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# The EuroNest Parliamentary Assembly: The European Parliament as a Socializer of its Counterparts in the EU's Eastern Neighbourhood?

Hrant Kostanyan & Bruno Vandecasteele



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## About the Authors

Hrant Kostanyan is a BOF (Special Research Fund) Research Fellow at the Centre for EU Studies (CEUS) in the department of Political Science at Ghent University. He is also an Associate Research Fellow in the Foreign Policy Unit at the Centre for European Policy Studies (CEPS) in Brussels. He previously worked as an expert for a European Commission project on the EU's relations with Russia and the Eastern Partnership countries at the EU Neighbourhood Info Centre, Brussels. Hrant Kostanyan is a co-editor of the *CEPS European Neighbourhood Watch* monthly newsletter. His research focuses on EU foreign policy institutions and decision-making, primarily on the European External Action Service, the European Neighbourhood Policy and the EU's relations with Eastern Neighbours and Russia.

Bruno Vandecasteele is a PhD candidate of the FWO (Flemish Research Council) at the Centre for EU Studies (CEUS), Ghent University, since 2011. He holds a Master in criminology and a Master in international politics. Previously, he worked as a trainee at the Belgian Embassy in Lithuania and for a renewable energy company in Belgium. He has been a visiting researcher at the Institute of International Relations of Warsaw University, Poland (2012) and at the Institute of International Relations and Political Science of Vilnius University, Lithuania (2013). His research interests are: decision-making in the EU, EU-Eastern Partnership relations and EU transport policy.

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Dijver 11 | BE-8000 Bruges, Belgium | Tel. +32 (0)50 477 251 | Fax +32 (0)50 477 250 | E-mail [ird.info@coleurop.be](mailto:ird.info@coleurop.be) | [www.coleurope.eu/ird](http://www.coleurope.eu/ird)

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## **Abstract**

This paper examines the EU-Neighbourhood East Parliamentary Assembly (EuroNest PA), an inter-parliamentary forum consisting of representatives from the European Parliament (EP) and from all Eastern Partnership (EaP) countries except Belarus, aiming at political and economic association between the EU and the EaP. More specifically, it analyzes the extent to which the EP tries and manages to socialize the national parliaments of the EaP countries. After introducing the theoretical framework, the paper outlines the structure and working methods of the EuroNest PA, clarifies the absence of Belarus in the framework, and examines the results of the first three plenary sessions. The paper concludes that, although the establishment of the EuroNest PA as such provides a framework to advance the EP's goals of transmitting its norms and values to the EU's Eastern neighbouring countries, in practice socialization has taken place only to a limited extent thus far.

## **Introduction**

This paper combines two strands of literature in European Union (EU) studies that have thus far been dealt with separately. On the one hand, in the last decade, the body of literature on the role of the European Parliament (EP) in EU external policies has grown considerably, in parallel with the increasing competences of the EP in this area. Most studies on the role of the EP in EU external policies focus on the EP's powers in shaping these policies (e.g. Diedrichs, 2004; Crum, 2006; Koutrakos, 2011). Much less scholarly attention has been given to the direct bilateral or multilateral relations of the EP with Parliaments of third countries (for an exception, see e.g. Corbett, Jacobs & Shackleton, 2005). On the other hand, since the early 2000s, studies on European socialization have enriched the EU studies literature with knowledge on the processes driving change at different policy levels within and outside of the EU. Nearly all research on European socialization focuses on the transfer of norms from international organizations to individual states (see e.g. Schimmelfennig, 2005, Schimmelfennig, Engert & Knobel, 2005, Lavenex & Schimmelfennig, 2011) or adaptation of EU officials to group norms of the institutions (e.g. Beyers, 2005, Hooghe, 2005, Juncos & Pomorska, 2006), including in the EP (Scully, 2005). Few have also studied the EU's engagement with and norm transfer to specific institutions or actors in non-candidate countries (see e.g. Smith, 2011). However, no research has been published thus far on possible norm transfer from the EP to third countries' Parliaments.

