Europeanization through the Grapevine: 

Communication Links in EU External Migration Policy

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Abstract
Communication links are a key dimension for implementation of European Union (EU) policies in non-member states because EU influence abroad is otherwise severely hindered. Exploring project implementation of external migration policy in Morocco and Ukraine highlights particularly the role of international organisations for bridging and exploiting communication gaps between administrations in Brussels and ‘the field’. Linking the Europeanization literature with insights on implementation, organisational sociology and social networks raises attention to the ‘grapevine’ of interorganisational communication and network structures that mediates EU influence and reveals manifold actor influence in Europeanization processes and on policy output beyond EU control.

Keywords
communication; European Union migration policy; implementation networks; international organisations; non-member states
Introduction

Although Europeanization studies in EU accession countries have gained prominence with the 2004 and 2007 enlargement rounds (Schimmelfennig & Sedelmeier 2005; Bache 2010), the influence of EU policies in non-member states (NMS) has been largely neglected and requires theorising that accounts for differences from accession and member states (Schimmelfennig 2009). This article addresses this gap and simultaneously links it with insights from the literature on implementation, organisational sociology and social networks. If Europeanization is ultimately about EU impact on processes and policy output then it is useful to link it with the implementation literature as an established area of public policy research that deals with how policy is “translated” into “action”. This link is not only theoretically useful but also points at an area of study where EU influence becomes most tangible in form of EU projects set in time and space. This allows insulating direct from indirect forms of EU influence as well as from non-EU driven change in NMS such as socialisation and lesson-drawing (Schimmelfennig 2009: p.8). Better analytical focus becomes possible on unfolding Europeanization processes in a ‘controlled environment’ to provide first insights into a new area that might otherwise be obfuscated by the complexity of these processes (Zahariadis 2008: p.223).

In contrast to accession and member states, implementation of EU policies towards NMS is more limited. The EU operates external policies outside of its legal reach, without sanctioning system, lacking substantial incentives, meaningful conditionality as well as administrative capabilities while simultaneously facing uncertainties about the implementation “object” of migration and the appropriate means to shape it. This setting creates a gap between Brussels, where policy objectives are set, and the implementation context in NMS that networks need to address to produce intended change. How do EU implementation networks bridge this gap and address uncertainties? Who profits in this constellation and why? What does this mean for EU influence on policy output and our understanding of Europeanization processes in NMS? It is argued below that communication links transmitting expert knowledge are the crucial dimension for EU implementation networks to deal with this gap and that international organisations occupy central positions in this communication grapevine.

While states ultimately set policy objectives and regulate migration, project objectives need to be interpreted and translated into ‘action’ through the grapevine of communication links in implementation networks. Despite the indispensable role of state actors, it is those organisations that are in crucial relay positions between administrative contexts that can facilitate or compromise implementation of policy objectives in NMS. Implementation of policy objectives therefore depends on the grapevine of interorganisational communication and network structures and can become dependent on often overlooked non-state actors such as international organisations. Consequently, policy is shaped along the way rather than
following a template set in Brussels and EU influence can become obscured in this interactive process.

EU external migration policy presents an interesting case for studying Europeanization as a priority area for its ‘neighbourhood’ stating clear objectives and backed by substantial funding. Apart from decentralised funding to NMS agencies, the Commission has implemented centralised thematic instruments that have provided ample empirical material over nearly a decade. If the implementation of centrally managed EU programmes in a priority policy area does not correspond to a hierarchical process then Europeanization is unlikely to be controlled by Brussels in other external policy areas where programmes are decentralised or seen as less important.

Empirical insights stem from 59 interviews in Brussels, Morocco and Ukraine and draw on social network analysis. Morocco and Ukraine are illustrative cases as targets of substantial funding and projects of EU external migration policy from the main geographic dimensions of the European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP). Both are explicitly left without membership perspective making them novel ground for Europeanization studies. Section 1 adapts findings of the Europeanization literature to NMS contexts and section 2 supplements them with the literature on implementation, social networks and organisational sociology. Section 3 visualises concrete examples of communication links in implementation networks of EU external migration policy. Section 4 theorises the role of international organisations with a detailed analysis of their links with EU and NMS actors as well as their influence on Europeanization processes.

