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# **A model of ‘contested’ Europeanization: The European Union and the Turkish-Cypriot administration**

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**Abstract** This article investigates the European Union’s (EU) relevance to the Turkish-Cypriot (TC) administration, pegged to the Europeanization debate. The study contributes to the discussion on Europeanization and the EU’s international role, especially in cases of contested states, which constitute an important element of the EU’s current global agenda but remain an under-researched topic. The argument advanced is that the Europeanization of the TC administration, although similar to previous cases of EU Enlargement, is importantly mediated by the conditions of contested statehood that exist in northern Cyprus. In this respect, the TC example holds strong comparative value for the study of Europeanization of contested states and the wider debate on international role of the EU, in variety of contexts and in relation to a diverse range of actors, beyond conventional states that dominate discourse.

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## **Introduction**

In May 2004, Cyprus acceded to the European Union (EU) as a divided country. The failure of reunification of the Greek-Cypriot (GC) and Turkish-Cypriot (TC) communities under a common state before EU accession created the conditions for a particularly complex enlargement case: Cyprus entered the EU as a whole island but in the administrative face of the GC-controlled Republic of Cyprus (RoC), in the southern part of the country. The northern side, home to the TCs and their secessionist and self-declared state of Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus (TRNC), are considered by the EU as a territory



upon which the internationally recognized government of the RoC cannot exercise control and is, therefore, exempted from the application of EU law (Protocol 10 of the Accession Treaty). To address this *sui generis* situation, the EU has sought to assist the TCs in order to (i) prepare for the full application of the EU law also in northern Cyprus, in the event of a GC–TC reunification under a new state and (ii) boost their socio-economic development and integration with the EU. This activity has been an avenue for an extensive EU impact on the TC part, and especially the institutional scene of the contested state. The article investigates this EU effect on the TC institutional scene (particularly the executive, legislative branch, central and local government), as a test-case for the relevance of the EU to contested states. Focus here is mostly on the period since 2006, which marked the beginning of intensive EU–TC relations.<sup>1</sup> The EU impact is assessed based on the two main Regulations that are at the epicenter of the EU endeavor.

The examination of the EU effect on TC institutions is conceptually linked to the Europeanization literature, which seeks to explain the process via which the EU impacts the domestic scene of associated states (EU member, candidate or third states). With Europeanization discussion being primarily concerned with examples of *states*, TCs represent a distinctive case of a *contested state*. Here, we approach 'contested state' as the entity that has control over a territory and has unilaterally declared state independence, which, however, has not been diplomatically recognized by the international world (see also Papadimitriou and Petrov, 2012). Those features are reflected in the case of the secessionist TRNC, which retains effective control of northern Cyprus and was self-declared in 1983, but remains unrecognized by the international community, including the EU (United Nations Security Council, 1983). Another important characteristic of the TC case, which directly relates to the contested statehood status, is the international isolation (in economic, political, social and more general terms) that TCs are subjected to (only Turkey maintains diplomatic relations with the contested TC state). It is posited that these features of contested statehood mediate the process of Europeanization of domestic affairs: they pose significant challenges to Brussels' role on the ground but they also create more room for an extended EU impact on certain domestic aspects and especially institutional matters. Although a small number of Europeanization studies have discussed topics relevant to contested states (not least the related conflicts or the official states from which the entities seek secession), the EU's impact on their exclusive domestic arena is neglected. However, this is a very important topic for understanding the international role of the EU, which increasingly engages in regions that host contested entities, such as Kosovo, the Occupied Palestinian Territories, Transnistria, Nagorno-Karabakh, South Ossetia and Abkhazia. As a result, the TC case provides substantial contribution to the discussion on Europeanization and increased comparative relevance to other examples of

contested statehood. More broadly, the investigation of the TC case offers significant insights for the *stimuli* and limitations of the EU to affect its external environment, in a plethora of contexts and with reference to a variety of actors, beyond conventional states that monopolize narration.

In this regard, research methodology is based on a single case study, pegged to the debate on Europeanization. A review of the existing literature provides the conceptual framework for the following investigation of the TC example, which is based on qualitative analysis of primary material, including policy discourse and especially official documents from the EU and local level. Research also draws on a wide range of interviews with a representative sample of members of the European Commission and various local elites and civil society that take part in the interaction with the EU.

Following an introduction of the conceptual framework of Europeanization, the third section of the article looks at the EU-induced impact on the TC institutional scene. Here, after a brief overview of the TC institutional setting, research is structured on the two main EU Regulations ('Financial Aid Regulation' and 'Green Line Regulation') concerning northern Cyprus and the institutional alternations that they have triggered. Empirical findings are, then, conceptually revisited in the fourth part. The final section summarizes the article and discusses its comparative value.

### **Europeanization: A 'Fashionable' and 'Useful' Term**

Europeanization constitutes one of the most debated and debatable analytical tools of contemporary European politics. As such, Europeanization has already been deployed in broad reference to contested states, but scholars have mostly focused on the EU's impact on the conflict related to each case (for example, Emerson, 2003; Coppieters *et al*, 2004; Tocci and Kovziridze, 2004; Vahl and Emerson, 2004; Williams, 2004; Nodia, 2004; Tocci, 2008; Secieru, 2011). In addition, a limited number of works have looked at how domestic actors of certain contested states understand the EU (for example, Vahl and Emerson, 2004; Popescu, 2007) or the EU's efforts for state-building, especially in Kosovo (for example, Bieber, 2011; Börzel, 2011). As far as Cyprus is concerned, Europeanization studies have explored either the EU's aptitude for conflict resolution (for example, Zervakis, 2002; Tocci and Kovziridze, 2004) or the influence of the EU on the domestic arena of the internationally recognized RoC, which dominated efforts for accession into the EU (for example, Featherstone, 2000; Stefanou, 2005; Sepos, 2008).