The EP engages with the Parliaments of the Eastern Partnership (EaP) countries – Belarus, Ukraine, Moldova, Georgia, Armenia, Azerbaijan – since 2011 via the EuroNest Parliamentary Assembly (EuroNest PA), a multilateral forum for parliamentary cooperation. As we will point out below, the EP does try to socialize the Parliaments of the EaP countries within this institutional setting; the substance of the resolutions adopted by the EuroNest PA corresponds very much to the position the EP mostly takes in external policy dossiers. We argue therefore that combining the above-mentioned two research strands could add considerably to scholarly knowledge about the EP's role in the world. In doing so, we address two research questions: (i) which instruments and opportunities does the EP have at its disposal in order to try socialize the national Parliaments of the EaP countries, and (ii) if socialization takes place, what is the nature and range of this socialization? With regard to the second research question, we apply the typology of socialization as

discussed by Checkel (2005), distinguishing between strategic calculation, role playing and normative suasion. We argue that (i) the EP clearly uses the EuroNest PA to familiarize its EaP partners with its position on various topics, and applies inclusion and exclusion techniques as leverage on them; (ii) despite the fact that the EuroNest PA has adopted a considerable amount of resolutions to date, very little socialization has taken place thus far. Indeed, the Eastern partners' Parliaments seem to engage only in the least extensive form of socialization, i.e. strategic calculation.

The paper is structured as follows. First, we briefly discuss the definitions and characteristics of the different types of socialization. Subsequently, we outline the organization of the EP-EaP parliamentary cooperation, with emphasis on the recent changes in the institutional architecture. This section discusses the instruments through which the EP can possibly socialize the EaP Parliaments. In the next sections, we discuss the results of the three plenary EuroNest PA sessions that have taken place until 2013, providing a more profound insight in EP-EaP socialization. The concluding section discusses and summarizes the main findings of the research.

### **The European Parliament as a socializer of other Parliaments?**

Checkel (2005) describes socialization as a process during which socialized actors (socializees) are inducted into the norms and rules of a given community (socializers), with sustained compliance due to internalization of these norms as a result. The logic behind the behaviour of the socializee switches from what March and Olsen (1998) called a *logic of consequences* to a *logic of appropriateness*. The extent to which these norms are internalized can vary; there are basically three types of norm internalization, corresponding with three mechanisms of socialization (Checkel, 2005; see also Schimmelfennig, 2005; and Warkotsch, 2007).

A first mechanism is *strategic calculation*: the socializee displays desired behaviour in response to positive and/or negative incentives, which can be social (e.g. status, shaming) as well as material (e.g. financial assistance, sanctions). Strategic calculation alone does not lead to socialization and internalization of norms, but it can be a first step towards preference change. This mechanism is most likely to operate when the socializee expects the benefits of adapting its behaviour (or pressurizing others, e.g. Governments, to change their behaviour) to be larger than the costs.

A second mechanism is *role playing*: the socializee behaves according to the group norms because it is considered appropriate in a certain setting, but its ideas and preferences remain unchanged. This type of socialization is most likely to occur in settings where agents have long, sustained and intense contacts with each other.

The third mechanism is *normative suasion*, which leads to the most far-reaching form of socialization: agents actively and reflectively internalize new understandings of appropriate norms, and behave accordingly. Normative suasion is most likely to take place when the socializee is in a novel and uncertain environment, has few prior beliefs that are inconsistent with the socializer's message, when the socializer holds a dominant and authoritative position within the group to which the socializee belongs or wishes to belong, when the socializer does not lecture or demand but acts according to principles of serious deliberative argument, and when interactions take place in less politicized and more informal settings (on the conditions for successful socialization through persuasion, see also Pardo Sierra, 2011).

As discussed above, socialization has thus far been mostly studied between the EU and individual Governments or within the EU institutions. In this paper, we extend the application of this theoretical framework to inter-parliamentary cooperation and socialization. This research is relevant in the context of the EP's increasingly active role in the EU's external policies, in particular following the enactment of the Treaty of Lisbon; the EP has regularly reminded the other EU institutions and Member States, as well as third country Governments and Parliaments, of the importance it attaches to norms and values. This is not less the case in the EU's relations with its Eastern neighbourhood: the EP is *inter alia* active in trade (European Parliament, 2012a), democracy (European Parliament, 2012b), and human rights issues with regard to the EaP (e.g. European Parliament, 2012d, 2012c). It is thus clear that the EP wishes to play a role in transferring 'European values' to the EU's Eastern neighbours. In the next section, we discuss the EuroNest PA as a framework for EP-EaP cooperation, as well as the instruments available to the EP for playing such a socializing role.

