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To cite this article: Pernille Rieker (2017): Outsidership and the European Neighbourhood Policy. The case of Norway, Global Affairs, DOI: [10.1080/23340460.2017.1410720](https://doi.org/10.1080/23340460.2017.1410720)

To link to this article: <https://doi.org/10.1080/23340460.2017.1410720>



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Published online: 15 Dec 2017.



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Outsidership and the European Neighbourhood Policy. The case of Norway

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ABSTRACT

This paper examines how and to what extent Norway adapts to and is affected by the EU's policy towards its neighbours in the East. In line with the overall topic of the special issue, it investigates how Norway handles its "outsidership" when formulating its policies towards Union's Eastern partner countries that have signed Association Agreements with the EU (Ukraine, Georgia and Moldova). While Norway is not an EU member, it is still highly integrated into most of the Union's policy areas. The European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP) is one of the few policy areas where Norway is not participating. In principle, it therefore also has the liberty to choose a different approach than the EU in its bilateral relations with these countries. The question is to what extent it does. This paper investigates what kind of balance Norway seeks between autonomy and integration in relation to the ENP partner countries.

ARTICLE HISTORY

Received 13 June 2017

Accepted 24 November 2017

KEYWORDS

EU; ENP; Norway; Ukraine; Moldova; Georgia

Introduction

When the European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP) was launched in 2004, it was considered by the member states as one of the most important security policy initiatives of the EU, alongside the enlargement process. The intention was to avoid new dividing lines between EU members and non-members. Although the ENP has not yet lived up to its promise, it is still given high priority, and has been revised and adjusted first in 2011 and then again in 2015 to be more in line with the current security context. Importantly, the ENP has become more differentiated in its approach, seeking to take into account the needs of the different partner countries as well as the changing geopolitical context. The recent adjustments are a direct consequence of the dramatic events that brought a deterioration of the security situation in the EU's Southern and the Eastern neighbourhoods after the short-lived Arab Spring of 2011 and then the crisis in Ukraine in 2013/2014 (Batora & Rieker, [Forthcoming](#); Rieker, 2016).

As part of the Schengen Area, Norway has a common interest with the EU in contributing to stability and prosperity in the Southern and the Eastern neighbourhoods. The Norwegian government's strategy for Norway–EU relations for the period 2014–2017,

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emphasizes that “Norway supports EU’s neighbourhood policy, which contributes to economic, political and social development south and east of EU’s borders” (Utenriksdepartementet, 2014a, p. 6). In a statement made by the former Minister for European Affairs, Vidar Helgesen, congratulating Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine on the signing of Association Agreements (AAs) with the EU he further argues that “closer association and integration with the EU for countries in this region is in Norway’s interest” (Utenriksdepartementet, 2014b). Even though the failed Arab Spring and the migration crisis have led to an increased attention and support to the ENP partner countries in the South, we see from the Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs’s (MFA) overview of its financial support that a clear priority is still given to the Eastern neighbourhood.¹

This article, therefore, investigates how Norway, a highly integrated non-member of the EU and a small state, has responded and adapted to the adjustments of the ENP that we have seen since 2014, primarily in response to the crisis in Ukraine. Has it done so by strengthening its adaptation to and integration with the EU? or has it ought greater autonomy in this policy area? In other words, how does Norway balance between Hirschman’s (1970) *exit* and *voice*? As mentioned in the introduction to this special issue (Haugevik & Rieker, 2017), the choice between these two alternatives will depend on the members’ loyalty to the organization. High loyalty will make exit less likely, and “give more scope to voice”. As a non-member, Norway has no exit-option – it is already formally outside. Still, it has the possibility to choose, in areas where no formal agreements exist with the EU, between following a more autonomous policy and being a passive supporter with a high level of “loyalty” but low “voice” or influence.