Theorising Europeanization in non-member states

EU influence on polity, policy and politics at domestic level has been conceptualised as Europeanization and provides a substantive field of scholarly literature (see for example Graziano & Vink 2007). The literature has established a range of possible domestic responses to accommodate EU adaptational pressures (Börzel & Risse 2003: pp.69-70). These diverse responses indicate underlying interpretation processes at domestic level of what “comes down” from the EU level. Implementation research similarly states that policy is not set in stone at the point of decision-making but undergoes challenging processes that can drive policy output away from original intentions (for an overview of the implementation literature see Hill and Hupe 2002). Indeed Europeanization research found that interpretation helps translating policies into national contexts and policies are at times deliberately vague for that purpose (Mörth 2003). Therefore accounts of domestic ‘fit’ and ‘misfit’ with adaptational pressure from the EU level should accommodate the interpretation and communication processes of organisations that are working under these pressures. Risse et al (2001: pp.8f) have suggested a list of factors that mediate adaptational pressure and further research has confirmed particularly the importance of administrative capacities and veto players on the one side and willingness of domestic actors on the other (Treib 2008: p.17). While organisational
sociology helps to conceptualise the role of communication for implementing organisations to make sense of their environment, social network analysis helps to assess interorganisational links and to identify potential veto players within implementation networks.

The Europeanization literature highlights the importance of what is “coming down” from the EU level as well as how it fits with and is mediated by the domestic context. Apart from substantial implementation challenges for EU policies in member states (Knill 2006), Europeanization processes differ depending on EU ‘modes of governance’ (Bulmer & Radaelli 2004). In contrast, directed EU influence in NMS will be less dependent on what comes down from the EU level due to three factors: lack of legal authority, of sanctioning mechanisms and of substantial incentives. These inhibiting factors of EU influence underscore the role of communication links in the NMS implementation context.

(1) EU external policies are outside the reach of the EU legal framework, which binds member states to implement directives and regulations. In contrast to accession countries that need to transpose all EU policies as a precondition for membership, other states are under no such obligation.

(2) In the accession process, substantial incentives are the central ‘mechanism’ for Europeanization with membership as the ultimate reward (Schimmelfennig & Sedelmeier 2005). The ENP was created as the most similar framework to membership on offer for NMS. However, it ‘lacks any substantial incentives…’ and has therefore ‘been deprived of any substantial leverage’ (Whitman and Wolff 2010: p.13). Although some incentives such as visa facilitation agreements are on the table to achieve policy change in NMS (Trauner & Kruse 2008), the EU will struggle to employ these incentives in a fine-grained manner that corresponds with the complex realities of implementing numerous individual projects.

(3) The EU has no sanctioning mechanism towards NMS that compares with that of the Commission and European Court of Justice in the case of member states or with the threat of withholding membership from accession countries. Although the Seville European Council Conclusions (2002: pp.10f) state that ‘an unjustified lack of cooperation in the joint management of migration flows’ can lead to the adoption of ‘measures or positions under the Common Foreign and Security Policy and other European Union policies’, this procedure has never been applied and reflects a broader picture of inconsistent application of conditionality in NMS (Schimmelfennig 2009: p.16). In the case of external migration policy, for example, non-compliance did not lead to EU sanctions because individual Commission DGs were protecting their portfolios from contamination by other DG’s policy objectives and broader foreign policy interests prevailed over sectoral interests even in this priority policy area (Wunderlich 2010: pp.266f).

Under these conditions, communication structures should be particularly important for Europeanization processes in NMS. Much like communication between the trenches depended on the ‘grapevine’ of telegraph wires which were strung around branches and
transmitted garbled messages during the US-American Civil War, the translation of EU policy objectives into action depends on (1) the structure of communication links in implementation networks and (2) organisations’ capabilities to acquire, process and employ information for their purposes. Those organisations that combine capabilities with crucial communication links can gain important influence over the implementation process and policy development. The structure and functioning of the grapevine is therefore likely to have large importance for the way in which EU policy interventions take shape in NMS.

**The role of communication links in implementation networks of EU external policies**

The basic proposition that communication structures are central to implementation finds support in the literature on organisational sociology. Any organisation that wants to act purposefully in its environment needs to be able to make sense of what is going on around it (Daft & Weick 1984). Since implementation of EU policies depends on cooperation because the EU does not have administrative authority in NMS, implementers need to be able to (a) make sense of the policy object “migration”, (b) identify capable cooperation partners and (c) achieve enough mutual understanding to follow through with joint projects. However, addressing these challenges is difficult. Boswell (2009: pp.169f), for example, describes migration as a challenging target for policy interventions marked ‘by uncertainty over the scale and consequences, as well as controversy over the appropriate means’ to act on it. Furthermore, relevant organisations are unevenly developed across the EU border. While western European countries have been mostly concerned with immigration control over the last four decades, eastern European countries emphasised emigration control until 1989 and are still developing policy approaches to take its place and southern Mediterranean countries have largely driven emigration policies. Lacking or mismatching policy approaches indicate that organisational structures are not likely to correspond between actors across the EU outer border.