In contrast, this work seeks to satisfy the need for a comprehensive account of the EU's impact on the exclusive TC zone, placing institutional arrangements at the spotlight. This is a very significant aspect of Europeanization, which has



not attracted academic attention. As a result, this work does not only shed light on the neglected impact of the EU on the TC side, but it also has comparative value for understanding the EU's relevance to contested states. This study of contested statehood offers important insight into the debate on the EU's ability to project an international role in a variety of pretexts and with regard to a diverse set of third actors, including contested entities that nowadays seat at the heart of the EU's international agenda. It is posited that conditions of contested statehood, despite limiting the EU's overall flexibility, actually foster idiomatic and strong Europeanization pressures at the domestic level. In this regard, we debate Europeanization as the process via which the EU impacts national level, and, more specifically, domestic politics, policy and polity (Ladrech, 1994; Börzel, 1999; Wallace, 2000; Hix and Goetz, 2001; Buller and Gamble, 2002; Töller, 2010).

Central to the debate on Europeanization and also the effort to explain the TC example are the mechanisms through which the EU effect is channeled in the domestic arena, which can be broadly categorized into:

- (a) *Europeanization by institutional compliance*, which refers to the EU impact via the provision of specific institutional models that countries need to adopt (Knill and Lehmkuhl, 2002).
- (b) *Change of domestic opportunity structures*, whereby change occurs as a result of redistribution of power among domestic actors. For example, redistribution might enable certain actors to better achieve their goals (Schmidt, 2008, p. 302) or 'exit' domestic constraints and pursue their interests through European structures. At the same time, the EU has the potential to provide various 'informational advantages', which relate to the influence that players enjoy due to their relevance to or knowledge of a particular matter, or, more opportunities for greater access to information via their participation in the EU affairs (Hix and Goetz, 2001, p. 12).
- (c) *Framing of domestic beliefs and expectations*, what we schematically call 'cognitive Europeanization', which relates to changes in the styles, practises and 'ways of doing things' (Radaelli, 2000, p. 4) of domestic players. Indeed, cognitive change can be widely conceptualized as influences related to 'softer' channels of Europeanization, such as processes of socialization of actors into certain practices (Schmidt, 2001, p. 12; Börzel and Risse, 2002; Pasquier, 2005).

In reference to domestic remits upon which Europeanization is 'projected', those can be divided into polity, politics and policy. With regard to domestic polity, which relates more to the institutional focus of this research on the TC administration, scholars have concentrated on the executive (for example, Bulmer and Burch, 2000; Goetz, 2000; George, 2001), the legislature (for example, Goetz and Meyer-Sahling, 2008) or local administration (for example, Burch and Gomez, 2003; Fargion *et al*, 2006). A reoccurring research theme

is also the EU effect on power constellations between different domestic institutions: some have argued for the weakening of the legislative branch (for example, Goetz and Meyer-Sahling, 2008) to find opposition by those who see national parliaments as a winner of EU integration (for example, Goetz and Meyer-Sahling, 2008). The same goes with local authorities, where a diversity of opinions has been expressed about the EU's positive, negative or differentiated effect upon them (for example, Radaelli, 2000, p. 11).

### **'Exporting' Europeanization**

The external relations of the EU have raised series of research questions about the 'Europeanization' of countries beyond the Union's borders. A range of scholars have debated Europeanization in third countries (for example, Wallace, 2000, p. 371; Buller and Gamble, 2002, p. 10; Lavenex and Ucarer, 2004, p. 419; Schimmelfennig, 2009, p. 8) but EU Enlargement remains a particularly strong branch of the literature, which has sought to investigate how the process of accession has impacted candidates for EU membership. Although there is increased analytical focus on accession conditionality (for example, Smith, 1998; Grabbe, 2001; Vachudova, 2003; Glenn, 2004), the occurrence of Europeanization is better conceptualized in reference to the overall process of preparing for EU integration via development, which is much broader in terms of scope and also participation of local agents. In this regard, although the TC case does not perfectly fit into any of the categories of EU relations presented so far (member states, candidates or third states), Brussels' approach toward the TCs is strikingly similar to Enlargement strategy: the EU embarks on assistance of a third party (TCs) toward development and approximation with the EU law in anticipation of its implementation via full EU integration (see also below). It is, therefore, the Enlargement-led Europeanization literature that becomes most helpful in explaining the TC example.

The mechanisms introduced for the study of Europeanization of EU member states go a long way toward investigating the TC case and, indeed, Enlargement-led EU impact in general. In this regard, the accession process is less relevant to institutional compliance pressures (Mechanism A, see above), given that the EU guidance toward the institutional arrangements needed for accession has been rather vague (Grabbe, 2001, p. 1023). In contrast, Enlargement-framed institutional and other domestic changes can be better understood as products of 'cognitive Europeanization' and, more specifically, 'normative' changes (candidate countries are communicated institutional or policy styles through interaction with the EU) or 'mimetic' pressures, whereby countries 'learn' about successful policies and institutions from other candidates or existing EU members (for example, Sedelmeier, 2011, p. 10). Finally, EU



accession has often provoked the change of domestic opportunity structures and created certain 'winners' and 'losers' (Papadimitriou and Phinnemore, 2004, p. 622). Indeed, the latter two mechanisms are expected to prevail over institutional compliance pressures in the TC example too.