Certain arguments could be made on the basis of previous research on Norway’s relationship with the EU. For instance, it could be argued that the capacity to act autonomously (and thus have greater autonomy) will be greater in this policy area, as it is not covered by formal agreements between the EU and Norway. However, an alternative argument is conceivable: that the far-reaching integration in other areas will lead to a certain spill-over effect that will, in turn, constrain Norway’s autonomy, pushing for close integration with a high degree of loyalty despite the lack of voice. Or one could argue something in-between: that there is a balance between autonomy and integration, and that this is the result of strategic calculations of costs and benefits. This would ultimately lead to a mixed strategy between the perceived need to preserve Norway’s policy of close European integration, while also investing in the formation of bilateral agreements and new alliances outside the EU. As the analysis in this article indicates, the Norwegian government seems to have chosen to align itself to the EU also in this area and that the explanation seems to be a combination of spill-over and strategic calculations.

This article starts by presenting the ENP and how Norway, as a closely associated non-member and a small state, relates to this policy. We then examine how Norway has balanced between autonomy and integration in practice in its bilateral relations with the three Eastern Partnership (EaP) countries that have signed comprehensive AAs with the EU: Moldova, Georgia and Ukraine. The article concludes by discussing the validity of the arguments presented above as well as the implications for the main topic of this special issue: how small states, including a closely associated non-EU member like Norway, are responding to the changing European security landscape.

The relationship with Norway, EUs foreign policy and the ENP

Although the Norwegian people have twice voted to reject EU membership, Norway has close relations with the EU. The main framework is the European Economic Area (EEA) Agreement – which makes Norway, like Iceland and Liechtenstein, a full participant in the EU Internal Market. The close relationship does not end here: over the years, the Norwegian authorities have achieved cooperation agreements and arrangements in many other areas as well (Archer, 2005; Sverdrup, 1998). In foreign and security policy, Norway has a well-established political dialogue with the EU, even participating in several EU-led Common Security and Defence Policy operations (Rieker, 2014). Concerning justice and internal security, Norway participates in the Schengen Area and works closely with the EU in combatting terrorism and international crime. Thus, Norway is actively involved in central EU policy areas, perhaps even becoming more integrated into the EU than some member states. This is especially true if we compare the position taken by Norway to that of EU members like Denmark and the UK (before Brexit), who have decided to opt out from some of these policy areas. In this sense, Norway could be viewed as a “class B” member of the EU – well integrated into most policy areas, but lacking real political influence or “voice” (NOU, 2012).

In foreign and security policy, the Norwegian government has had a “political dialogue” with the EU since 1994 (after the negative outcome of the second referendum), with two meetings a year between the Norwegian Foreign Minister and the foreign ministers of the EU. In addition, there have been several meetings involving senior officials from Norway (as well as from Iceland and Liechtenstein) and their counterparts in the various Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP) working groups set up under the Council. Since 1994, Norwegian officials have participated primarily in the working groups involved with policy areas where Norway has special interests – like the Balkans, Russia, the Middle East peace process, anti-terror policy and non-proliferation. Further, Norway has regularly been invited to align itself with EU foreign policy statements, as it generally does: indeed, it has been unofficial Norwegian policy to sign onto EU statements wherever possible (NOU, 2012, p. 731). As Thorhallsson and Gunnarsson (2017) show, this has also been the case for Iceland.

After the entry into force of the Lisbon Treaty in December 2009 and the establishment of the European External Action Service (EEAS), this format for Norway–EU cooperation has changed slightly. In general, it has become increasingly difficult to establish a new form of institutionalized meeting structure between third countries and the High Representative for CFSP/Vice President of the Commission. The contact between the High Representative and subsequent Norwegian foreign ministers has continued to be frequent, but more on an ad hoc basis. The right-of-centre coalition government that took office in Norway in October 2013 underlined its ambition to lead an increasingly active policy towards the EU by establishing the post of a Minister for European Affairs at the Prime Minister’s office. Although a new institutionalized meeting structure at the political level is still lacking, the unilateral alignment to EU foreign and security policy has continued and has hardly been contested – perhaps because EU foreign policy is much in line with the Norwegian policy, generally making alignment natural (Rieker, 2014). Just as Norway tends to support EU foreign policy declarations, it explicitly supports the ENP and the EaP, especially the Eastern partner countries’ process towards European

integration. This was emphasized in the government's 2016 working programme for cooperation with the EU:

Stability and development in Eastern Europe and the Balkans are important for our security and welfare. Norwegian financial assistance to countries in Eurasia has been targeted towards the three countries that have entered into association agreements with the EU (Ukraine, Georgia and Moldova) and is designed to support the efforts of these countries towards closer European integration. The Government will therefore continue its dialogue with EU institutions and member states on cooperation with the countries in Eurasia and on other instruments, such as restrictive measures against Russia. (Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs [NMFA], 2016)

In 2015 Iceland, Liechtenstein and Norway reached an agreement with the EU on a new contribution to EEA and Norway grants.² This contribution from the EEA countries to improve and strengthen social and economic cohesion is often seen as the “membership fee” for having such an extensive associated membership (Johnsen & Rieker, 2015). Under this agreement, a regional fund worth some €100 million was established for 2014–2021, the rationale being that various challenges affect several countries or entire regions of members and non-members, and these challenges require joint cross-border efforts. As support may be granted to initiatives involving countries that are not formal members of the EU/EEA and are not covered by the grants, this opens possibilities for collaboration with countries such as Ukraine and Moldova: through this regional fund, Norway may contribute indirectly to the ENP.³

Seeking to stimulate such projects, State Secretary (junior minister) Elsbeth Tronstad visited Slovakia in 2015. In her presentation, she emphasized Norway's positive experiences with cross-border cooperation in the Barents region, and expressed hopes that this could be an inspiration also for Carpathian region⁴ (Tronstad, 2015). Interestingly, Norway's bilateral approach towards the EaP countries appears similar to the approach applied by the EU member states.

Norway actively supports the ENP, but how far does this support go? Has Norway retained autonomy in its bilateral relations with the partner countries – or is Norway's approach more an extension of EU policy towards these countries? The next section examines the various projects and initiatives that Norway has initiated in the three countries often referred to as the “frontrunners” in the East – because, among the ENP countries, Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine have undertaken the most reforms.

The ENP and Norway's relations with Moldova, Georgia and Ukraine

In the Norwegian MFA, the bilateral relations with Moldova, Georgia and Ukraine are handled by the Department for Security Policy and the High North and the Division for Russia, Eurasia and Regional Cooperation, while relations to the ENP and the EaP are dealt with in the Department for European Affairs and the European Policy Section. These serve different ministers, with the former reporting to the Minister of Foreign Affairs and the latter to the Minister of EEA and EU Affairs. In practice, for those dealing with European affairs, the EU and EU cooperation features high on the agenda, whereas the other department focuses primarily on how to support the partner country in question.⁵ Still, most of the programmes and activities initiated by the Norwegian government are in line with the EU, sometimes implemented in close cooperation with the EU.

Moreover, Norway has decided to concentrate its financial support to these three countries precisely because of their commitment to the EU reform agenda.⁶ The former Minister for European Affairs, Vidar Helgesen, argued that

Norway has committed itself to assisting Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine in their processes towards European integration. These processes are fragile. The countries' own governments need to do more to move them forward. It is in our interests that they succeed in doing so, and we are providing support for reforms and modernisation efforts in these countries. (Helgesen, 2015)

Thus, the government actively supports these countries' efforts to adapt to EU standards, assisting them towards European integration. This might seem paradoxical, as Norway remains outside the EU itself, but is hardly questioned in the country. For instance, in 2014, the government decided to increase financial support to these countries: while support for Ukraine was increased by NOK 160 million (€17 million) to a total of 200 million (€22 million), support for Moldova was also increased by NOK 20 million (€2 million), to a total of 50 million (€5 million); and the government will continue to allocate NOK 40 million (€4 million) to Georgia.⁷ Since then the support has increased further (more on this below).

