

Euronest: What Drives Inter-Parliamentary Cooperation in the Eastern Partnership?

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The regional inter-parliamentary cooperation assembly, Euronest, has been described in the context of the Eastern Partnership (EaP) policy, yet not conceptually analysed. This article therefore aims to focus on the identification of the driving forces behind multilateral parliamentary cooperation in the EaP region. Following a literature review, three conceptual interpretations of the drivers of inter-parliamentary cooperation can be pointed out: institutionalization, socialization and parliamentary diplomacy. The research shows that all the three possible explanations play a role in driving the Euronest Parliamentary Assembly. Parliamentary diplomacy, including both formal and informal tracks, is concluded to play the leading role in the development of Euronest. Institutions, such as secretariats and political party families, have a lot of potential but are still in their infancy. Socialization is seen as a goal of Euronest, but with serious limitations.

1 INTRODUCTION

With the making of the Eastern Partnership between the European Union (EU) and neighbouring countries to the East, not only high-level executive relations and civil society exchanges were introduced, but also an inter-parliamentary assembly, ‘Euronest’, in which parliamentarians would meet and add a parliamentary dimension to the Eastern Partnership. However, it has largely been under-researched what the driving forces of such inter-parliamentary cooperation are. Beyond the objective to add another – parliamentary – dimension to the Eastern Partnership, we have to outstep the descriptive exercise of the origin, purpose and objectives of the Eastern Partnership, and ask what the actual driving forces and challenges of the parliamentary cooperation are. In order to do so, we opt for a multi-tiered approach, focusing on whether Euronest is driven by the overarching (normative) goal of diffusing the EU’s objectives and norms in its neighbourhood by means of socialization and external governance; whether it can (rather) be explained by the objectives of parliamentary exchanges on both sides of

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the partnership, also understood as parliamentary diplomacy; or, thirdly, whether the institutionalization of parliamentary cooperation in form of Euronest serves as a meaningful concept to explain the driving forces of the Eastern Partnership's parliamentary dimension.

This article will proceed as follows. We will briefly outline the multi-tiered research approach which we take in this article and introduce the accompanying research methodology. Furthermore, we will give a brief overview of the general objectives of the Eastern Partnership (EaP) and, more specifically, Euronest. After this descriptive part, we will go into the analysis of the driving factors. By analysing official documents and interviews with members of Euronest we point to various factors that drive Euronest but also to the challenges which respectively make the cooperation more difficult. Complementary to studies of S. Lavenex, F. Schimmelfennig, T. Börzel, and T. Risse,¹ we also conclude that socialization is a driving factor of Euronest, especially when focusing on the EU's objectives – more precisely: the objectives of the European Parliament. However, we confirm that focusing on socialization cannot explain all the driving forces and challenges of Euronest.² Rather, we argue that 'parliamentary diplomacy' and 'institutionalization' can explain the mutual exchanges, conflicts and contestation of norms in a complementary way, adding a new perspective to the study of Euronest in particular, and inter-parliamentary cooperation in general.

¹ S. Lavenex & F. Schimmelfennig, EU democracy promotion in the neighbourhood: from leverage to governance?, 18 *Democratization*, 885–909 (2011); S. Lavenex & F. Schimmelfennig, EU rules beyond EU borders: theorizing external governance in European politics, 16 *J. Eur. Pub. Policy*, 791–812 (2009); S. Lavenex, A governance perspective on the European neighbourhood policy: integration beyond conditionality?, 15 *J. Eur. Pub. Policy*, 938–955 (2008); S. Lavenex, EU external governance in 'wider Europe', 11 *J. Eur. Pub. Policy*, 680–700 (2004); J. Langbein & T. Börzel, Introduction: Explaining Policy Change in the European Union's Eastern Neighbourhood, 65 *Europe-Asia Stud.* 571–580 (2013); T. Börzel & T. Risse From Europeanisation to Diffusion: Introduction, 35 *W. Eur. Pol.* 1–19 (2012); T. Börzel & T. Risse When Europeanisation Meets Diffusion: Exploring New Territory, 35 *W. Eur. Pol.* 192–207 (2012); J. Langbein & K. Wolczuk Convergence without membership? The impact of the European Union in the neighbourhood: evidence from Ukraine, 19 *J. Eur. Pub. Policy*, 863–881 (2012).