Polity, politics and policy of the candidate states can be generally regarded as the domestic remits upon which Europeanization is reflected. Regarding polity, which is at the focus of this work on the TC administration, changes have stemmed from the need of candidate countries to develop institutions to match the interaction with the EU and implement the EU *acquis communautaire*. As far as institutional structures to manage EU affairs are concerned, many (for example, Agh, 1999; Grabbe, 2001; Lippert *et al*, 2001; Fink-Hafner, 2005; Goetz, 2005) posit that the main impact of EU Enlargement has been the strengthening of the executive *vis-à-vis* the legislative branch and the local authorities and the emergence of a 'core executive', a small governmental team to handle dealings with the EU (for example, Lippert *et al*, 2001). So far, research on the EU effect at the local level has produced diverse results, which propose either the empowerment or marginalization of regional players (for example, Grabbe, 2001; Czernielewska *et al*, 2004; O'Dwyer, 2006).

Finally, the Enlargement-related EU impact on domestic matters has been importantly facilitated by the credibility of conditionality (that is, clear promise of EU membership strictly conditioned on the criteria of accession – see Sedelmeier, 2011), whereas both technical and financial assistance have helped candidates to meet the criteria set (O'Dwyer, 2006, p. 225). Besides, the experience of EU Enlargement is also very relevant to the so-called 'goodness of fit' thesis (Radaelli, 2000; Cowles *et al*, 2001; Featherstone and Radaelli, 2003), which refers to the degree of compatibility between EU and national policies, processes, institutions and structures and the effect of this relation on the course and outcome of Europeanization; the majority of scholars suggest that the bigger the 'misfit' the greater the EU impact is, whereas Börzel and Risse (2002) draw particular attention to 'policy' and 'institutional' mismatches. For example, during the enlargement 2004/2007 round, 'Europeanization' was particularly aided by the important gap between EU conditionality content and the policies and polity that existed at the domestic level of the post-communist states. This relative prematurity is indicative of the aptitude of EU Enlargement to induce change in environments where there is both space and need for reform. Indeed, the notable underdevelopment of the TC contested and isolated state creates expectations for important institutional and policy 'misfits' to mediate the process of Europeanization.

Along these lines, Europeanization is not only 'fashionable' but also 'useful' (Olsen, 2002) in analyzing the EU effect on the TC domestic arena. In an effort to explain the importance of contested statehood, the main focus of this research is polity and public institutions (as the domestic aspect that is most

associated to the contested administration), and it is against this background that mechanisms of Europeanization are tested. Furthermore, although idiomatic as a case, Brussels' strategy toward the TCs is very similar to enlargement policy, which is based on the financial and technical assistance of a third party (TCs) toward future integration and application of the EU law. Correspondingly, the EU relevance to the TC institutions is expected to largely reflect Enlargement record and the related literature is particularly important in 'unpacking' this Europeanization on the TC case. As the TC preparation for implementation of EU law is still at an early stage, this research does not focus on the institutional *result* of the application of *acquis* but, instead, on the institutions developed to manage interaction with Brussels and the preparations for integration into the EU. Consequently, research begins with the hypothesis that the EU has impacted the TC institutional scene by (i) triggering the emergence of an institutional structure to deal with EU integration, (ii) a following (re)distribution of power between TC institutions and (iii) the communication of new institutional and policy styles and practises. In trying to contribute to the discussion on Europeanization, increased attention is paid to the mediating factor of contested statehood and how this shapes the degree and nature of the EU effect on domestic matters.

### **A 'Pending Accession'?: EU and the TC Administration**

The TC administration and institutional mosaic have been profoundly shaped by the history of Cyprus and its inter-communal conflict. The difficulty of the two communities to cooperate under the RoC, the bi-communal state established in 1960, led to the gradual division of the island, which was reinforced by the 1974 war. Since then, the country has been divided in two different territorial and administrative zones: in the south, the RoC, now monopolized by the GCs but still recognized as the only legal administration of Cyprus, and the TC community, retired in the north, and under the administrative face of the self-declared TRNC, which, until this day, heavily relies on Turkey and remains internationally unrecognized and isolated. As a result, the administration in northern Cyprus has been mainly informed by the experience of TCs during British rule before independence, the very few years of bi-communal cooperation under RoC or Turkey's help to establish a separate administration in more recent years. As a consequence, policies and structures informed by the colonial era of Cyprus but also Turkey (Interview, European Commission official A', Brussels, 2009), and outdated administrative systems (Interview, Head of EUCC, Nicosia, 2009) are central characteristics of the internationally isolated TC community and evident of an important gap between the domestic and the international (including EU) level. Naturally, isolation has also resulted





in very low familiarization of the elites involved in the TC institutions with international processes and practises.

Nonetheless, the TC administration displays some typical characteristics of a stable separate institutional and political space. The political system of the self-proclaimed TRNC is set along the lines of a semi-Presidential democratic republic. The directly elected president is the head of state and shares the executive power with the council of ministers (Article 5), head of which is the prime minister (PM). The presidential post has increased importance within TC politics due to (i) the bold personality of Rauf Denktaş, who monopolize and shaped the position for over 20 years (1983–2005) and (ii) the chief role of the president in all the reunification talks with the GCs until now. The legislative power rests with the TC unicameral parliament of 50 seats (Article 4), while the supreme court (Article 6) sits at the top of the TC judicial institutions. Locally, the TC administration is comprised of three levels. At the top, five districts (Nicosia, Famagusta, Kyrenia, Morphou and Trikomo) are headed by an Officer. At the second level, mayors and councils preside over municipalities, and at the third and final level the villages are administered by commissions. Local authorities appear to enjoy a certain degree of independence, which indicates a reasonably balanced system of power between central and regional governance. This institutional landscape was meant to be importantly impacted by the TC–EU relations, which intensified around 2006.