### **Structure and functioning of the EuroNest PA**

This section outlines the history and the institutional architecture of the EuroNest PA. After introducing the origins and the members of the EuroNest PA, we successively discuss the competences of the Bureau, the Working Groups, Committees, and of

the plenary Parliamentary Assembly. The EP can use these bodies to try to transfer its preferred norms to the EaP countries' Parliaments.

### *Origins and members of the EuroNest PA*

The 2009 Lisbon Treaty could be called the *Treaty of Parliaments*: it reinforced the role of the EP in the EU's legislative process and external policies and strengthened the control of national Parliaments over EU decision-making. The EP increased its legislative, budgetary and supervisory powers over the EU's external action, thus ensuring greater accountability (Raube, 2011; Wisniewski, 2013). The role of the EP in EU policies towards the EaP is somewhat atypical in this respect, for two main reasons. First, although the conceptualization and establishment of the EuroNest PA took place in the same period as the negotiations, signature and ratification of the Lisbon Treaty, the two developments were not interconnected and took place in separate settings. Second, and contrary to the overall strengthening of the role of national Parliaments in EU decision-making with the Lisbon Treaty, the Parliaments of the EU Member States have no role in the EuroNest PA.

The idea to establish the EuroNest PA dates back to 2006 and was preceded by a series of conferences with representatives from the EP, Ukraine, Moldova, Georgia, Armenia and Azerbaijan, as well as Belarusian opposition members. The idea was further developed two years later in a Communication of the European Commission (2008) and was taken up in the constitutive document of the Eastern Partnership, the Prague Declaration. The participants of the Prague Summit invited the members of the EP and the deputies from the EaP countries to establish a joint multilateral parliamentary assembly (Council of the European Union, 2009a). The goal of the Assembly is to accelerate the political and economic integration of the EaP countries and the EU as well as to enhance people-to-people contacts and engage more actively in cultural dialogue. The EuroNest PA is based "on mutual interests and commitments as well as on the principles of differentiation, shared ownership and responsibility" (EuroNest PA, 2013e, art. 1).

Although the EuroNest PA is – in principle – a multilateral framework for cooperation between the EP and the Parliaments of the six EaP countries (European Parliament, 2009), the Belarusian Parliament is not represented thus far. Discussions regarding the participation of Belarus were even the main reason for the delay in launching the Assembly (Ćwiek-Karpowicz & Wojna, 2010): the idea of the EuroNest PA was formally



declared in 2009, but it took almost two years until the Assembly was operational. Since the EP consistently criticizes the course of elections in Belarus (see e.g. European Parliament, 2011, 2012d) and “the EuroNest PA is a dialogue between real members of Parliament, not between people appointed by a dictator” (Interview D), it would be controversial if it would engage with the Belarusian Parliament. Prior to the adoption of rules for EP representation in its relations with third countries, Members of the European Parliament (MEPs) thus had to choose between three options: invite a delegation of the Belarusian Parliament, not involve Belarus at all, or include Belarus in the EuroNest PA while putting its active participation “on hold” (Interview C, D). Eventually, the EP opted for the latter solution and suspended the Belarusian participation. It was decided that Belarus “will be welcomed once political requirements will have been fulfilled” (EuroNest PA, n.d.). In order to meet the political requirements, the Parliament should be elected according to its commitments made to the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) and other international standards for democratic elections, and commit itself to promoting human rights and fundamental freedoms, pluralistic democracy and the rule of law (Buzek, 2011; EuroNest PA, 2011, art. 3).

The EuroNest PA now hosts sixty members of the EP and ten members from each EaP countries’ Parliament (excluding Belarus). Appointments in the EuroNest PA from both the EP’s and the EaP countries’ sides are done in a manner that “the distribution of the various political groups and delegations represented is reflected as far as possible” (EuroNest PA, 2013e, art. 2).

There are two main differences between the EuroNest PA and the other parliamentary cooperation platform of the EU’s Neighbourhood Policy, i.e. the Euro-Mediterranean Parliamentary Assembly (EMPA). In the EMPA, the EU delegation consists of 49 members of the EP and three members of each EU national Parliament, while in the EuroNest PA there is no role for national Parliaments of the EU. In fact, the EuroNest parliamentary cooperation is the only format for EU-EaP cooperation where the EU Member States are not involved; Member States do have a role in intergovernmental, business, and regional cooperation. This situation has been criticized by some national parliamentarians (Interview A). An MEP responded, when questioned on this, that “it would be much more complicated if national parliamentarians would participate. There would be much more discussion on what we should do. [...] It’s already complicated enough with the EaP countries” (Interview D). The absence of the national Parliaments thus upgrades the role of the