According to officials in the Norwegian MFA, the ministry follows closely the EU's efforts and country evaluations as an important source of information for determining bilateral financial support. There are also regular meetings (annually for each country) in the EEAS where all donor countries are invited to exchange information and coordinate activities, to make support from the various more complementary. In addition, there are regular contacts between the EU delegation in the three partner countries and the Norwegian embassy, for exchange of information and to ensure a certain degree of division of labour. The status reports developed by the EU for each country are a further source of information when Norway evaluates the progress made in these countries, although the decision concerning which projects to support are taken according to national priorities, interests and capacities.⁸

In the following, we examine the projects that Norway supported in these countries since 2014, asking how they align with the projects of the EU member states and ENP policy.

Norwegian support to Ukraine

Ever since Ukrainian independence, the national authorities have worked to develop a closer association with the EU. However, the signing of the AA, postponed several times by the EU due to various setbacks in the country, was finally rejected by President Yanukovich, after Russian pressure, in December 2013. The ensuing events – the Maidan revolution, the war between Russian-supported separatists in Eastern Ukraine and the Kiev – government, as well as the Russian annexation of Crimea – put the country in a serious crisis.

Even though Ukraine was further from signing the AA than ever before, the newly elected president, President Porochenko, finally managed to sign the agreement in March 2014, enabling the country to continue on the path towards European integration despite Russian pressures (Batora & Navratil, 2014). While this has remained the

ambition, the EU has, in view of the situation in Ukraine and the rising tensions with Russia, been toning down the prospects for European integration, emphasizing instead the need for reforms and assisting the Ukrainian government financially and technically in this reform process. The member states and several other countries, including Norway have been increasingly active in Ukraine as donors. The EU envisages €825–1013 million in support to Ukraine for the period 2014–2020 (Rieker, 2016, p. 193); additionally, several member states have bilateral programmes (Batora & Rieker, *Forthcoming*). Since the Maidan revolution and the subsequent war between Russian-supported separatists and the Ukrainian government, the Norwegian government has also increased its financial support substantially: in 2015, the figure was about 10 times higher than in 2013. While Norway provided NOK 106.5 million (€11 million) in development aid to Ukraine in 2014 – up from NOK 34.6 million (€3.6 million) in 2013, NOK 22.8 million (€2.4 million) in 2010 and a mere NOK 1.4 million (about €150,000) in 2005.⁹ This means that Norwegian official development aid to Ukraine has increased substantially since 2005, with the most significant year-on-year increase between 2013 and 2014. In 2015, its overall support to Ukraine amounted to NOK 310 million (€36 million);¹⁰ and it committed itself to NOK 390 million (€41.7 million) for 2016 and this level of support is likely to continue in 2017.

With Norway's earlier support at some NOK 40 million annually since the mid-1990s, the recent increase is quite substantial, although small compared to the amounts provided by the EU. As explained by Norway's State Secretary for Foreign Affairs in late April 2015, Norway focuses on the following priorities in its support to Ukraine: most of the support is general budget support; project support goes to areas such as energy reform; European integration; good governance, transparency and accountability; strengthening of civil society and free media; and the fight against corruption (Brattskaar, 2015). Further, Norway explicitly promotes Ukraine's Europeanization process in the sense that all recent supported projects aim at assisting Ukraine in complying with EU standards.¹¹ In 2015, Norwegian support was allocated as follows: budget support (NOK 100 million/€10.3 million); security sector and constitutional reform (NOK 73 million/€7.5 million); energy reform and nuclear safety (NOK 77 million/€7.9 million); trade facilitation and EU integration (NOK 20 million/€2.06 million) and general humanitarian aid (NOK 40 million/€4.12 million).¹² In 2016, overall support was increased by 80 million, to NOK 390 million (from €9 million to €42).