### **The 'Financial Aid Regulation'**

Before *circa* 2006, substantial links between Brussels and the TCs did not exist. This is a consequence of the TC absence from the overall process of EU accession of Cyprus, which was monopolized by the GC-led RoC. A reluctant and indirect EU involvement in the TC community started around 2000, when EU-supported bi-communal projects began, in the frame of pre-accession assistance. However, the administration of the programs by the United Nations (UN) limited the EU's links to the TCs, especially as far as institutions are concerned.<sup>2</sup> Along these lines, the EU activities for the TCs represent a reaction to the accession of Cyprus as a separated island and have been based on two Regulations: the 'Green Line Regulation' (The Council of the EU, 2005), which controls the movement of goods and persons between the TC and GC areas (see also below), and the 'Financial Aid Regulation' (The Council of the EU, 2006), which aims at the TC assistance and preparation for application of the EU law, in the event of a future reunification. In addition, a proposal for a 'Direct Trade Regulation' to facilitate trade between TCs and EU member states (European Commission, 2004a) is still pending, largely due to the veto of the RoC. Here, it

should be underlined that the EU refers to northern Cyprus as ‘the TC community’ or – in local terms – ‘areas of the RoC in which the government of the RoC does not exercise effective control’ (for example, The Council of the EU, 2006) and is particularly careful to explain that continues to not recognize the self-declared state:

nothing in this Regulation (i.e. Financial Aid Regulation) is intended to imply recognition of any public authority in the areas other than the Government of the RoC. (The Council of the EU, 2006)

At present, the Financial Aid Regulation constitutes the most important EU instrument in northern Cyprus. As such, it is also the program that sees the greatest engagement from the side of the TC institutions. The interaction between the EU and the TC administration mainly relates to the Regulation’s objectives that aim at:

- the promotion of social and economic development [...]
- the development and restructuring of infrastructure [...]
- preparation of legal texts aligned with the *acquis communautaire* for the purpose of these being immediately applicable upon the entry into force of a comprehensive settlement of the Cyprus problem (The Council of the EU, 2006).

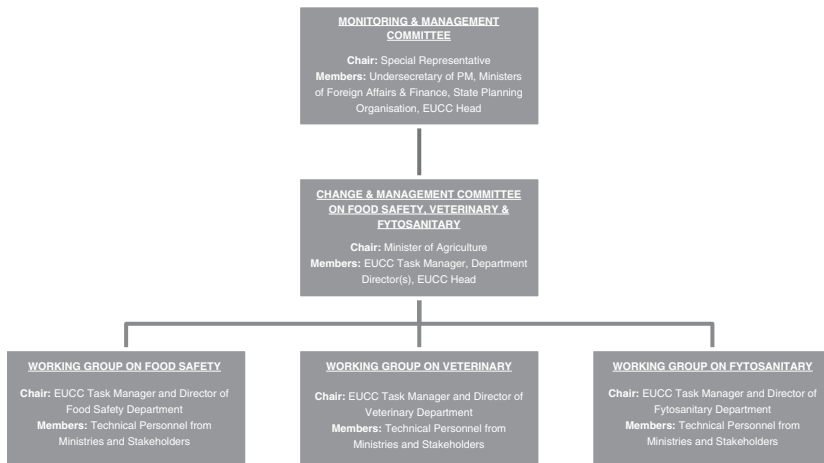
These priorities are indicative of the similarities between the EU strategy deployed in the TC case and the approaches followed in other examples of EU Enlargement: despite the largely different context of relations, the EU objective here is the aid of a partner (TCs) toward approximation with the EU law in anticipation of its application. It is therefore not surprising that the process of Europeanization in the TC community resembles other Enlargement cases (see also below). However, what is interesting to note (and test against other Europeanization cases) is the lack of conditionality credibility: in the TC case neither the ‘stick’ nor the ‘carrot’ of EU accession is as strong: EU integration is linked to reunification, which is nothing but sure (therefore, the ‘promise’ of integration is not as clear) and also something that the EU cannot effectively control, in case TCs do not undertake certain reforms (therefore, ‘criteria’ of EU integration are not relevant, as the EU cannot suspend or award integration anytime).

Faced with EU integration, the TCs had to develop institutional structures, which deal with the main imperative of EU activities: the management of assistance and the gradual preparation for implementation of EU law. Brussels’ guidance for the required institutional changes to manage EU affairs was very abstract (European Commission, 2007) and the TCs resorted to inspiration and advice from states with previous experience in establishing similar institutions. In particular, the TC institutional arrangements were informed by two specific

cases: Turkey and the RoC itself. TCs first consulted the political elites in Ankara, which are regular contacts of the contested administration (Interview, Head of EUCC, Nicosia, 2009). At the same time, TCs were also inspired by the GC institutional changes in the frame of the EU accession process of Cyprus (as handled by the GC-led RoC), some years earlier. Indeed, the good relations between TC and GC political elites played an important role in gaining advice on the appropriate TC institutional setting for the interaction with the EU (Interview, Head of the EUCC, 2010).

Along these lines, pressures of institutional compliance (see above, Mechanism A) have not been exerted upon the TCs, given that the EU did not provide guidance for explicit institutional changes. Instead, EU-induced alterations are better understood as a 'cognitive' type of Europeanization (Mechanism C), which takes place through strong 'mimetic pressures': TCs have learned how to respond to European integration from consultation with other, more experienced parts (for example, RoC, Turkey) and have 'mimed' their institutional styles and solutions introduced. Indeed, the below analysis of TC structures is suggestive of outstanding similarities to institutional solutions of other EU membership candidates. In fact, these reforms based on 'cognitive' processes and not so much institutional compliance have been extensively discussed in the literature of Enlargement-led Europeanization.