Although network relations are multi-dimensional, communication links are a precondition for other interorganisational relations (and Europeanization processes) where overarching authority is lacking and uncertainty is great. For example, communication is necessary to establish how to allocate and control funding, exert authority or legitimate action. Actors who bridge mismatching structures and approaches and provide communication links enable cooperation between both sides and could gain therefore considerable influence in Europeanization processes.

The importance of adequate administrative capacities for carrying out action is well established in the Europeanization and implementation literature (Treib 2008: p.11). Their role is particularly relevant for organisational sense-making and communication where interaction is less established as across EU borders. Qualified staff needs to have time and resources to establish and maintain communication networks and relevant information needs to be identified, processed and passed on for informed decision-making. Failure can result in
“garbled messages” that hamper implementation because a chosen approach does not fit the context, is not feasible in terms of available resources and cooperation partners or not in line with overall objectives and undermines policy coherence. Understanding who holds relevant knowledge and how it is passed through implementation networks therefore contributes to explaining different organisations’ influence in the implementation process and ultimately on policy output.

Two prominent approaches to conceptualise implementation indicate distinct communication forms and channels. A top-down approach assumes a hierarchical “implementation chain” that under the right conditions could perfectly translate a political decision into a matching outcome (Bardach 1977; Gunn 1978). Delegation and control can be identified as the primary forms of interaction down the “implementation chain”. This conceptualisation of implementation would indicate that communication is primarily bound within hierarchical administrative structures and policy-makers are little receptive for implementers’ experience “on the ground”. The above-mentioned limitations to EU policy implementation in NMS undermine the assumption of hierarchical processes in implementation networks.

In contrast, bottom-up approaches dismiss the notion that implementers are mere tools in the hands of political actors. These studies point at pressures and uncertainties that affect ‘street-level bureaucrats’ and differ from those of policy-makers (Lipsky 1971; Brunsson 1989). Implementers are more concerned about how to make sense of at times contradictory policy objectives, how to create feasible interventions with restricted resources and fit them to a local context while strengthening their position vis-à-vis other organisations. Implementation is consequently a dynamic and inherently political process of negotiation between actors as in Barrett and Fudge’s (1981: p.4) understanding of a ‘policy-action relationship’ in which policy objectives are interpreted, modified and in some cases subverted. Complex interdependence should be characteristic between actors in implementation networks with coordination and negotiation. Accordingly, the existence of EU external policy objectives says little about whether or how they are put into practice (Bicchi 2010; Wunderlich 2010).

The literature suggests that Europeanization processes can alter opportunity structures and lead to ‘differential empowerment of actors’ (Knill & Lehmkuhl 1999: p.2; Risse et al 2001: p.11). Social network analysis offers insights into what constitute opportunity structures in networks and how to identify potential veto players. Since implementation networks can be understood as “a more (or less) stable pattern of social relations between interdependent actors, which take shape around policy problems and/or policy programmes” (Klijn & Koppenjan 2000: p.155) they provide opportunities for organisations to fulfil their tasks and to further their own interests.

The external governance literature suggests that functionally relevant political structures at EU level and in NMS are likely to reproduce in the network structure and workings (Lavenex & Schimmelfennig 2009: pp.802-805). However, functionally driven organisational setups do not guarantee that communication links are complete. Even in settings without formal
structures, information circulates unevenly first within informal groups and then between them (Festinger et al. 1950). Communication gaps can be assumed within formal structures even where organisations are functionally relevant to each other and especially in an international setting. Organisations that bridge gaps are important for network communication for two reasons. (1) Granovetter (1983) highlights the ‘strength of weak ties’. Highly connected networks provide their members with little “new” information and circulating information soon becomes redundant. In contrast, less frequently used links between groups and with “outsiders” (‘weak ties’) contribute potentially relevant news as relays between them. (2) In areas with a lower density of interorganisational links, information is sparse and communication gaps can persist over time between groups as ‘structural holes’. Those organisations that bridge structural holes can become information hubs and brokers of rare information between both sides (Burt 2001: pp.208-211). Brokers pass on information to where it is in demand, where it benefits their own interests and strengthens their position in the network. Communication structures and the behaviour of relays and brokers should have an important role in shaping Europeanization processes in implementation networks.

