 (0.105)	0.083 (0.099)	0.290*** (0.104)
Student	0.138 (0.140)	0.055 (0.153)	-0.092 (0.117)	0.287* (0.154)	0.068 (0.132)	0.136 (0.129)	0.132 (0.126)
CUEING							
Trust in government	-0.313**** (0.079)	-0.161* (0.083)	-0.255**** (0.072)	-0.158 (0.127)	0.381**** (0.075)	0.140** (0.068)	0.245**** (0.072)
Trust in media	0.467**** (0.090)	0.402**** (0.109)	0.111 (0.084)	0.200* (0.107)	0.176* (0.099)	0.243*** (0.085)	0.022 (0.086)
Direction of country	-0.143*** (0.047)	0.068 (0.052)	-0.074 (0.047)	0.073 (0.053)	0.313**** (0.048)	0.139*** (0.042)	0.460**** (0.046)
Democracy satisfaction	0.143** (0.073)	-0.007 (0.082)	-0.013 (0.062)	0.265**** (0.073)	0.178** (0.081)	0.056 (0.061)	0.174** (0.085)
COGNITIVE MOBILISATION							
Frequency of discussion	-0.287**** (0.060)	0.057 (0.058)	-0.174**** (0.049)	0.022 (0.065)	0.052 (0.064)	0.056 (0.044)	-0.010 (0.059)
Opinion leadership	0.015 (0.072)	-0.016 (0.078)	-0.056 (0.055)	-0.100 (0.073)	0.157** (0.075)	0.077 (0.057)	0.126* (0.068)
AFFECT							
Affect towards Europe	0.363**** (0.066)	0.194** (0.081)	0.350**** (0.061)	0.246*** (0.084)	0.346**** (0.077)	0.178** (0.074)	0.426**** (0.077)
Affect towards nation	-0.254 (0.160)	0.122 (0.174)	0.016 (0.108)	-0.472** (0.194)	0.180 (0.186)	-0.050 (0.108)	0.112 (0.123)
Affect towards Russia	-0.481** (0.194)	-0.019 (0.082)	-0.041 (0.087)	-0.135 (0.084)	-0.171** (0.066)	-0.148** (0.064)	-0.367**** (0.075)
Been to Europe	0.281* (0.143)	0.071 (0.148)	0.398**** (0.080)	0.056 (0.201)	0.312** (0.128)	0.216 (0.249)	0.126 (0.079)
Family in Europe	0.090 (0.120)	0.050 (0.073)	0.028 (0.076)	0.133 (0.096)	0.087 (0.087)	0.118* (0.069)	0.207*** (0.072)
CONTROLS							

Gender	0.013 (0.067)	0.063 (0.077)	-0.004 (0.056)	0.123* (0.072)	-0.010 (0.069)	-0.154** (0.060)	-0.025 (0.066)
Age	0.005* (0.003)	-0.006** (0.002)	-0.011**** (0.002)	-0.003 (0.002)	-0.003 (0.002)	0.002 (0.002)	-0.003 (0.002)
Constant	3.326**** (0.295)	2.730**** (0.280)	4.111**** (0.230)	3.031**** (0.330)	2.118**** (0.284)	2.368**** (0.222)	1.835**** (0.250)
Observations	850	962	913	875	852	946	784
R^2	0.189	0.062	0.206	0.096	0.280	0.149	0.371
Adjusted R^2	0.170	0.042	0.189	0.074	0.263	0.130	0.355

Source: EU Neighbourhood Barometer 2014, wave 6. Own calculations.