The collective TC institutions developed for the management of EU affairs are divided into three levels (Figure 1). The Monitoring and Management Committee (MM Committee) stands at the top of the hierarchy and is responsible



**Figure 1:** TC institutions for the management of EU affairs.

for the monitoring and management of the process of harmonization with EU law (EUCC, 2010). For the most part of this research, the MM Committee was chaired by the 'Special Representative', a type of 'EU Minister' (see below). After the change of government in April 2009, the chairmanship of the MM Committee was delegated to the minister of transport, who was very familiar with EU affairs (EUCC, 2010). Other members of the MM Committee include: the undersecretaries of (i) the PM, (ii) the foreign affairs minister, (iii) finance minister and (iv) state planning organization (a ministerial unit concerned with development matters) and the head of the EU Coordination Center (EUCC, see also below). The MM Committee is accountable to the council of ministers, whereas the TC president enjoys great (largely informal but effective) influence over the process of harmonization (Interview, Head of EUCC, Nicosia, 2010). At the second level, the so-called Change Management Committees (CM Committees) are based on the specific chapters of EU law to be prepared for/adopted and they are responsible for the harmonization strategy. This level too sees increased participation of ministerial authorities: each CM Committee is consisted of the relevant EUCC Task Manager, ministry department director(s), minister or undersecretary plus the head of the EUCC (EUCC, 2010). Finally, the last level of the institutional pyramid includes Working Groups, which bring together technical personnel from the ministries and the EUCC, and a good number of civil society representatives and stakeholders.

This institutional setting is indicative of the extensive involvement of governmental actors in the process of European integration, which provides them with increased leverage over certain policies (for example, reforms in the frame of European integration) but also a series of other privileges, including access to the EU environment and resources or 'informational advantages'. This EU-induced change of opportunity structures in favor of a 'core executive' that manages EU matters is indeed a reoccurring theme of the Enlargement-focused Europeanization literature.

Among the aforementioned actors, the EUCC, as a new, purpose-build institution, is a particularly revealing aspect of the EU's domestic impact. The EUCC coordinates, organizes and monitors the relations between TCs and the EU and plays a crucial role in the entire Financial Aid Regulation. Employing a small team of contractual experts and ministerial staff, the EUCC has been exclusively headed by a young technocrat, who has a strong EU background and is not directly affiliated to any party or government. This head of the EUCC shares power with a series of ministers in the MM Committee and also nominates the members of the CM Committees and Working Groups. This collection of duties gives EUCC a very important job within the interaction with the EU and a clear presence in all three levels of the institutional pyramid. As a result of influences by the GC institutional structures, the EUCC has, to a large degree, the same responsibilities with the office developed in the RoC,



for the purpose of EU accession (Sepos, 2008, p. 375; Office of the Coordinator for Harmonisation, 2010).

The interesting finding here is the way the profile and, most importantly, power of the EUCC have been mediated by the conditions of contested statehood. The EUCC is largely accountable to the presidential office which, therefore, secures a dominant position in the process of EU integration. Despite that, the EUCC has maintained a certain degree of distance from the TC authorities. This is largely due to the diplomatic stance of the EU itself, which tends to refer to the EUCC as an actor distinct from the 'TRNC' bodies (Interview, European Commission Official B', Nicosia, 2009), in order to avoid 'recognition by implication', a term often used to refer to the recognition/legitimization of the TC authorities from the side of the EU, through the direct interaction of the latter with the former. Indeed, the government of the RoC has been particularly instrumental in opposing EU engagement with the TC administration, based on the argument that this creates diplomatic recognition consequences. Correspondingly, a central reason for the establishment of the EUCC was the facilitation of the EU's interaction with an actor free of references to the self-declared TC state (Interview, KTTTO Member B', Nicosia, 2009; EUCC, 2010). As a result, this greater participation of the EUCC in European affairs becomes a source of varied benefits: more influence in decision making (for example, in the process of preparing for EU integration), greater access to the EU environment and more prestige, information, resources and opportunities at both the domestic and international level (through the participation in the activities of the EU and interaction with EU elites). Besides, the international isolation of the contested state and the very limited knowledge of EU affairs results in 'informational advantages' for those few elites with EU expertise (such as the head of the EUCC). Looking back at the conceptual framework of Europeanization, it seems that EU integration has generally empowered the executive branch but opportunity structures are uniquely affected by the variable of contested statehood and produce an important empowerment of the EUCC.

The Europeanization via change of domestic opportunity structures (see Mechanism B) also contributes to explaining the case of the 'Special Representative for the EU and the UN' (hereinafter 'Special Representative'). For the most part of this research, the Special Representative post was served by an elected member of the parliament (MP). Despite the existence of a separate TC foreign minister, Special Representative also undertook international representation tasks. This was due to the fact that the EU and UN, the main responsibility of Special Representative, were also the two major foreign actors that TCs have ties to. In addition to this diplomatic role, the Special Representative was also responsible for the supervision of TC efforts for EU integration as chairman of the MM Committee (Interview, Special

Representative, Nicosia, 2009). Those combined responsibilities are indicative of an EU-induced empowerment of the Special Representative and important similarities with institutional solutions already observed in other cases: Special Representative is very similar to the post of 'EU minister' introduced in other EU integration cases and discussed by the Europeanization literature (for example, Turkey, Czech Republic, Estonia or Hungary; see Lippert *et al.*, 2001). At the same time, the identification of the leading domestic figure of EU affairs with the post of foreign minister is also very common in Enlargement history (see below).

Here, again, the parameter of contested statehood and the non-recognition of the TCs by the EU played an important role in the profile and power of the Special Representative. The position of Special Representative was only recently created and was also free of any connotations to the self-declared TRNC that titles such as 'minister' bear. Similarly to the case of EUCC, it looks that Special Representative was approached by the EU as a single actor, not closely associated to the TC authorities, despite the fact that the official was practically part of the presidential office and the 'right hand' of the then president. From this focal position, Special Representative enjoyed a variety of advantages that relate to domestic influence and policymaking (for example, over the process of harmonization with the EU law) but also to easier access to international environment and increased policy knowledge, networking opportunities as well as prestige. Besides, international isolation and unfamiliarity with EU affairs provided 'informational advantages' and favored people with EU expertise as more appropriate to serve the post of Special Representative (both the two first officials that served the post had an important knowledge of international/EU matters). As a result, Special Representative was a new and, comparatively, powerful player. Again, Europeanization through change of domestic opportunity structures contributes to the understanding of the overall reinforcement of a powerful executive (that the Special Representative as well as the EUCC related to). However, contested statehood mediates this power *equilibrium* and offers added influence to the Special Representative, as an actor seemingly less correlated to the TC administration.