Social network analysis as the suggested methodology responds to demands in the Europeanization literature to take both structural and agential factors into account. Although social network analysis does not provide a causal narrative, the approach emphasises actors’ relations over their properties and opens sight to network structures as a whole beyond a narrow focus on individual actors’ relations (Marin & Wellman 2010). Linking qualitative and quantitative network analysis allows evaluating central communication links and network actors in order to analyse their influence on Europeanization processes.

Implementation networks of EU external migration policy

EU external migration policy developed from the 1999 European Council in Tampere in response to shortcomings of EU policies to control immigration and asylum in the Union (Boswell 2003). Its general policy objectives have since been refined and updated in multiannual programmes at The Hague and Stockholm (CEU 1999; 2004; 2009) and backed by at least €650million of EU-funding until 2010 plus another €175million until 2013 (CEC 2006: pp.6-10; 2010: p.143). Especially in its relations with neighbouring countries, EU migration policy has become a policy priority with hierarchical intentions. While the number of EU migration policy approaches differs among neighbouring countries, this reflects the stages of overall bilateral cooperation and internally inspired EU objectives are not greatly adapted to local needs and context. Overall EU external policy objectives are therefore relatively undifferentiated in this internally motivated external policy field and follow the restrictive aim to reduce migration into EU member states (Wunderlich 2010: pp.254-260). Multi-annual action plans state objectives as improving asylum systems, strengthening border control capacities, enhancing document security, resettlement and readmission programmes and limited initiatives to cooperate on labour migration as well as linking migration and development policy. The undifferentiated nature of EU policy objectives also reflects in the
structure of the implementation network, i.e. the policy content seems to have little effect on the network as a whole for different NMS. Diagram 1 portrays the Brussels side of the implementation network with its links into NMS in the case of Ukraine and Morocco.

Interpreting network structures as the one in Diagram 1 make further methodological considerations necessary. The visualisation of implementation networks with help of social network analysis homogenises ties between different actors in form and content and presents them as static. Although the situation at the time of data collection may be overrepresented, the visualised network is not a “snapshot” because interorganisational relations are relatively stable and EU project implementation lasts more than three years. Notwithstanding its limitations the method has the benefit of making networks tangible, casting the view beyond individual relations and evaluating interorganisational relations within the network as a whole (Marin & Wellman 2010). Context sensitive interpretation presupposes a meaningful analysis of social networks. Evaluating graphic accounts therefore gains by juxtaposing them with qualitative accounts of network interactions (Hollstein 2010: pp.17-18). While quantitative analysis helped to highlight central relationships within the overall network, semi-structured interviews with network members provided systematic and substantial accounts of how actors perceived interorganisational relations that were contrasted with each other to help interpret quantitative accounts.¹

Diagram 1: Established interorganisational communication links in implementation network of EU external migration policy (towards Ukraine and Morocco)
Diagram 1 shows that the EU implementation network to Ukraine and Morocco is largely split along administrative authority and EU links with both countries do not obviously differ despite political and migration differences. DG AIDCO occupies a central position as the main implementation arm and financial watchdog for external cooperation programmes. It is responsible for centrally managed instruments such as B7-667, AENEAS and the Thematic Programme for Migration and Asylum that allow targeted migration projects abroad. DG AIDCO functions as information hub between former DG Freedom, Security and Justice (JLS) as the lead DG for external migration policy with a unit of nine officers and DG RELEX responsible for external relations and the networks of 112 Commission Delegations on the one side and implementers in NMS on the other side. Those DGs that are only involved in policy input are peripheral to the implementation network such as DG Development (because of its geographical remit) and DG Employment (as an almost exclusively internal DG). Non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and think tanks are sidelined. In contrast, Delegations are clearly visible as relays between the political DGs RELEX and JLS with Moroccan and Ukrainian state actors some of whom directly liaise with DG AIDCO through
individual EU projects. The position of member states and international organisations stand out as additional insights from the visualised network.

Member state actors are marginal without direct connection to either implementers in NMS or at EU level apart from links with DGs RELEX and JLS as the central policy developers. In fact, policy experts in the Commission confirmed that member states lack overview of funds and instruments available at EU level and their attention to migration issues is geographically and thematically selective. Council DG Justice and Home Affairs (JHA) is similarly marginal to the implementation network than the member states’ permanent representations. Given that there are only three migration experts in Council DG JHA, they focus on the preparation of decisions and not on implementation. This confirms the notion that policymakers such as member states’ interior ministries focus more on decision-making than following up their decisions and subsequent action (Brunsson 1989). Implementers in the Commission are therefore largely undisturbed by EU policy-makers when implementing projects and driving Europeanization processes abroad.