EP not only to an actor with regard to the EaP countries, but also vis-à-vis the EU and its Member States. A second difference between the EMPA and the EuroNest PA is that, in the former, the EU representatives are a minority (130 on a total of 280), while in the EuroNest PA the EP has a *de facto* majority as long as Belarus does not participate (60 on a total of 110). Since the decisions are usually taken with a two-thirds majority, this does not translate into direct power over decision-making. However, it signifies a certain dominance of the EP in the Assembly. This dominance is reinforced by the fact that the EP delegation usually expresses unified positions, while the points of view of the EaP parliaments are often much more divided.

### *Components of the EuroNest PA*

Before the establishment of the EuroNest PA, the EP and individual Parliaments of the EaP countries already collaborated through the Parliamentary Cooperation Committees (PCCs) and bilateral delegations established in agreements between the EU and partner countries. After the establishment of the multilateral EuroNest PA, the PCCs and delegations have remained in existence alongside the EuroNest PA and have been invited by the latter to collaborate with it (EuroNest PA, 2013e, art. 28).

The EuroNest PA consists of four main institutional components. First, the EuroNest PA elects a Bureau, which consists of co-Presidents and vice-Presidents. One of the co-Presidents is elected from the members of the EP, the other from the EaP deputies. One parliamentarian from each EaP country is elected as a vice-President, with the exception of the country from which a deputy is elected as co-President. This is matched by an equal number of vice-Presidents elected among members of the EP. The Bureau meets twice a year and plays a key coordinating role, both internally and externally. Internally, the Bureau drafts the agenda and procedures for plenary sessions of the EuroNest PA and authorizes the thematic EuroNest PA Committees to draft, *inter alia*, reports, resolutions and recommendations. Externally, the Bureau is responsible for maintaining relations with other bodies and actors involved in the EaP such as the EaP Summit, the ministerial conferences, the European Commission, the European External Action Service, the officials in EaP multilateral thematic platforms, Ambassadors, and civil society organizations. The Bureau can invite the relevant actors to participate in meetings of the Committees and Working Groups as well as in the plenary sessions of the EuroNest PA.

Second, the Bureau of the EuroNest PA decides on creating Working Groups for a certain period of time to deal with a specific aspect of the EaP or to send fact-finding missions to the EU or the EaP countries. The Working Groups continue functioning until the EuroNest PA decides otherwise (EuroNest PA, 2013e, art. 27). A Working Group consists of ten members, one from each EaP country and five from the EP. Currently, the EuroNest PA has two Working Groups. One of them discusses the Rules of Procedure, the other focuses on Belarus. The latter is charged with investigating and making recommendations to the EuroNest PA on how it could support Belarus to meet the requirements for the Belarusian delegation to fill its vacant seats in the EuroNest PA. To this end, the Working Group on Belarus “may take contacts with the Institutions of Belarus, with the civil society of the country, with the other EU Institutions, with the EU Member States and other players concerned; the Working Group may hold hearings and organize visits to the country, in agreement with the Bureau” (EuroNest PA, 2012a, p. 2). In the words of one EP official, the Working Group on Belarus is thus a means to “compensate” for the absence of Belarusian delegation in the EuroNest PA (Interview C).

Third, for the purpose of examining important aspects related to the EaP, the EuroNest PA has set up four Standing Committees that thematically mirror the four platforms of the EaP multilateral framework: the Committee on Political Affairs, Human Rights and Democracy, the Committee on Economic Integration, Legal Approximation and Convergence with EU Policies, the Committee on Energy Security and the Committee on Social Affairs, Education, Culture and Civil Society.

The Committee on Political Affairs, Human Rights and Democracy is responsible, among other things, for issues relating to democratic institutions, good governance, corruption, political parties, electoral processes, contribution to multilateral confidence-building measures and peaceful conflict settlement as well as external relations. The Committee on Economic Integration, Legal Approximation and Convergence with EU Policies works on questions related to, *inter alia*, economic, financial and commercial relations between the EU and the Eastern European partners, with third countries and with regional and international organizations such as the World Trade Organization (WTO). Harmonization of technical standards, social and human development, environmental governance, transport and telecommunication are also discussed in this Committee. The Committee on Energy Security deals with matters relating to energy supply and security mechanisms, the enhancement of contacts on energy security and energy crisis preparedness, harmonization of

energy policies and legislation, diversification of supply and transit routes as well as supporting the creation of diversified energy markets. The Committee on Social Affairs, Education, Culture and Civil Society is charged with working on issues related to youth, gender equality, facilitating cooperation of culture, language, education and research as well as relations with the Eastern Partnership Civil Society Forum.