The group of aforementioned actors (Figure 1) has led the TC efforts for capacity building and preparations for the implementation of EU law. From the side of the EU, experts have provided a series of 'awareness seminars' on a wide range of topics, including legal approximation with EU law, training on the principles of effective transposition of legal texts as well as public expenditure management (TAIEX, 2009, p. 18). The 'training' of the TCs has also been based on EU missions on the ground or visits of locals to EU member states for the exchange of best practises (TAIEX, 2004, p. 12; TAIEX, 2005, p. 10). Although the contested statehood and the absence of recognition of TC institutions is explicitly cited as counter-productive to the EU's role in the area



(TAIEX, 2009, p. 18), the activities are still important and have intensified in recent years (TAIEX, 2010, p. 28). An indicative example of this 'knowledge transfer' has been the 'Regional Training Programme', which coaches domestic officials on the implementation and enforcement of EU legislation (TAIEX, 2007, p. 20).

The variety of those activities have resulted in the production a TC 'action plan', the so-called 'Programme for Future Application of *Acquis*', which can be seen as the equivalent of National Programmes for Adopting the *Acquis*, consolidated in previous cases of enlargement. The program relates to 13 prioritized policy areas and, so far, particular progress has been recorded in the areas of environment, agriculture, statistics (TAIEX, 2007, p. 10), financial activities and competition law (TAIEX, 2008, p. 20).

This part of the EU–TC interaction, which has been framed by both EU and local elites as the most important element of Brussels' role in the area (Interview, European Commission Official A', Brussels, 2009; Interview, KTTO Member B', Nicosia, 2009) is particularly important for the 'Europeanization' of the TCs. Here, the focus of Brussels is on the 'understanding' and transformation of the TC mentality with regard to the adjustment to EU policy and practises (Interview, KTTO Member A', Brussels, 2009). As a result, rather than a coercive adjustment to certain conditions and reforms, the TCs engage in a process of 'Europeanization' through the communication of new ideas and practises via their socialization into the EU environment (see also Mechanism C). The extensive exchange of expertise and consultation with EU experts has a great potential for the 'cognitive' Europeanization and EU-informed 'normative changes', through the communication of new styles and practises of policies and institutional setting. What is more, the international isolation of the contested state has led to a large gap of policy and institutional arrangements between the EU and the domestic level, which creates added opportunities for cognitive pressures to be exerted upon the TCs.

In contrast to the executive, which the above actors belong or are accountable to, the legislative branch and the local authorities display limited participation in the dealings with the EU. First, the role of the TC parliament has been restricted to the approval of legislation for the approximation with the EU law but does not relate to the preparations for the application of *acquis* and the rest of EU activities. Second, the participation of regional institutions is limited to *ad hoc* committees, which have sought to coordinate different parts of the TC administration toward the implementation of the EU assistance at local level, such as the project of water/wastewater management (Interview, Head of EUCC, Nicosia, 2010). However, the actors coming from the 'core executive' team, which is responsible for the interaction with the EU (Figure 1), remain at the helm of the process. Therefore, although EU integration has a good potential for the development of TC locality (for example, through the

increased attention paid to infrastructure development), regional authorities, for the time being, remain relatively untouched by both the process and the outcome of EU activities. This is another reconfirmed manifestation of the Enlargement-driven Europeanization, which is often characterized by change of opportunity structures toward the marginalization of local authorities and the legislature by the central government (see also below).

### **The ‘Green Line Regulation’**

‘Green Line Regulation’ is another EU activity in northern Cyprus, which aims to control movement of goods and persons between the two communities and facilitate their trade (with the economic benefit of the TCS being an additional target).<sup>3</sup> In this case, the involvement of TC public institutions is limited and so is the discussion of this Regulation in this article. Nevertheless, the unexpected importance of non-state actors in the Regulation, which stems from the problematic political context of contested statehood, is an important finding that merits further investigation.

The Green Line Regulation did not create the need for further, important institutional arrangements. All the same, it is the minimal participation of TC institutions in this EU activity that draws the attention. For the successful implementation of the Regulation, the TC part needed to undertake a series of responsibilities, such as monitoring of trade and issue of accompanying documents for the goods traded. Admittedly (Interview, European Commission Official C’, Brussels, 2009), under normal conditions (not shaped by contested statehood matters and the ‘recognition by implication’ issue), these duties would have been undertaken by a series of ministerial authorities. However, given the fact that the TC administration is not recognized, the EU preferred to avoid formal and direct interaction with public institutions.

Instead, the European Commission delegated these tasks to the TC Chamber of Commerce (*Kıbrıs Türk Ticaret Odası – KTTO*) (European Commission, 2004b), which has been active in trade issues for a long time and has acclaimed trade expertise, capacity and status within the community. Therefore, the *KTTO* became a very important partner for the Commission in the implementation of the Regulation.