A surprising insight is the high connectedness of specialised international organisations at the heart of the network in Brussels and with actors in NMS. Not embedded in the administrative structures on either side but operating between them, the International Organisation for Migration (IOM) and the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) are not only relays or information hubs. They are also potential brokers in the network with best access to information and the capacity to use it for their own interests. In terms of degree centrality, IOM’s Brussels office is well positioned to gain information from all sides with 96 percent of all possible connections to other actors in the network. UNHCR’s EU office has 78 percent of possible links in comparison to 81 percent for DG AIDCO and 56 for DG JLS as the next highest. In terms of betweenness centrality, 37 percent of all attempts of network actors to connect with one another through established communication channels would have to go via IOM (UNHCR 14 percent, DG AIDCO 16 percent, DG JLS 5 percent) which indicates their potential for brokerage (on centrality concepts see Freeman 1979). Since visualisation and quantifications can only indicate actors’ relative importance, their relations and effects on the implementation process are scrutinised in more detail below.

Assessing the grapevine: Communication links and EU influence in EU external migration policy

How do actors’ capacities and network positions affect implementation processes and EU policy output and what does this mean for EU influence? This section assesses communication links in Brussels and non-member states before analysing alternative links through international organisations.
Communication links of Commission Directorates General and non-member states

Commission Delegations and DGs are limited in their capacity to establish and exploit communication links to counter uncertainty about the implementation context. Although Delegations are the Commission’s sensors and mouthpieces vis-à-vis national authorities, they largely rely on the implementation capacity and information from their NMS counterparts. Delegations programme yearly cooperation with state actors, liaise with implementers, monitor and evaluate projects. However, with one policy officer supported by a couple of project administrators, their capacities are limited for JHA matters (out of which migration policy is only one alongside other priority areas such as counterterrorism or organised crime).

In Brussels, Commission DG JLS is jointly responsible with DGs RELEX and AIDCO to analyse the migration situation, identify opportunities for cooperation and approve project proposals from state agencies, NGOs and international organisations. However, DGs JLS and AIDCO lack funding and staff capacities to visit NMS and identify possible cooperation partners participate in negotiations or monitor projects. Despite occasional email or telephone contact with Delegations, continuous information flows otherwise filter through DG RELEX whose broad vision of relations with NMS makes migration not its principal focus of attention.

The installation of migration contact points and specialised staff circulating between DGs (as observed during the course of this research) should strengthen communication links at Commission level. Furthermore, country migration profiles were first introduced as tools to address information gaps with sociological and economic data in 2005. Seemingly-targeted Europeanization processes are however based on mere paper reports rather than a thorough understanding of the complex institutional and volatile migration situation themselves. Therefore, feedback is hindered and existing monitoring and evaluation reports do not usually inform the Commission’s programming of interventions due to limited staff capacities.

Despite the functional need for information, communication gaps emerge even in integrated formal structures such as the Commission and make it difficult to address the complex implementation context in NMS. This problem occurred in 2008 when the EU failed to fund a follow-up project to improve Moroccan asylum services although the 2007 agreement between Morocco and UNHCR offered the opportunity to improve lacking state assistance and address asylum-seekers’ needs after more than five years of struggle. It seems that Brussels assumed that the agreement itself would resolve these issues rather than subsequent implementation although the Delegation in Rabat communicated continuing substantial shortcomings. Coordination issues between Rabat and Brussels with inadequate feedback and follow-up can hence seriously undermine EU objectives.

The effect of the Lisbon Treaty on this constellation is uncertain although two particular changes raise concerns. The new European External Action Service will be working alongside
Commission staff in the Delegations. The Commission President reserved the right to steer the ENP, which is no longer in the portfolio of the High Commissioner as head of DG RELEX. These further complicate existing communication flows.