The fourth institutional component of Euronest is the actual Parliamentary Assembly. It conducts discussions and consultations, and adopts resolutions and recommendations concerning the EaP in general or particular themes. Based on requests from the Committees' co-chairs, the Bureau decides how many reports can be voted in the plenary sessions. The Rules of Procedure also allow for urgent motions for resolutions (EuroNest PA, 2013e, art. 9). In the framework of the resolutions and recommendations, the EuroNest PA may also submit messages to the EaP Summit and ministerial meetings. For urgent matters, the Bureau is also allowed to make statements on the basis of existing resolutions and reports.

The EuroNest PA holds plenary sessions once a year with the location decided on the basis of rotation. One of the meetings takes place in the facilities of the EP in Brussels, Luxembourg or Strasbourg and the subsequent meeting convenes in the capital of one of the EaP countries. Up until now, there have been three plenary meetings (see below), with the fourth meeting scheduled to take place in Yerevan in November 2014.

The EuroNest PA also has a role of scrutiny of the EU 'executive', e.g. the EEAS and the Commission. This forum is therefore one of the main tools available to the EP and EaP countries' Parliaments to influence EU decision-making *vis-à-vis* the EaP (Kostanyan & Orbie, 2013). The members of the Assembly can submit written questions to the Council, the European Commission, the ministerial bodies of the EaP and the Presidency-in-office of the Summit. Questions are subject to the Bureau's ruling on their admissibility. The Bureau arranges public hearings with representatives from the relevant 'executives' and members of the EuroNest PA can ask questions orally. Oral questions too have to be submitted in written form to the Bureau, which then decides on their admissibility. At the request of twenty members of the EuroNest PA, the answers to the questions may be followed by a debate (EuroNest PA, 2013e, art. 22).

The setup of the EuroNest PA, including a Bureau, Working Groups, Committees and a plenary meeting, is comparable with other Parliamentary Assemblies of the EP with

third countries' Parliaments, such as the EMPA and the EU-ACP Joint Parliamentary Assembly. This composition, however, does not exactly mirror the EP itself: the EuroNest PA is much more limited in its structure and in the frequency of meetings, and the discussions are mostly 'nationally' inspired, not ideologically (see also below). Nevertheless, the structures and procedures of the EuroNest PA do constitute a way of socializing the EaP countries' Parliaments: since it reflects a 'template' of EU cooperation with third countries, it imposes a 'way of doing things' to the other Parliaments and familiarizes them with European standards for multilateral cooperation.

### **The EuroNest PA at work**

This section discusses the three plenary sessions of the EuroNest PA that have taken place thus far. We find that, after a difficult start, the participants of the EuroNest PA were able to adopt a number of increasingly significant resolutions.

#### *The first plenary session of 14-15 September 2011*

The first ordinary plenary session of the EuroNest PA took place on 14-15 September 2011 in Strasbourg. The outcomes focused mainly on the body's internal procedures and appointments: the plenary adopted the Constituent Act and the Rules of Procedure of the EuroNest PA, and elected the Bureau and the two co-Presidents (Mr Borys Tarasyuk on behalf of the EaP countries, and Mr Kristian Vigenin on behalf of the EP). It also adopted a decision on setting up four Standing Committees and approved their Rules of Procedure. Finally, the deputies adopted a decision on setting up of the Working Groups, on the Rules of Procedure and on Belarus.

The members of the EuroNest PA also discussed a number of draft resolutions. However, the meeting was marked by a tense atmosphere, and none of the planned resolutions were adopted. There were disagreements between the EP and EaP representatives, but also between the EaP countries themselves, notably Armenia and Azerbaijan (Donskis, 2011; Tarasyuk, 2011). The main stumbling block was the difference in positions between the Azerbaijani and Armenian delegations on references to "right to self-determination" and "territorial integrity" in the final statement. In addition, as a result of delays due to recounts, discussions and voting confusion, most MEPs left the meeting room in a hurry at the end of the two-day session since they had to attend a regular EP plenary (RFERL, 2011). Commenting on

this chaotic start of the EuroNest PA, which lacked concrete results, Tarasyuk (2011) complained that the EaP exists on paper but not in practice, and claimed that bilateral cooperation between individual EU Member States and EaP countries is much more significant than the EaP framework.