² See also on challenges and limits of the European Neighbourhood Policy and Eastern Partnership: G. Bosse & E. Korosteleva-Polglase, *Changing Belarus?: The Limits of EU Governance in Eastern Europe and the Promise of Partnership*, 44 *Cooperation & Conflict*, 143–165 (2009); E. Korosteleva *The limits of EU governance: Belarus's response to the European Neighbourhood Policy*, 15 *Contemp. Pol.* 229–245 (2009); J. Kelley, *New Wine in Old Wineskins: Policy Adaptation in the European Neighborhood Policy*, 44 *J. Com. Mkt. Stud.* 29–55 (2006); G. Sasse, *The European Neighbourhood Policy: Conditionality Revisited for the EU's Eastern Neighbours*, 60 *Europe-Asia Stud.* 295–316 (2008); R. Youngs, *Democracy promotion as external governance?* 16 *J. Eur. Pub. Policy* 895–915 (2009); A. Albi, *The EU's 'External Governance' and Legislative Approximation by Neighbours: Challenges for the Classic Constitutional Templates*, 14 *Eur. For. Aff. Rev.* 209–230 (2009); C. Hagemann, *External Governance on the Terms of the Partner? The EU, Russia and the Republic of Moldova in the European Neighbourhood Policy*, 35 *J. Eur. Integration*, 1–17 (2013).

2 DRIVING FORCES OF EURONEST: THEORETICAL APPROACHES

In this article, we depart from the idea that inter-parliamentary cooperation in the Eastern Partnership can be understood as being driven by the overall purpose of socializing the EU's neighbourhood the (West-) European way,³ diffusing norms and adding to the transformation of European neighbourhood societies through external governance of the EU.⁴ According to this understanding, one explanation of Euronest roots in the ability of parliamentary cooperation to contribute to the implementation of and compliance with European norms. The socialization approach would understand Euronest as a facilitator of the European socialization process in the post-Soviet space. Accordingly, exchanges between the EP and national parliaments are seen as dealing primarily with the question how the overarching agenda of the Eastern Partnership can be implemented by making use of its parliamentary dimension. In this study we test the hypothesis that Euronest was meant to become a platform of socialization.

However, there could be a second explanation of what drives Euronest, related to literature on the very purpose and meaning of inter-parliamentary cooperation and diplomacy itself. In this context, the driving forces of inter-parliamentary cooperation are meant to be about information-exchanges and the fostering of current understandings amongst parliaments – without a necessarily preset incentive to diffuse norms.⁵ The overarching aim *could* be the spreading of norms, such as parliamentarization and democratization, but this is far from a given. While F. Weisglas and G. de Boer define parliamentary diplomacy as ‘the full range of international activities undertaken by parliamentarians in order to increase mutual understanding between countries, to assist each other in improving the control of governments and the representation of a people and to increase the democratic legitimacy of intergovernmental institutions’,⁶ we may not take for granted that parliamentary diplomacy is always about the facilitation of the ‘control of government’ or the improvement of ‘democratic legitimacy’ in a respective setting. While without doubt inter-parliamentary diplomacy can include mechanisms of governmental/executive consultation and oversight,⁷ we should also take into account that external cooperation of parliaments is first of all devoted to formal and informal exchanges of (basic) information on various topics and policies.

³ H. Kostanyan & B. Vandecasteele *The EuroNest Parliamentary Assembly: The European Parliament as a Socializer of its Counterparts in the EU's Eastern Neighbourhood?*, EU Dipl. Paper, College of Europe (2013).

⁴ Lavenex & Schimmelfennig, *supra* n. 1; Langbein & Wolczuk, *supra* n. 1.

⁵ J. Wouters & K. Raube, *Towards an Inter-parliamentary scrutiny of CSDP*, 47 *Intl. Spectator*, 149–163 (2012).

⁶ F. Weisglas & G. de Boer *Parliamentary diplomacy*, 2 *Hague J. Dipl.* 93–99, 93 (2007).

⁷ A. Cofelice & S. Stavridis, *The European Parliament as an International Parliamentary Institution (IPI)*, 19 (2) *Eur. For. Aff. Rev.* 145–178 (2014).

Moreover, parliamentary delegations can have very different and even internally-mixed objectives. As such, the approach of parliamentary diplomacy helps to understand informal and formal exchanges of information in either bilateral or – as in the case of Euronest – multilateral settings. It sees the EP and other parliaments conducting ‘diplomacy’ beyond EU borders, or respectively within the EU.⁸ It does not only look into how the EP and partner parliaments of the EP receive and perceive common cooperation through mutual exchanges; it also focuses on the objectives and agendas of the parliaments. Relatedly, it looks at Euronest as a forum in which exchanges of information can also enter dissent and contestation. This contestation and dissent can take (at least) two forms: dissent between members of one delegation and between delegations.