Since the situation differs between NMS, findings about communication links of non-EU counterparts can only be indicative of general dynamics in EU implementation networks. The literature identifies administrative capabilities, structures and coordination between relevant NMS actors as important mediating factors for EU policy transfer (Lavenex & Schimmelfennig 2009: pp.804f). Where the EU aims at or depends on cooperation with state agencies (such as on asylum procedures, border controls, readmission or migrants’ rights), central political actors in NMS need to approve cooperation. In Morocco, international cooperation depends on the hegemonic Interior Ministry that controls the policy field and other state organisations that might question its migrant control agenda. In Ukraine in contrast, interorganisational competition marks a disjointed setup of state actors without meaningful coordination. Formal veto players such as the Finance Ministry, that countersigns EU programming agreements, do not hold migration policy expertise. Policy expertise and effective coordination in NMS are hence crucial for checking migration dynamics, EU budget attributions and policy coherence “on the ground”.

Alternative communication links: the role of international organisations

There are only a few conceptualisations of the role of international organisations in Europeanization processes in NMS. The EU mobilises international organisations to increase the legitimacy of its interventions. However, international organisations are not only ‘agents of EU-ization’ as implementers of EU projects because they depend on member states’ funding. International organisations are also balancing EU advances through their mandates and broader membership including sending and transit countries of migrants to the EU (Lavenex 2007). As established organisations with their own agendas, international organisations can also act autonomously beyond the delegated authority of their member states (Barnett & Finnemore 2004; Loescher 2001). Regarding implementation processes, the roles of international organisations are best described as agents and catalysts of Europeanization.

In order for international organisations to become communication relays and/or brokers within an implementation network certain external and internal conditions need to be fulfilled. The previous section highlighted that a lack of direct connections between relevant EU and NMS actors creates structural holes in the implementation network. Lack of expertise and coordination between NMS actors as well as limited capacities and information deficits in Delegations and Commission headquarters worsen their effects. Consequently, structural holes provide opportunities for alternative communication links to inform EU policy implementation and reduce uncertainties. In order for international organisations to bridge
structural holes, they need extensive administrative resources that allow information gathering at all end and strategic networking for implementation.

Since organisations are concerned with their own survival, so are international organisations not only interested in legitimising their actions and responding to their mandates and members’ demands. International organisations are also proactive to maintain and where possible expand their overall capacities (e.g. staff levels, representations, areas of activity, financial resources) so that they can improve their possibilities to exist into the future. Daily activities can hereby become ‘decoupled’ from their original mandates (Meyer & Rowan 1977).

In the following analysis focus is set on IOM and UNHCR as the main international organisations in the policy field and implementation network to exemplify how they can bridge structural holes and use interorganisational links for their own interests. Over the development of EU external migration policy since the late 1990s, IOM and UNHCR have acquired a crucial role in bringing funding, beneficiaries, implementers and expertise together. UNHCR gets involved in asylum capacity-building or providing status examinations while organising legal support and other direct services to asylum-seekers with help of local NGOs. IOM engages in diverse areas such as border management, anti-trafficking, labour market programmes, migrants’ rights and diaspora relations.

The Commission was IOM’s fourth largest funding body, contributing US$63.9million or eight percent of its operational budget in 2009. Given that 96.5 percent of IOM’s budget is based on project funding, the following statement of an IOM official squares: ‘We rely on EU-funding. Offices can be opened or closed depending on the operational budget coming in’. Financial dependence hence ensures that communication links to the Commission do not break off and that IOM is too critical of EU policy objectives. It interprets both its mission statement and EU objectives broadly to make it not only a flexible service provider to its donors but also a proactive seeker of funding opportunities to expand its activities and sustain its staff. With US$126.1million, the Commission is UNHCR’s second largest donor in 2009 corresponding to 8.0 percent of its governmental donor contributions. Despite financial dependence for its operations, UNHCR can claim a more independent standing vis-à-vis the EU as guardian of the 1951 Geneva Convention and its 1967 protocol.

IOM and UNHCR bridge structural holes between state actors in NMS, NGOs and EU organisations by means of their widespread networks of representations in almost every country on the globe. These provide supreme access to information and links to the EU, governmental and non-governmental actors. With 460 field missions and 7,000 staff currently implementing 2,360 projects worldwide following its official website at the end of 2010, IOM is the policy specialist. IOM’s extensive capacities in comparison to UNHCR and the Commission become apparent in Ukraine where it has 120 staff compared with 20 for UNHCR and only one JHA expert at the Delegation. Neither member states with their limited embassy staff and limited geographical experience nor NGOs can match IOM’s capacity and
expertise. How do these capacities play out for IOM and UNHCR in the implementation networks? What effect do they have on policy output and the implementation process?