This replacement of public authorities by non-state actors is a particularly interesting aspect of the TC case of Europeanization. In an unprecedented move, the EU chose to bypass domestic public authorities as the main interlocutors in order to avoid ‘recognition by implication’ (see also before). Instead, the Commission replaced actors coming from the contested TC administration with non-state players, most notably the *KTTO*, which do not bare any diplomatic risks for the EU. This strategy has very important





consequences for the EU-triggered change in the domestic opportunity structures: the role of the *KTTO* in European integration comes hand-in-hand with an unpredictably important domestic role and influence over certain policies related to the EU's role in the TC community, including leverage over the Green Line Regulation but also the Financial Aid Regulation, as an intermediate between Brussels and TC civil society beneficiaries of EU aid (Interview, *KTTO* Member B', Nicosia, 2009). At the same time, *KTTO* has also gripped benefits related to the access to international affairs, such as the establishment of a very strong lobbying delegation in Brussels. In this regard, the process of Europeanization and change of domestic opportunity structures is uniquely affected by the variable of contested statehood and results in an empowerment of non-state actors, such as the *KTTO*. This is a particularly important contribution of the TC case to which we return below.

### **The Difference of Being Contested: Europeanization and the TC Administration**

The TC 'Europeanization' bears resemblance to other EU Enlargement cases but, at the same time, is also characterized by a series of special features related to contested statehood. Going back to the conceptual discussion on Europeanization and the hypothesis introduced, the EU's relations to the TCs have indeed triggered important institutional changes. Interestingly, these changes have not been a result of institutional *compliance*, the Europeanization mechanism most directly related to institutional alterations. Here, the TC case mirrors the experience of enlargement, where the absence of specific institutional directions to manage EU affairs has led countries to initiate own structures, often similar to other candidates. Along these lines, TCs looked back at previous or current enlargement cases (for example, RoC, Turkey) and gained from this experience. Hence, the TC institutional changes can be better conceptualized as a result of 'mimetic' pressures rather than mere institutional compliance. This process of 'mimetism' is evident in the type of TC institutional alterations, which 'echo' previous arrangements in the Central East European Countries, Turkey or even RoC. The EUCC or the Special Representative are examples of similar institutions established in other European integration cases. As a result and in accordance with previous Europeanization-informed changes, EU–TC relations led to the emergence of a distinctive 'core executive' to handle the EU affairs, which largely consists of governmental actors and some purpose-build institutions, such as the EUCC or the Special Representative.

These institutional changes also relate to an important EU-induced modification of the domestic opportunity structures, which goes a long way toward the

confirmation of the second part of our hypothesis. Similar to other Europeanization studies, the TC executive appears to have been the ‘winner’ of European integration at the expense of both the legislature and local authorities. The central position of the executive in the interaction with the EU has increased its already strong domestic influence. Such an improvement of power relates to the authority that actors who participate in the EU integration process enjoy with regard to decision making and their access to the EU/international environment and benefits in terms of information, resources, prestige and, ultimately, influence. Here, the contested statehood leads to an interesting twist in our working hypothesis: the international isolation favors elites with EU understanding, whereas the non-recognition of the self-declared TRNC gives increased role and opportunities to actors who bear – or seem to bear – less identification to the contested administration. In this regard, important institutional misfits facilitate the process of Europeanization here: on the one hand, the misfit between existing relatively decentralized structures and the EU-induced empowerment of a core executive, and on the other the misfit between the previous prevalence of actors coming from the administration and the novel importance of players that are/ seem to be less identified to the contested state (for example, EUCC, *KKTO* – see also below).

Not only is the executive central to the process of EU integration but also the role of the TC parliament has been restricted to the approval of legislation to align TC policies to the EU *acquis*. As a result, the overall EU effect has been a reinforcement of the existing tendency toward a rather weak legislature *vis-à-vis* the executive branch. Besides, when it comes to EU matters, the established (relative) balanced distribution of power between central and regional government is also challenged: the aforementioned ‘core executive’ has also dominated EU activities related to the TC regional development. Indeed, as discussed earlier, scholars have extensively debated the weakening of both the parliament and local authorities as a result of the EU-led Europeanization process.

Finally, an important ‘cognitive’ EU impact is also evident in the TC case and reconfirms the last part of this work’s hypothesis. First of all, the institutional changes that have occurred extensively rely on blueprints of arrangements in other EU integration cases. This is evident of an important EU effect on the institutional styles favored among TC elites who, through their socialization into the EU environment, ‘learn’ new ways of institutional setting. In addition, the several EU activities, which aim at the transfer of ‘know-how’ and the adoption of different policies and practices toward harmonization with the EU law and development (for example, TAIEX), unleash a certain amount of cognitive pressures on the actors that participate. In absence of a coercive process of ‘Europeanization’, TCs are faced with new approaches of



institutional and policymaking and might experience a process of 'framing' of 'ways of doing things', especially at this stage, where the EU efforts concentrate on understanding, preparation and capacity building for implementation of the EU law. Nevertheless important, the limited credibility of conditionality and the absence of criteria for EU integration does potentially limit the TC incentives toward reform and, therefore, the process of 'cognitive' Europeanization.

Two specificities of the TC case mediate the process of Europeanization and contribute to the conceptual debate on the EU's leverage on contested states. First, the issue of the long-standing TC isolation interplays in a fascinating way with the 'goodness of fit' thesis: the TC isolation has created an important policy misfit between the EU and the TC level, which is mostly characterized by dated structures and policies. This gap has created the conditions for significant (mainly cognitive) pressures, to be exerted upon the TC institutions and their actors, through the EU programs and the introduction into novel policies of conditionality. In addition, the related low familiarity of the TCs with the international/EU affairs has also affected the domestic power *equilibrium* and has provided two types of 'informational advantages': first, it appears that the limited EU expertise, which characterizes series of domestic elites, has given increased role and benefits to players, such as the head of the EUCC or those serving as heads of the CM Committee, who enjoy an EU background and can better respond to the relevant policy challenges. Second, the participation of certain domestic actors in the process of EU integration offers additional privileges with regard to access to the international environment, which the isolated community has been missing.