Finally, inter-parliamentary cooperation could be seen as driven by institutional bodies, actors and procedures. For example, a strong secretariat at the heart of the parliamentary cooperation could very much have become the centre of inter-parliamentary gravity, fostering exchanges by developing tailor-made agendas. Research has shown that administrations can become major actors in parliamentary affairs.⁹ T. Winzen in his article ‘Technical or political? An Exploration of the Work of Officials in the Committees of the European Parliament’ points out the following two groups of functions of the parliamentary officials: management of policy process and provision of information and expertise. While the first group of functions on management of policy process is seen as technical, the informational and expertise support is, in a sense, more political. In the context of Euronest the question is if such an institutionalization, in form of a central secretariat or other institutionalized mechanisms, has become a driving force of the inter-parliamentary exchange. Furthermore, the establishment of specialized committees and parliamentary activities, such a filing parliamentary reports, may contribute to its activity. Hence, rather than complying with European norms (‘socialization’) or the exchanging of information in parliamentary cooperation (‘parliamentary diplomacy’), the idea is to explore if since the making of Euronest institutionalization dynamics contribute as a driver of Euronest through which parliamentarians feel obliged to cooperate and exchange information.

⁸ K. Raube, *Parliamentarisation Approach: Parliamentary Control in EU Foreign Policy*, in *New Approaches to EU Foreign Policy*, 125–141 (M. Wilga & P. Karolewski eds, Routledge, 2014).

⁹ T. Winzen, *Technical or Political? An Exploration of the Work of Officials in the Committees of the European Parliament*, 17 *J. Legislative Stud.* 27–44 (2011); M. Egeberg, Å. Gornitzka & J. Trondal, *People Who Run the European Parliament: Staff Demography and Its Implications*, 36 *J. Eur. Integration*, 659–675 (2014).

3 HOW TO RESEARCH THE DRIVING FORCES OF EURONEST?

The article is based on a number of semi-structured interviews with the delegates to the Euronest PA, as well as two interviews with officials of the EP. In order to obtain a wider overview of the opinions, the interviews were held with the representatives of various political parties (ALDE, EPP, SD, GUE in the EP and ruling and opposition parties in the partner countries) representing different committees of Euronest. In total, eleven interviews were conducted (four members of the European Parliament, five parliamentarians of the partner countries and two with EP officials). Each interview consisted of several sets of questions, such as background information on a MP/MEP, Euronest as an institution of the Eastern Partnership regional cooperation; objectives, challenges and developments of the institution and concrete working methods of Euronest.

In addition, the interviews were complemented with participant observation method. In the framework of the research, the meetings of standing committees, plenary session (third ordinary session, Brussels, 27–29 May 2013) and party group meetings (EPP Euronest group) were observed. Furthermore, primary information comes from the documentation analysis such as rules of procedure, resolutions and minutes of Euronest, official documents of the EU and EaP Member States.

4 THE ROLE OF INTER-PARLIAMENTARY COOPERATION IN THE EAP: EURONEST

4.1 ESTABLISHING THE ASSEMBLY

After the idea of the EaP was introduced, regional inter-parliamentary cooperation was put on the agenda by the EP in 2006. The respective EaP parliaments were contacted and the proposal was further developed in the EP's resolution on 'Strengthening the European Neighbourhood Policy' (15 November 2007) and at the Parliamentary Conference ENP-EAST (4–5 June 2008) which was attended by members of the European Parliament as well as the Parliamentary Cooperation Committees between the EU and Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine and representatives of the respective missions to the EU. Belarus was represented by four opposition leaders (not members of the Belarussian parliament). The possibilities of the establishment of the permanent PA were agreed to be examined by all the participating parties. As a result, by the time of launching the EaP, the idea was taken up and incorporated into the Joint Declaration of the Prague Eastern Partnership Summit in 2009, where Euronest was included as one of the new regional institutions. Explaining the role of Euronest in the institutional structure of the Eastern partnership policy, an MEP emphasized: 'the concept of Euronest was three years younger than the EaP, which

means that the EaP created in 2009 in Prague recognized an already existing structure as its own parliamentary assembly'.¹⁰

However, a year and a half after the Prague Summit, the functioning of Euronest was blocked by the question of the participation of the Belarusian delegation. While the European Parliament required that the Belarusian delegation was either formed on the '5+5' principle (five current parliamentarians and five members of the opposition, not represented in the parliament) or by ten opposition representatives. Both options were claimed unacceptable by Minsk. After the presidential elections in Belarus on 19 December 2010 following a crackdown of demonstrations, a decision was taken by the Conference of Presidents of the EP to hold the first meeting of Euronest without the Belarusian delegation. Hence, Euronest was formally established on its constituent meeting on 3 May 2011 with five EaP Member States.