**International organisations between Brussels**

Information gathering through IOM’s and UNHCR’s extensive global networks helps to follow local developments, design project proposals and set up joint operations. They broaden their existing experience in terms of approaches, procedures, local context and contacts and build up ever more expert knowledge that they can feed into the implementation process. Representations in Brussels help IOM and UNHCR to carry their policy proposals straight into the centre of the network to the Commission and build personal relations at EU level. Personal networks are also fostered by recruitment of Commission officials to their Brussels representations as I observed in various cases. When UNHCR and IOM are invited to provide advice and expertise to EU institutions, this provides feedback loops between their experience in implementation and EU policy development. For example, IOM runs EU-funded ‘trial’ versions of circular labour migration between Columbia and Spain since 2007.

Professional and personal networks build up expertise about the complex competitive EU bidding system and implementation requirements in comparison with which many NGOs struggle. Considerable administrative and financial resources are needed to provide stamina for the 18-month EU application process with an average success rate of one in six. Established links with major donor governments in immigration countries make it easier for IOM and UNHCR to mobilise the required 20 percent of co-financing for EU projects. These advantages fit with the Commission’s preference for dealing with larger “more professional” and financially secure organisations as evaluation reports reveal (F.M. Partners Limited 2005: pp.16, 26, ECRE 2008: pp.18f). Since the beginning of thematic instruments as the only instruments specific for EU external migration policy, IOM and UNHCR secured every third project in competitive bidding between 2001 and 2006 leaving around 120 NGOs, international organisations and governmental agencies to share the rest of the funding amongst each other.

IOM’s pro-activeness and broker role paired with the Commission’s disconnectedness from implementation in NMS produce at times unease amongst its staff and national donors. These reservations are based on the Commission’s apparent lack of control over implemented action and its dependence on IOM for project implementation because no other competitor can carry out comparatively elaborate migration interventions in NMS. IOM’s proactiveness becomes apparent in the wide interpretation of its mandate. For example, IOM is providing support to EU Election Observation Missions in NMS based on its logistical capabilities and widespread network of representations. In order to justify these activities, IOM constructs complex tales that election support activities help democratisation and peace-building, contributing to economic development and ultimately increase the engagement of diasporas and their return. In conclusion, the reader learns that election support enhances migration
management (IOM n.d.) in an apparent attempt to link ‘decoupled’ practices to a widely interpreted mandate (Meyer & Rowan 1977).

In contrast, UNHCR’s mandate as guardian of international refugee law make the EU receptive for critical comments because it provides legitimacy at the planning stage and valuable first-hand information (Klaauw 2002). However, even UNHCR’s direct communication links to Brussels do not guarantee mutual understanding and the Commission’s lack of exposure to direct information from NMS can cause unrealistic expectations about project feasibility. For example, the EU funded project ‘Improving asylum management’ in Ukraine had the aim to improve legislation in line with international standards, training officials, reception facilities and an asylum database. While the Commission claimed that UNHCR did not deliver and considered the project a failure, underlying obstacles to implementation were: (1) UNHCR’s draft legislation was not tabled in the Ukrainian parliament; (2) high staff turnover in state agencies hindered staff training; (3) property disputes between ministries made planned facilities unavailable; and (4) while UNHCR provided equipment, the government did not put personnel in charge to use it.

UNHCR’s perception of the implementation *problematique* is hereby interesting. UNHCR sees itself as a ‘mediator’ for ‘channelling funding’ and ‘not [as] the implementer of projects’. A senior UNHCR official stated, ‘The ultimate responsibility for implementation lies within the government. If the government fails to implement, the project fails. For the Commission, UNHCR is the implementation partner as the contracted party. For them, the government is the beneficiary.’

This example underscores that organisational sense-making and communication are crucial for targeted Europeanization processes. Firstly, the work of the Delegation did not prevent that unrealistic expectations took over in Brussels. Secondly, monitoring and evaluation did not manage to control project output and thirdly, communication links between UNHCR and the Commission failed to produce mutually acceptable accounts about project performance and objectives. This highlights the contextual uncertainties as well as the complexities and interdependencies in the implementation process that place Europeanization processes in NMS often beyond EU control.

… and non-member states

IOM and UNHCR have officially been charged to organise and facilitate the transfer of experience between EU and NMS government officials. The EU finances multilateral consultative processes such as the Söderköping Process in Eastern Europe since 2001 hosted by UNHCR or the ‘5+5 Dialogue’ in the Mediterranean since 2002 hosted by IOM. These initiatives highlight the EU’s recognition of the importance of establishing and maintaining communication flows in structured way.

