

Exporting European Preferences to the Neighbourhood - Patterns of Progress in the Environmental Field of the European Neighbourhood Policy

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Abstract

Launched in 2004, the European Neighbourhood Policy intends to provide a coherent frame for the relations between the European Union and its neighbourhood. Aside several multilateral initiatives, it rests largely on bilateral relations between the EU and its partners.

The centre-pieces of those bilateral relations are the action plans, which feature agreed objectives between the parties involved. Those objectives focus on a large range of issues, one of them is the environment. As the environment is clearly an issue of trans-border nature and high importance, and as the EU has strong preferences in this area, this study examines the progress achieved in the environmental field since the conclusion of the action plans and the effectiveness of exporting the environmental preferences of the EU to its neighbourhood.

Given that there is a significant gap in the academic literature on the topic, this paper touches upon a field that has not been covered sufficiently. Assessing all the sixty progress reports that have been published on the ENP- countries so far, this paper examines the progress systematically and analyses for patterns. It delivers a study that exceeds any previous one on the progress achieved in any ENP- field by assessing all partner countries and all progress reports available.

Analysing for patterns of progress in the sectoral, regional and temporal dimension, this study comes to the conclusion that there are no distinctive patterns to be recognized. Albeit it appears as if the Southern countries in general are more constant in achieving progress, there is no significant difference between the Eastern and the Southern countries in the overall progress achieved. Generally, there has been progress in the environmental field, albeit not necessarily particularly strong.

As the progress achieved varies from case to case, the overall efficiency of exporting the preferences of the EU in environmental terms to its neighbourhood is somewhat ambivalent. A group of best- performing countries consisting of Egypt, Israel, Jordan and Morocco could be identified. In the absence of recognizable patterns, mentioned

group has been cross- referenced to various indices assessing development and democracy. However, no indications for causal relationships could be found. It appears as if individual factors determine the progress achieved in the environmental field in a given ENP- country aside the common challenges of limited resources and limited awareness in the partner countries respective the need for environmental protection.

Being the first of its kind, this study faced several major methodological challenges which it encountered in a consistent and transparent way. The methodological framework developed particularly for this study might serve well for subsequent studies on other fields of the ENP. Moreover, the findings of this study might serve as empirical ground- work for a variety of research programmes on the environmental field within the ENP. Hence, an under- examined topic receives some more due consideration.