In the early stages of the EuroNest cooperation there was little indication of any form of socialization in the EaP countries' Parliaments. The EP representatives could not convince their counterparts from the EaP to agree on a joint statement, and the delegations of the different Parliaments did not consider themselves as belonging to one region, contrary to how the EP views the EaP initiative.

*The second plenary session of 4-5 April 2012*

The problems that the EuroNest PA experienced in its constitutive meeting continued during the second plenary. Since the session took place in Baku, Azerbaijan, the conflict between Armenian and Azerbaijani members of the Assembly became even more pronounced than in the first plenary. Moreover, the Azerbaijani Government used the opportunity to promote its agenda and harangue Armenia, including through statements by Azerbaijan's President (2012). An EU official shared his frustration over the proceedings which ran against a prior agreement:

President Aliyev appeared at the plenary session of this EuroNest Parliamentary Assembly and used that forum for one third of the time to criticize Armenia and the Government of Armenia on the issue of Nagorno-Karabakh. It was totally outside of the agenda. I mean, we have to face those realities. [But] it was outside of the context. Why? Because the Nagorno-Karabakh is a subject under the OSCE Minsk Group. We, as the EU, are supportive of the OSCE Minsk Group work because France is a co-chair. So, there is a channel for negotiating and resolving the conflict. EU should not be using another forum, especially this one in the parliamentary cooperation, again and again and again to be pushing what I call the bilateral agenda. So there are right formats to ensure that conflicts are discussed, negotiated and resolved (Interview B).

However, as opposed to the first plenary that failed to pass any resolution, and despite the tensions between Azerbaijani and Armenian deputies, the members of the EuroNest PA managed to pass five resolutions. Although the contents of the resolutions have been watered down in order to get the largest possible number of deputies on board, they have importance as the first substantive result that the EuroNest members produced together. The contents of the resolutions are summarized below:

1. The “Resolution on challenges for the future of democracy, including the question of free and independent media in Eastern Partnership and EU countries” (EuroNest PA, 2012b) stresses the importance of fundamental principles of democracy, including human rights, the rule of law, separation of powers, and free, fair and transparent elections. The resolution also calls for deepening the EaP political dialogue and cooperation in democracy building as well as supporting the freedom of expression, development of free and independent media, enhancing peoples’ confidence in public institutions, and strengthening civil society.

2. The “Resolution on trade agreements between the EU and the Eastern European Partners, including the Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Areas, and the EU assistance in this field” (EuroNest PA, 2012f) stresses the importance of common standards of goods and services. The resolution welcomes the Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Area (DCFTA) negotiations with Armenia, Georgia and Moldova, and proposes that Azerbaijan and Belarus take steps to become WTO members as a precondition to start the DCFTA negotiations.

3. The “Resolution on energy security, renewable energy, energy efficiency, energy infrastructure: developments in the Eastern Partnership and in the EU countries” (EuroNest PA, 2012c) recommends enhancing the energy security dialogue between the EU and its Eastern Partners by further exploring the ‘Baku Initiative’, the Energy Community Treaty, and the EU 2050 energy and climate objectives.

4. The “Resolution on strengthening civil society in the Eastern Partnership Countries, including the question of cooperation between Government and civil society, and the question of the reforms aimed at empowering of civil society” (EuroNest PA, 2012d) reaffirms the role of civil society in democracy, strengthening the rule of law and holding Governments accountable. The authorities are called to guarantee the freedoms necessary for civil society to act effectively. In particular, the resolution welcomes the work of the Civil Society Forum.

5. Finally, the “Resolution on the situation of Yulia Tymoshenko” stresses the need for an independent judiciary and “deplores the sentencing of former Prime Minister Yulia Tymoshenko” (EuroNest PA, 2012e, p. 1). The resolution calls upon the Ukrainian authorities to facilitate a fair and transparent process of appeal, urges its Parliament, the Verkhovna Rada, to review the criminal code that is applied against Tymoshenko, and demands that the authorities ensure the right to health and wellbeing of Tymoshenko and her allies.