Despite occasional communication failures, the success of international organisations to bridge structural holes often translates into success to find funding for their own operations.
For example, where state actors are not willing to cooperate, the Commission invites specifically intermediaries such as UNHCR and IOM for ‘joint management’ of projects on its behalf.

Far from only being reactive to Commission approaches, international organisations profit from the ‘strength of weak ties’ (Granovetter 1983) between Brussels and NMS due to their widespread and fine-tuned communication links. IOM and UNHCR manage to mount projects “through the backdoor” that fall under EU objectives and channel EU-funding to NMS authorities and NGOs. Under the European Neighbourhood Policy Instrument, the largest budget line for projects in neighbouring countries, local authorities need to launch an official request for cooperation. If the requested project matches the EU country strategy then financial support is usually granted. Local authorities are however often unaware of funding opportunities and procedures and therefore approach IOM for advice and consultation on designing projects.

Cooperation with IOM also runs in the opposite direction. IOM representations suggest projects to local authorities that are in line with EU-funding objectives using their knowledge of the local context. In order to attract funding for its own representations and for future expansion, IOM generates interests in projects by lobbying for support from local authorities. For example, IOM created awareness among local authorities about “inadequate” medical facilities in Ukrainian asylum reception centres, proposed to fill this gap, advised them on the EU-funding application and carried out the project. Similarly, IOM held seminars with Moldovan authorities to explore the use of remittances and links with the Moldovan Diaspora in which IOM made concrete institutional proposals such as the installation of a ‘Ministry of Diaspora’. IOM then drafted a project for the authorities that attracted EU-funding.

IOM therefore introduces problem perceptions and simultaneously proposes solutions that might otherwise not have ended up on the agenda of local actors. This underscores the importance of international organisations as intermediaries in intergovernmental communication on migration as a base for policy transfer and socialisation (Thouez & Channac 2006: pp.384f).

In a similar vein, UNHCR contributes to spreading EU problem perceptions among NGOs in NMS by channelling EU-funding and engaging them in actions and policy objectives that they hitherto resented. The constructed nature of problem perceptions, solutions and interpretation of EU policy objectives puts the notion of objectifiable ‘fit’ and ‘misfit’ with local context in question.

Conclusions
The NMS context poses challenges that limit EU control over implementation processes and policy output more than in member and accession countries. Under these conditions, interorganisational communication and network structures are crucial mediating factors in addressing uncertainties about cooperation partners and other information deficits. Empirical research in the area of external migration policy shows that the structure of network links
opens up opportunities especially for international organisations to bridge communication gaps between NMS and Brussels. This allows them to ‘manage’ implementation knowledge and shape output confirming the influence of implementers on policy. This makes them important intermediaries as relays, information hubs and brokers of Europeanization in NMS.

The grapevine metaphor contributes to Europeanization studies because it highlights communication links as a precondition for implementation and sets focus on network links beyond the analysis of individual actor relations and the narrow realm of interactions between state actors. Social network analysis provides helpful tools to identify crucial actors, trace communication networks and set focus on actor relations rather than properties. Implementation dynamics indicate that Europeanization in NMS corresponds to conceptualisations of bottom-up implementation as an interactive process in which policy is not set in stone in Brussels but constantly negotiated. Although policy objectives follow the broader direction of EU documents, implementers have considerable leeway to shape policy output beyond EU control. If this is the case in centrally managed EU programmes in a priority policy area such as external migration policy then Europeanization is unlikely to follow a hierarchical process controlled by Brussels in other external policy areas where programmes are decentralised or seen as less important.

Notes
1 Among others, systematic questions explored actors’ influence on implementation dynamics and experience with programming, monitoring, evaluation and feedback and each interviewee was asked to fill in a survey how important they rated their relations with other actors for EU project implementation. Interview coding was carried out via NVIVO and UCINET and Netdraw were used for quantitative analysis. Data and copies of the interview schedule and survey are available from the author.
2 In June 2010, DG JLS was split into DG Justice and DG Home Affairs, which bears responsibility for migration policy. DG Development is responsible for policies towards African, Caribbean and Pacific countries while DG RELEX covers all other states. Due to its responsibility for the European Neighbourhood Policy as the main area where external migration policy is implemented, focus is set on DG RELEX.
4 Interview Council DG JHA, 10/12/2007.
7 Interview DG AIDCO, 4/12/2007.
10 Including contributions from EU member states, IOM’s dependence is even greater with a total of USD219.8million or 22 percent following IOM’s Financial Report 2009, pp. 4, 44.
11 Interview IOM Brussels, 19/12/2007.


Bibliography