The plan was to continue to allocate NOK 100 million annually as budget support, with the remainder for project funding. As of September 2016, according to the MFA grants portal, the Norwegian government was supporting 35 projects in Ukraine. As to project funding for 2016, the plan was to distribute NOK 122 million (€13 million), but by September only NOK 74 million (€8 million) had actually been transferred. This means that with budget support and project funding, the total amounts to far less than planned – even taking into account the planned projects (NOK 122 + 100 million/€13 + 11 million). Among the projects supported, the most important one are in energy efficiency (NOK 15.8 million/€2 million), support to refugees and migrants (NOK 14.4 million + 5 million/2 + 0.5 million), humanitarian aid (NOK 10 million/€2 million), local energy management (NOK 6 million/€0.7 million); and projects aimed at justice sector reform (Norwegian Mission of Rule of Law Advisers to Ukraine [NORLAU]) (NOK 4 million/€0.4 million).¹³

While most of these are bilateral projects, Norway's contribution to the reform of the Ukrainian justice sector (NORLAU) has been developed in close coordination with the EU. The ambition has been to make sure that the Norwegian-supported projects are complementary to those initiated by the EU.¹⁴ Norway has also decided to contribute to the European Union Advisory Mission (EUAM) in Ukraine, launched on 1 December 2014 at the request of the Ukrainian government, after the Maidan revolution. The objective of EUAM is to assist the Ukrainian authorities towards sustainable reform of the civilian security sector through strategic advice and hands-on support for specific reform measures, based on EU standards and international principles of good governance and human rights. However, the Norwegian contribution is expected to be rather modest (with two to five persons).

Finally, Norway has also contributed to the funding of the Eastern Europe Energy Efficiency and Environment Partnership (E5P), which was an important part of an EaP flagship project on energy. The E5P, launched in Ukraine in 2010, is administered by the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD).¹⁵ Energy efficiency had already become an important element in Norwegian support to Ukraine, but when the E5P was launched, Norway decided to channel most of the financial support to this sector through this initiative. The E5P was later expanded to include the other EaP countries as well.¹⁶

In addition to these initiatives administered by Norway's MFA, the Ministry of Defence (MoD) also actively supports reforms in Ukraine. For instance, the Centre for Integrity in the Defence Sector (SIFS) in the MoD has recently offered Ukraine support and assistance to the process of adapting the Ukrainian human resource management system in the defence sector to EU standards on Support for improvement in governance and management by raising awareness of integrity and anti-corruption issues.¹⁷

A comparative study of projects initiated by Germany, Sweden and Norway in Ukraine show a relatively low degree of path-dependence in Norway's reform efforts in Ukraine (Batora & Rieker, 2015). The reason for this is probably because Norway had not been particularly engaged there in the pre-Maidan period. Interestingly, this might have made Norway's solutions more up-to-date and better suited for dealing with actual needs in Ukraine than the case with other reform efforts launched at a much earlier stage. While Norwegian bilateral projects might be more readily adapted to the new situation, the main point is still that Norwegian support to Ukraine is closely coordinated with the activities of the EU, as instruments for assisting Ukraine on the path towards European integration.

Norwegian support to Moldova

Ever since 2009, Moldova has supported and promoted European integration. In 2014 it signed an EU AA and a Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Agreement (DCFTA). Reactions from Russia were less sharp than when Ukraine made a similar move, but the Kremlin still reacted by banning imports of certain key goods (wine and other agricultural products) from Moldova (Baltag & Bosse, 2016). Russia has remained the second most important trade partner of Moldova, after the EU: some 62% of Moldova's exports are destined for the EU, followed by Russia (12%) and then Belarus (6.6%).

For the period 2014–2020 the EU plans to provide Moldova with €610–746 million in support to facilitate reforms in the country (Rieker, 2016). Until recently, Moldova received the highest support from the EU per capita in the Eastern neighbourhood. The support was intended to strengthen democratic development; good governance and rule of law; poverty reduction; trade and sustainable development.¹⁸ Beyond the neighbourhood instrument, the EU and its member states were decisive in securing grants and loans at the donor conference in 2010. Moldova's elite has also been rewarded politically for paying lip service to the EU. Indeed, the EU representatives went so far as to call Moldova the “success story” of the EaP (Kostanyan, 2016). For years, Moldova's elite successfully misused this positive perception in the EU to legitimize their misdeeds before the domestic audience. In the end, the elites also succeeded in negotiating the AA with the EU in June 2014.