The adoption of concrete resolutions by the EuroNest PA indicates some progress in EU-EaP parliamentary cooperation. Moreover, the topics discussed largely reflect the positions taken by the EP on issues related to the Eastern neighbours of the EU. The EP delegation thus seems to have increased its leverage on the contents of the resolutions adopted between the first and second sessions, which could point to a certain degree of socialization. However, given the tense atmosphere in which the Assembly discussed the resolutions, it is not clear to what extent the resolutions represent the genuine positions of the members. It would have been irrational on behalf of the EaP countries to block the adoption of resolutions again; repetition of this behaviour would decrease their credibility in the EuroNest PA, and the parliamentary delegations might lose their forum. In sum, we observe a limited form of strategic calculation.

#### *The third plenary session of 28-29 May 2013*

The third ordinary session took place in Brussels. Belarus was still not formally represented, due to a "lack of an internationally recognized Parliament" (European Parliament, 2013). However, the Working Group on Belarus held consultations with members of the Belarusian opposition, as well as with representatives from civil society and independent media: the EP is "not willing to accept the fact that the citizens of Belarus are still deprived of freedom and basic fundamental rights. We will always uphold democratic values and support the people in Belarus in every way we can" (EP President Martin Schulz on ENPI info centre, 2013).

During the plenary meeting, the participants appointed Mr Evgeni Kirilov as the new EuroNest PA co-chair for the EP<sup>1</sup> and adopted four resolutions (European Parliament, 2013). In addition, they called on the EU to increase the budget for assistance to EaP countries in the 2014-2020 Multi-Annual Financial Framework (European Parliament, 2013). Furthermore, the delegates expressed their hope to achieve a breakthrough in their relations – including with Belarus – at the November 2013 EaP summit in Vilnius, but not at the expense of democracy, rule of law and peace. EaP co-President Tarasyuk said "it will be up to respective Governments to use the crucial six months we have left to show progress in areas which have been clearly indicated by the EU" (European Parliament, 2013).

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<sup>1</sup> The former chair, Kristian Vigenin, was appointed foreign minister of Bulgaria and thus had to give up his seat in the EP.



While some of the resolutions adopted during the previous plenary meeting still concerned general issues such as democracy and cooperation with civil society, the third session focused on more specific policy areas: regional security challenges (EuroNest PA, 2013d), approximation of national legislation in EaP countries with EU legislation in the economic field (EuroNest PA, 2013a), EU-EaP energy interconnections and harmonization of the energy market (EuroNest PA, 2013c), and combating poverty and social exclusion in the EaP (EuroNest PA, 2013b).

Although four resolutions were adopted, the tense atmosphere and the divisions between the EU and the EaP countries, between the EaP countries (Armenia and Azerbaijan) and between political parties in Ukraine and Georgia prominent during the first and second plenaries, continued to mar the third plenary in Brussels. The MEP Gerben Jan Gebrandy (Democrats 66, the Netherlands, a member of ALDE in the European Parliament) tweeted: "In bureau of #Euronest parliamentary [sic] assembly. Sensitive issues: Nagorno [sic], Tymoshenko, Merabishvili, Safarov, Abkhazia, South Ossetia" (<https://twitter.com/search?q=%23Euronest>).

As was the case during the second plenary session, we note, on the one hand, some alignment of the EaP countries' Parliaments with the EP's position. However, on the other hand, it was clear that the real issues of concern for the EaP countries' delegates were related to their national agenda rather than to finding common ground with the EP. In sum, we see an increasing but still very limited degree of socialization among the EaP countries' representatives. There are no indications that their agreement with the EP position reflects their genuine point of view. Their participation in the EuroNest PA is rather inspired by strategic calculation: it gives these countries some status and legitimacy, as well as stage in a public forum to express their position.

## **Discussion and conclusions**

The setting of the EuroNest PA illustrates that the EU takes up the role of *teaching* norms and rules, while the EaP countries are expected to *learn* and/or *implement* them. The institutional similarity of the EuroNest PA with the other multilateral forums for EP cooperation with third countries indicates that the EaP countries have adapted to the EP's proposed format. In addition, the recommendations of the EuroNest PA, adopted during the second and third plenary sessions, send different messages to the EaP countries on the one hand and to the EU on the other. The EaP

countries are encouraged to push through and implement reforms, while the Assembly calls on the EU to support these developments through financial and technical aid. In other words, the norms promoted by the EU are taken as the point of reference.