Standard errors in parentheses

* $p < 0.10$, ** $p < 0.05$, *** $p < 0.01$, **** $p < 0.001$

Table 14. Ordinal logit regression - Full models

Predictors	Russia	Armenia	Belarus	Azerbaijan	Ukraine	Georgia	Moldova
Economic situation	0.498** (0.209)	0.011 (0.201)	0.512** (0.199)	0.225 (0.185)	0.098 (0.264)	0.119 (0.246)	-0.260 (0.225)
Economic expectations	-0.163 (0.144)	0.245** (0.122)	-0.109 (0.172)	0.006 (0.172)	0.159 (0.127)	0.112 (0.138)	0.379*** (0.134)
Level in society	0.099** (0.046)	0.027 (0.035)	-0.092* (0.050)	0.048 (0.035)	0.035 (0.038)	0.124*** (0.043)	0.006 (0.045)
Higher education	0.088 (0.151)	-0.196 (0.131)	0.037 (0.149)	0.208 (0.163)	0.010 (0.137)	0.318** (0.148)	-0.093 (0.157)
Without job	-0.021 (0.192)	0.048 (0.157)	0.013 (0.192)	0.256 (0.163)	0.172 (0.177)	0.054 (0.171)	0.267 (0.168)
Qualified job	-0.065 (0.180)	-0.106 (0.196)	0.099 (0.197)	-0.026 (0.223)	-0.029 (0.208)	0.153 (0.236)	0.535** (0.220)
Student	0.289 (0.280)	0.094 (0.268)	-0.410 (0.278)	0.513* (0.294)	0.179 (0.273)	0.215 (0.303)	0.318 (0.269)
Trust in government	-0.639**** (0.162)	-0.269* (0.140)	-0.566*** (0.178)	-0.408* (0.247)	0.707**** (0.149)	0.297* (0.159)	0.506*** (0.154)
Trust in media	0.984**** (0.188)	0.670**** (0.184)	0.275 (0.206)	0.469** (0.203)	0.442** (0.202)	0.591*** (0.204)	0.009 (0.178)
Direction of country	-0.251*** (0.095)	0.112 (0.092)	-0.227** (0.113)	0.136 (0.101)	0.635**** (0.101)	0.315*** (0.101)	0.986**** (0.104)
Democracy satisfaction	0.274* (0.147)	0.029 (0.138)	-0.041 (0.148)	0.536**** (0.141)	0.403** (0.172)	0.152 (0.145)	0.370* (0.199)
Frequency of discussion	-0.617**** (0.127)	0.120 (0.099)	-0.390**** (0.117)	0.107 (0.127)	0.140 (0.126)	0.108 (0.105)	-0.015 (0.127)
Opinion leadership	-0.000 (0.145)	-0.047 (0.133)	-0.169 (0.134)	-0.236* (0.137)	0.301** (0.148)	0.191 (0.133)	0.276* (0.142)
Affect towards Europe	0.751**** (0.139)	0.340** (0.140)	0.859**** (0.151)	0.394** (0.164)	0.639**** (0.151)	0.438** (0.176)	0.884**** (0.166)
Affect towards nation	-0.513 (0.318)	0.141 (0.289)	0.059 (0.267)	-1.022*** (0.346)	0.381 (0.337)	-0.107 (0.249)	0.251 (0.262)
Affect towards Russia	-0.906** (0.399)	-0.029 (0.141)	-0.128 (0.210)	-0.198 (0.160)	-0.215 (0.134)	-0.346** (0.152)	-0.831**** (0.166)
Been to Europe	0.482 (0.305)	0.042 (0.256)	1.095**** (0.206)	0.189 (0.381)	0.632** (0.298)	0.577 (0.621)	0.350** (0.171)
Family in Europe	0.198 (0.258)	0.069 (0.123)	0.110 (0.181)	0.266 (0.189)	0.229 (0.175)	0.283* (0.161)	0.371** (0.149)
Gender	-0.000 (0.139)	0.012 (0.130)	-0.028 (0.133)	0.301** (0.140)	-0.076 (0.136)	-0.410*** (0.142)	-0.054 (0.140)
Age	0.010* (0.005)	-0.010** (0.004)	-0.027**** (0.005)	-0.006 (0.005)	-0.006 (0.005)	0.006 (0.004)	-0.005 (0.005)

cut1							
Constant	-3.270*** (0.627)	-1.234*** (0.475)	-6.036*** (0.607)	-2.140*** (0.637)	0.105 (0.531)	-1.155** (0.553)	-0.206 (0.573)
cut2							
Constant	-1.645*** (0.624)	-0.443 (0.467)	-4.375*** (0.578)	-1.498** (0.632)	0.976* (0.532)	-0.394 (0.529)	1.398** (0.556)
cut3							
Constant	0.585 (0.622)	1.159** (0.471)	-1.636*** (0.555)	0.961 (0.630)	2.981*** (0.545)	2.779*** (0.524)	3.445*** (0.565)
cut4							
Constant	2.236*** (0.656)	3.100*** (0.484)	0.500 (0.554)	2.500*** (0.638)	4.935*** (0.569)	4.455*** (0.541)	5.405*** (0.583)
Observations	850	962	913	875	852	946	784

Source: EU Neighbourhood Barometer 2014, wave 6. Own calculations.

Standard errors in parentheses

* $p < 0.10$, ** $p < 0.05$, *** $p < 0.01$, **** $p < 0.001$

8.1. Abstract

8.1.1.English

This cross-national study aims to explain the variation in levels of external support for the European Union in Eastern Partnership countries and Russia, by testing different theories from academic literature about public perception of the European Union. Existing research has found four main approaches to be important in shaping the public image of the EU: economic-utilitarian considerations (utilitarian approach), assessing the EU via national proxies (cueing approach), levels of political awareness (cognitive mobilisation approach) and identity-based motivations (identity approach). The results of various least-square regression models show that the cueing and identity approaches are the most appropriate concepts to explain external public perceptions of the EU, while utilitarian considerations and cognitive mobilisation play a less influential role in shaping the public image of the EU. The outcomes of the regressions reveal interesting similarities and differences between the examined countries regarding effects of various factors on the EU image.

8.1.2.German

Diese länderübergreifende Studie hat das Ziel, Unterschiede in der Wahrnehmung der Europäischen Union in Ländern der Östlichen Partnerschaft und Russland zu untersuchen, indem verschiedene Theorien aus der wissenschaftlichen Literatur über die öffentliche Wahrnehmung getestet werden. Vorherige Studien haben vier grundlegende Ansätze herausgearbeitet, die wichtig bei der Formung des Images der EU sind: Ökonomisch-utilitaristische Überlegungen (Utilitaristischer Ansatz), das Bewerten der EU mittels nationaler Proxies (Cueing Ansatz), das Ausmaß an politischem Bewusstsein („Cognitive Mobilisation“ Ansatz) und identitätsbasierte Beweggründe (Identitätsansatz). Die Ergebnisse der verschiedenen Kleinst-Quadrat-Regressionen zeigen, dass die Cueing- und Identitätsansätze die geeignetsten Konzepte sind, um die öffentliche Wahrnehmung der EU von außerhalb ihrer Grenzen zu erklären. Utilitaristische Überlegungen und „Cognitive Mobilisation“ spielen eine deutlich geringere Rolle bei der Herausbildung der öffentlichen Meinung über die EU. Die Resultate der Regressionen decken interessante Gemeinsamkeiten und Unterschiede zwischen den untersuchten Ländern in Bezug auf die Wirkung verschiedener Faktoren auf das Image der EU auf.