Like the EU, Norway has until recently given priority to Moldova alongside Ukraine and Georgia, which have been referred to as “frontrunners” in the Eastern neighbourhood. Norway contributes far more to Ukraine, but the government decided to increase its bilateral support to Moldova in 2015. As mentioned, it was also decided that both Moldova and Ukraine were potential recipients under the EEA regional funding.

Despite these efforts by Norway and the EU, support for European integration in Moldova has fallen, while support for closer cooperation with Russia has risen. According to a survey commissioned by Moldova's National Democratic Institute in November 2015, only 40% support European integration, while 44% prefer Eurasian integration.¹⁹ These tensions have led to a slowing down of the reform process in Moldova, in turn resulting in less willingness from the EU and Norway to maintain their engagement. According to Kostanyan (2016), Moldova's elite has consistently lacked the will to reform a political system that primarily serves its own interests – but for years, the EU turned a blind eye to the abuses of successive governments. In 2014, a scandal revealed that the equivalent of \$1 billion had been stolen from three banks. This resulted in strong reactions from international society, with the IMF, the EU and Norway all halting their financial support to Moldova.

With the ratification process of the AA coming to an end, and given the state of Moldovan politics, the new EU leadership finally felt compelled to change its policy towards the country. The Council conclusions of 15 February 2016 are representative of this recent shift. The EU foreign ministers now clearly and publicly demand from the Moldovan government that it

prioritise reforms aimed at addressing the politicisation of state institutions, systemic corruption, public administration reform aimed inter alia at enhancing the effectiveness of regulatory bodies, transparency and accountability in the management of public finances as well as with regard to policy making.²⁰

Norway continued to support certain projects in Moldova. However, of the NOK 54 million (€6 million) planned for in 2016, only 26 million (€3 million) were disbursed²¹ – according to sources in the ministry, because of the lack of progress.²² According to the MFA grant portal, Norway is currently supporting 10 projects in Moldova, but of the NOK 30 million (€3 million) that are planned transferred only 4 (€0.4 million) has so far been disbursed.²³

In addition, comes NORLAM – the Norwegian Mission of Rule of Law Advisers to Moldova who has been operating in the country for 10 years. While NORLAM came to an end in June 2017, it has been an important part of the recent Norwegian assistance to Moldova. The main goal of the mission has been to assist in competence building within the justice domain and the legal profession, with the aim of improving the efficiency of institutions for guaranteeing human rights and the rule of law, in line with Moldova's European objectives and commitments. The number of Norwegian experts that has been involved in Moldova has varied vary from two to eight, assisted by three members of the local staff.²⁴

Due to the lack of progress, Moldova has become less of a priority for the Norwegian government. NORLAM was closed down in June 2017 and no initiative for follow up or new missions of projects are taken. Also here, Norway seems to be following the EU, who has downsized its support to Moldova and is increasingly focusing on Georgia instead.

Norwegian support to Georgia

Like Moldova, Georgia signed an AA in 2014. While most of the economic content of the agreement has been provisionally in force since September 2014, its definitive and complete entry into force came in July 2016. Whereas Moldova has experienced serious setbacks in combating corruption, Georgia has made important progress in this area, as part of its radical reform achievements since the Rose Revolution of 2003.

Georgia has now become an Eastern priority country for the EU; for the period 2014–2020 the EU plans to provide €610–764 million, the same as for Moldova (Rieker, 2016, p. 193). Over €100 million annually is provided as technical and financial assistance, as benefits like the DCFTA and visa facilitation. Through the EU Monitoring Mission and EU Special Representative, the EU also supports Georgia in dealing with its breakaway regions, while remaining fully committed to Georgia's territorial integrity within its internationally recognized borders.²⁵ In many ways, the reform process in Georgia can be seen as positive (Bolkvadze & Lebanidze, 2016), at least so far. However, also in Georgia, views differ as to the way forward. While Georgians tend to view EU integration as a way to address the country's most pressing issues, only a small segment of society shares what might be termed as European liberal values. In turn, this makes Georgia an arena of competition between the EU and Russian integrationist projects, such as the EaP Programme and the Eurasian Economic Union, including value competition (Anjaparidze, 2016).