Referring back to the first research question of this paper, on the instruments and opportunities the EP has to socialize the Parliaments of the EaP countries, we note three main techniques for socialization. First, the EP can use the Plenary Assembly, the Working Groups and the Committees to familiarize the EaP countries with its points of view and try to influence these countries' Governments through their national Parliaments. Second, in successfully setting the Rules of Procedure (see above), the EP promotes its preferred way of organizing multilateral cooperation. Third, the EP applies inclusion and exclusion techniques in order to reward or punish EaP national Parliaments. Its strict stance in refusing an official delegation of Belarus is the most obvious expression of this strategy. With this second technique, the EP tries to compensate for its lack of formal instruments to exert direct pressure on the EaP countries. Indeed, the EP does not have 'carrots' (e.g. funds provided on the basis of conditionality) or 'sticks' (such as the power to impose visa bans or economic sanctions) which it can apply in the EuroNest PA. It therefore applies the only reward/punishment strategy it has at its disposal, i.e. providing status and legitimacy by allowing or refusing EaP Parliaments the right to participate in the EuroNest PA. However, the application of this strategy does not remain without criticism of its coherence. An EP official explained that many members of the EuroNest PA question the current arrangement, suggesting that democracy is not the only criterion for allowing/refusing delegations: "If Belarus is not in, why is Azerbaijan there? Are Azerbaijan's democratic credentials better than Belarus'?" (Interview C).

Regarding the second research question, on the extent to which socialization takes place, as well as its nature, we point to two observations. First, we argue that very little socialization has taken place thus far. Indeed, the EuroNest PA often functions as a platform for voicing national or party-related positions and concerns, rather than as a forum for multilateral cooperation. Azerbaijanis use the EuroNest PA to publicly attack Armenia on the Nagorno-Karabakh issue. Georgians bring up their concerns on Abkhazia and South Ossetia. Armenians express their frustration about the Safarov

affair.<sup>2</sup> Ukrainian opposition parties put the imprisonment of former Prime Minister Tymoshenko on the agenda, and the detention of Merabishvili (former Prime Minister of Georgia and an ally of President Saakashvili) is an emerging topic. A second observation is that, despite the above-mentioned frictions and bilateral or internal struggles, the EuroNest PA has managed to adopt a fair number of resolutions, reflecting to a large extent the EP's position. This indicates a certain degree of socialization within the EuroNest PA, although it should not be exaggerated. We argue that, at best, the Eastern partners engage in strategic calculation when participating in the EuroNest PA. They get a higher status by participating in this multilateral setting and, perhaps more importantly, they are provided with a forum for expressing their positions which they otherwise would not have. In exchange they endorse resolutions that promote values and norms the EP usually emphasizes. Since these resolutions do not involve strong commitments to implementation, the costs for the EaP Parliaments of supporting these values are rather low.

The conditions for internalization of norms and thus deeper forms of socialization – role playing and normative suasion – are not fulfilled. The contacts between the parties are not long and intense enough for role playing to take place. As for normative suasion, the initial beliefs of the different delegations show too little consistency with the message of the socializer (the EP), and there are too few interactions in informal settings.

With this paper, we have highlighted a number of issues related to socialization in the setting of the EuroNest PA. In doing so, we aim to contribute to scholarly knowledge of the EP's international role. Given the relatively short period of activity of the EuroNest PA and the limited number of interviews on which this paper is based, we do not pretend to draw definitive conclusions. The present study could inspire further research in three ways. First, socialization in the EuroNest PA could be compared with other formats for EaP multilateral cooperation. Together with the EU-EaP Summit of Heads of State and Government, the EuroNest PA is the most 'political' forum for cooperation. Other formats, such as the Business Forum or the EaP Transport Panel, are more technical. A comparison between these political and technical environments could provide more insight into the mechanisms of socialization in multilateral cooperation. Second, socialization in other parliamentary assemblies in

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<sup>2</sup> Safarov, an Azerbaijani military serviceman, murdered by axe an Armenian officer during a NATO training in Budapest, and was later on extradited from Hungary to Azerbaijan, where President Aliyev pardoned and glorified him.

which the EP participates could be studied and compared with the EuroNest PA. To date, there is no research on this topic; further research could shed light on the conditions (e.g. geographical proximity, political conditions, issues under discussion, composition of the Assembly, etc.) under which socialization is more/less likely. Third, future research could focus on agenda setting processes in the EuroNest PA and on socialization and norm transfer in both directions (from the EP to the EaP countries and vice versa). This paper has found an overwhelming presence of the first direction of socialization and no indication of the second. However, further research, including extensive interviews with representatives from the EaP, could reveal more fine-tuned conclusions.

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