Another fascinating factor that affects the Europeanization process is the absence of international recognition for the TC administration. On the one hand, the issue of non-recognition has led to a low intensity role of Brussels in northern Cyprus. At the same time, the non-recognition of the self-proclaimed TRNC has uniquely affected institutional arrangements and has given increased power and opportunities to a group of actors that were recently established and have been regarded as distinctive from the official unrecognized state, such as the EUCC or the Special Representative. The risk of 'recognition by implication', which the dealings with TRNC representatives entail for Brussels, has also been addressed by the replacement of TC authorities with non-state actors, such as the *KTTO*. The case of *KTTO* is indicative for the opportunities provided to non-state actors (including interest groups, civil society and so on) in similar instances.<sup>4</sup> This point represents a uniqueness of the TC example as a contested state, whereby positions traditionally delegated to public authorities are given to non-state players, with consequent implications for the advantages that these posts might provide to their holders.

## Conclusion: Beyond the TC Example

The study of the TC case has been very revealing for the EU's international influence and the discussion on Europeanization. The investigation of the TC community has reconfirmed popular theses of the Europeanization debate, especially the path of the literature that discusses enlargement. At the same time, it has provided important knowledge and contribution to the ongoing conceptual discussion on the EU and its international role and influence, especially with regard to the neglected but very important topic of contested states. The dealings with the EU have informed a series of institutional changes in the TC administration. Changes here are not a result of institutional compliance, but, rather, of 'cognitive' pressures and inspiration from institutional alterations at other EU integration cases. In addition, an EU cognitive effect is also channeled via the 'capacity building' activity, which aims at transforming the TC mentality and styles of policy and institutional setting. This effect seems to gain from the gap that exists between EU and domestic institutional structures and policies, a gap resulted out of years of TC international isolation. Finally, and in accordance with existing observations of the Europeanization literature, institutional changes come together with an impact on the domestic distribution of power and the strengthening of the executive branch in its already central position *vis-à-vis* the parliament and the local authorities. Nevertheless, here, the balance of power is uniquely affected by the contested status of the TRNC, which has given increased influence to new actors, which bear (for example, *KTTO*), or seem to bear (for example, *EUCC*), fewer correlations to the unrecognized TC state.

Despite restricted to observations with regard to the TC example, this research aspires to increased relevance to the discussion on Europeanization in relation to the EU's external environment and, especially, contested states, which have been neglected by the literature until now. The study of the TC case has revealed that under conditions of challenging diplomatic relations, which are particularly true for contested states, the EU effect on domestic matters would be normally mediated and 'slowed down'. It is anticipated that the solutions devised to bypass those diplomatic challenges will reflect the TC case and the prioritization of actors less (or seemingly less) identified with the contested state, which offer interaction that does not lead to recognition claims and is, therefore, 'safer' for the EU to pursue. This is particularly important for the empowerment of civil society as an alternative interlocutor to state authorities. Finally, the investigation of the TC example has been illuminative for an important 'misfit' between the EU and the domestic level of the contested (and internationally isolated) partner: based on the TC example, when the 'Europeanized' part is considerably behind what EU activities aim at – and this should be expected to happen in cases of contested and internationally



'embargoed' states – Brussels will need to invest on 'capacity building', which provides increased opportunities for EU effect on domestic matters and reconfirms the popular 'goodness of fit' thesis of the Europeanization literature.

The EU, especially after the recent opening toward its 'near abroad', is faced with a diverse series of contested statehood cases, including Kosovo, the disputed territories in Georgia and Moldova or the occupied Palestinian territories, to name some of. This foreign agenda is expected to test the EU's ability to play a pivotal role in those regions and channel an effect on the particularly idiomatic domestic setting of these examples. In this context, this study opens a research dialogue and constitutes an important model for the study of Europeanization of contested states but the discussion on the EU's international influence will be benefited by more diverse research on the matter. Particularly welcome is the examination of different contexts of the EU's relations to contested entities, for example in the context of enlargement (for example, Kosovo), the European Neighbourhood Policy (the Occupied Palestinian Territories, Transnistria, Nagorno-Karabakh, South Ossetia, Abkhazia) or the better-tailored Eastern Partnership, and how those define (different) EU instruments, mechanisms and, ultimately, impact of Europeanization. For the study of the EU's relevance to contested states, this investigation of the TC example has provided a revealing and useful 'roadmap'.

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## Notes

- 1 For consistency reasons, the research does not go beyond the recent change of TC leadership in 2009/2010 but, instead, focuses on the period under the government of Republican Turkish Party (CTP) and President Mehmet ali Talat, which, anyway, represent the commencement and most important period in the EU–TC relations.
- 2 Before accession, the potential for EU membership led to a strong public pro-European trend, also translated in the electoral victory of pro-EU political elites *vis-à-vis* the Eurosceptic camp. Although this development does relate to an EU impact on the sociopolitical TC landscape, the EU bore no substantial relevance to institutional matters, which are at the focus of this work.
- 3 Reports on the implementation of the Regulation underline limited progress and they make specific reference to the matters of contested statehood and the limited recognition of TC authorities, which create a series of irregularities and negatively affect effective implementation (European Commission, 2011).
- 4 The EU relevance to the TC civil society is high and relates to a variety of EU activities, such as the Financial Aid Regulation or the European Parliament's activities on the ground, as well as the wide pro-EU trend that the prospects of EU integration have stipulated (especially in the pre-accession era). For the sake of coherence, this article only focuses at the importance of the EU for non-state actors and/ or civil society in the context of the problematic relations between Brussels and institutions of the contested state and in the frame of the two Regulations at the focus of investigation.

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**Disclaimer** This work does not wish to engage in the debate over the legality of the self-declared 'TRNC' and the legitimacy of its governing institutions. For reasons of clarity, domestic institutions are referred to by their official name as used by the TCs themselves (for example, 'President', 'Parliament' and so on). This should not be interpreted as a statement of the author that endorses the legality of the TC administration.