Due to its geographical location, Georgia is not included in the regional fund of the EEA grant. However, the progress in Georgia has been noted by the Norwegian authorities, and Norway is considering possibilities for greater engagement. Norway currently supports nine projects in Georgia, but these are all rather small.²⁶ Until 2013 Norway also had a rule-of-law project, Norwegian Mission of Legal Advisers to Georgia, similar to NORLAM in Moldova. The Norwegian government is now looking for ways of continuing the effort in this area, and the Georgian government has expressed interest in an increased Norwegian engagement. In 2016, Elsbeth Tronstad, State Secretary in the Norwegian MFA, visited Georgia and offered Norwegian assistance to the reform process. Overall, Norwegian support for reforms in Georgia has become a priority, and this is very much in line with the policy of both the EU and NATO.

At a meeting in February 2017 between the Georgian and the Norwegian deputy minister for foreign affairs, the Georgian representative praised the Norwegian government's strong support for Georgia's sovereignty and territorial integrity, as well as for its European and Euro-Atlantic integration. Special note was also taken of Norway's active involvement in the implementation of the NATO Substantial Package, and its important contribution to the establishment of the NATO–Georgia Joint Training and Evaluation Centre – JTEC. Norway is also providing financial and methodological support to Georgia's educational system and for protection of Georgia's cultural heritage. In the meeting, special attention was paid to the Clean Energy Invest Company's role in the development of the energy sector in Georgia.²⁷

Concluding remarks

This article has examined how Norway as a non-member adapts to and is affected by the EU's policy towards its neighbours in the East. It has investigated how Norway handles its "outsidership" when formulating policies towards the Eastern Partner countries that have signed AAs with the EU: Ukraine, Georgia and Moldova. In the beginning of the article, a series of alternative arguments were put forward. Drawing on the analysis presented here, I will now discuss the validity of these, as well as the implications of these findings for understanding the relationship between "outsidership" and "insidership", between autonomy and integration, exit or voice, with some reflections on what this tells us about the importance of the ENP.

We have seen how the ENP also affects the approach of a non-member like Norway towards the same region. The EU and Norway follow a similar policy; they have the same overall objectives, measures are related, and their activities are complementary rather than competing. Whereas the EU has more resources, Norway can contribute with know-how in certain areas where it has special expertise, such as energy and energy reform. Despite certain differences, due to specific national priorities or competencies, the overall conclusion is that there exists considerable complementarity between the EU and Norway. We have also seen that Norway is interested in consulting and coordinating with the EU as much as possible. Indeed, Norway has the possibility to act autonomously as this area is not covered by any bilateral agreements between the EU and Norway. Still, Norway tends to follow or support EU policy also here. Interestingly, the degree of complementarity with the EU approach is also higher than Norwegian officials often seem to be aware of. The analysis presented here also indicates that there is a certain mismatch between perceived and actual autonomy. While adaptation is sometimes conducted in a rather structured fashion, we find that perceived "independent" bilateral approaches also are very closely aligned with the policies of the EU. With reference to the countries examined here – Ukraine, Moldova and Georgia – Norway explicitly supports their processes towards European integration, assisting them by contributing necessary capacities and resources. In Ukraine, for instance, there are several projects undertaken in close coordination or cooperation with the EU and where the goal is to assist Ukraine in deepen its ties with the EU. Still, there is a tendency to go for a mixed approach, where the overall strategy involves coordinating with the EU, supplemented with an independent bilateral approach.

Interestingly, the department in Norway's MFA dealing with these countries does not have EU activities on the agenda in its day-to-day dealings with these countries – but the

initiatives taken and the project that is funded are still very much in line with the EU approach. This may indicate that Norway, as a non-member, does not really make use of the autonomy it could have in this area.

How can this be explained? Why does Norway, as a non-member of the EU, opt for compliance and integration rather than autonomy? The most obvious explanation would be that it is in the Norwegian interest to do so. As noted, it is in Norway's interest to have stable and robust democratic states in the region. While the heightened tensions between Russia and the EU after the crisis in Ukraine may create some challenges for Norway, the recent revision of the ENP, which takes into account the geopolitical context and downplays the integration element, is more compatible with Norway's tradition of maintaining balanced relations with Russia. An alternative explanation could be that the approach is simply in accordance with the Norwegian habit of aligning itself with the EU: that it is a result of path dependency. This means that to follow the EU also in areas where it is not bound by any formal agreements has become more or less institutionalized.

While both explanations are plausible, the latter is perhaps more compatible with the finding that this alignment seems to be exercised in practice without the Norwegian officials always being fully aware of it. In the terminology of Hirschman (1970), the overall picture is therefore one of exit/outsiderness combined with *loyalty*, despite perceptions of autonomy. This shows, as confirmed by Brommesson and Hedlin (2017), that there is not necessarily much difference between insidership and outsidership when it comes to policy approach. That finding also indicates a high level of legitimacy for this particular EU policy.

Notes

1. <http://udtilskudd.regjeringen.no/#/nb/country?year=2017>.
2. While the EEA grants are jointly financed by Iceland, Liechtenstein and Norway, Norway grants are solely financed by Norway. Both funding schemes are available for the countries that joined the EU in 2004, 2007 and 2013 (<http://eeagrants.org/>).
3. <http://eeagrants.org/News/2015/Agreement-secured-on-new-funding-round>.
4. The Carpathians are a mountain chain stretching in an arc from the Czech Republic in the northwest through Slovakia, Poland, Hungary and Ukraine, to Romania in the east, and to the Iron Gates of the Danube between Romania and Serbia in the south.
5. From interviews conducted at the NMFA, September 2016.
6. From interviews conducted at the NMFA, September 2016.
7. https://www.regjeringen.no/en/aktuelt/increase_support_Ukraine/id2005548/.
8. Interviews conducted at the NMFA, August 2016.
9. See <http://www.norad.no/om-bistand/norsk-bistand-i-tall/> (accessed 22/11/15).
10. See http://www.norway.com.ua/News_and_events1/Grants_and_projects/Norways-support-to-Ukraine-in-2015/#.VIFOTHYveM8 (accessed 22/11/15).
11. http://www.norway.com.ua/News_and_events1/Grants_and_projects/#.VjInu8mEr9c.
12. <http://nucc.no/norway-increases-its-support-to-ukraine/>.
13. <http://udtilskudd.regjeringen.no/#/nb/country/details?year=2016>.
14. Interview in the MFA, August 2016.
15. The EBRD is owned by 65 countries from 5 continents, as well as the EU and the European Investment Bank.
16. <http://e5p.eu/>.
17. See <http://www.tnp.no/norway/panorama/5121-norway-supports-ukraines-efforts-to-combat-corruption>.

18. For the period 2004–2020, EU support may amount to as much as €746 million (Kostanyan, 2016).
19. <https://www.ndi.org/moldova-November-2015-survey-results>.
20. Council Conclusions on the Republic of Moldova <http://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/press/press-releases/2016/02/15-fac-moldova-conclusions/>.
21. <http://udtilskudd.regjeringen.no/#/en/country/details?year=2016>.
22. Interviews Norwegian MFA, August 2016.
23. <http://udtilskudd.regjeringen.no/#/nb/partner/details?country=62&year=2017>.
24. <http://www.norlam.md/?l=en>.
25. http://www.eeas.europa.eu/factsheets/news/eu-georgia_factsheet_en.htm.
26. <http://udtilskudd.regjeringen.no/#/nb/partner/details?country=152&year=2017>.
27. <https://www.finchannel.com/world/georgia/63488-norway-starts-investing-in-georgia>.

Acknowledgements

I would like to thank Jozef Bátora, Steven Blockmans, Douglas Brommeson, Nina Græger, Kristin Haugevik, Christophe Hillion, Susan Høivik, Brigid Laffan, Hanna Ojanen, Baldur Thorhallsson, Ulf Sverdrup and the two anonymous reviewers of *Global Affairs* for valuable comments on earlier drafts.

Disclosure statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author.

Funding

This article builds on research funded by the Norwegian Research Council [grant number 238017/F10].

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