4.2 OBJECTIVES

The Constituent Act of Euronest states that its objectives are to 'support, promote and consolidate in practical terms the Eastern Partnership by covering its four thematic platforms'.¹¹ However, participating countries have their own individual objectives when joining Euronest.¹² On the one hand, members of the European Parliament stressed the importance of 'exchange of the experience in respect of the functioning of democracy, human rights and the rule of law; economic cooperation for the prosperity of the region; and further progress on such issues as Association Agreements and visa facilitation'.¹³ On the other hand, delegates from Eastern Partnership countries especially emphasized the role of Euronest for further reforms in the EaP region, giving a new impetus to the policy, as well as the importance of Euronest for assessing EaP; hence, underlining the value of a deepened coordination amongst parliaments of EaP countries.

4.3 EURONEST PA MEETINGS

All the interviewees characterized the first years of the Euronest functioning as 'hard' or 'difficult'. Bringing together sixty members of the EP and fifty members

¹⁰ Interview, MEP, European People's Party Group, European Parliament (Brussels, 29 May 2013).

¹¹ Euronest, *Constituent Act*, Art. 2 (2011), <http://www.euronest.europarl.europa.eu/euronest/webdav/shared/constituent_act/Constituent%20Act_EN.pdf> (accessed 10 Jul. 2015).

¹² Interview, Member of the delegation of the Parliament of Azerbaijan, European Parliament (Brussels, 28 May 2013).

¹³ Euronest, *Minutes of the Constituent meeting* (2011) <http://www.euronest.europarl.europa.eu/euronest/webdav/site/mySite/shared/minutes/Minutes%20constituent%20meeting%20Euronest%20PA_EN.pdf> (accessed 10 Jul. 2015).

of parliament of the five Eastern partner's delegations, the first ordinary session of Euronest took place in Strasbourg in 2011. Due to the conflict between the delegations of Armenia and Azerbaijan, none of the discussed resolutions were adopted.¹⁴

The second ordinary meeting taking place in Azerbaijan (Baku, 2012) was much more positive. In fact, it was called a first success adopting resolutions covering four thematic platforms (democracy, economy, energy and civil society), as well as an additional resolution focusing on the imprisoned Y. Timoshenko. Adopting common resolutions in Euronest created the precedent of working out joint documents by all six delegations. At the same time, it was noted that in order to find a consensus 'contents of the resolutions have been watered down'.¹⁵

The third meeting in Brussels, 2013 again showed that parliamentarians from different delegations were able to work together. Analysing the resolutions an MEP argued that:

these are not resolutions that are going to change the world radically, these are not resolutions with legislative power whatsoever. But it is one of those means through which you work together . . . maybe in future we can make it a bit stronger, urge our governments to be active as well.¹⁶

The fourth ordinary session taking place in Yerevan in 2015 reflected some of the general problems of the EaP: next to the continuing absence of Belarus also the delegation from Azerbaijan refused to 'set foot on Armenian soil'.^{17,18} Attendance rates of other delegations remained low (e.g., Moldova sent only one delegate and half of the EP delegation was present). Furthermore, the session in Yerevan further underlined a general trend that 'increasingly Eastern partners put forward their own domestic issues and try to have resolutions connected to their countries in the plenary rather than seeing Euronest as multilateral track aiming to identify the common interests of all the partners first'.¹⁹

On the other hand, positive inter-institutional dynamics are noted: Euronest is being increasingly recognized by other EaP and EU institutions. Thus, the

¹⁴ Euronest, *Minutes of the first ordinary session* (2011), <http://www.euronest.europarl.europa.eu/euronest/webdav/shared/general_documents/first_ordinary_session_2011/minutes_150911_en.pdf> (accessed 10 Jul. 2015).

¹⁵ Kostanyan & Vandecasteele, *supra* n. 3, at 13; V. Pulišová, *Multilateral Europeanisation of the EU's Eastern neighbourhood: (how) does it work?* (Institute of European Studies and International Relations, Faculty of Social and Economic Sciences, Comenius University, EUFORPOL Working Papers, 54–55, 2013).

¹⁶ Interview, MEP, Alliance of Liberals and Democrats for Europe, European Parliament (Brussels, 28 May 2013).

¹⁷ Interview, European Parliament official (Brussels, 22 Jun. 2015).

¹⁸ Furthermore, in September 2015 as a reaction to the resolution of the EP condemning repression against civil society in Azerbaijan, the Azerbaijani parliament adopted a resolution on suspending its activity in Euronest.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*

co-presidents are regularly invited to deliver a speech at the EaP Summits, in 2015 they were also present at the Foreign Affairs Committee of the EU and six EaP countries. Euronest also organizes joint meetings together with the Committee of the Regions and invites members of the EaP Civil Society Forum (CSF) as well as the Conference of the Regional and Local Authorities for Eastern Partnership (CORLEAP) to its plenary sessions.

5 WHAT DRIVES EURONEST?

As outlined in the introduction, we will further analyse each of the three possible explanations of the Euronest PA driving factors: institutionalization, socialization and European socialization/norms diffusion and parliamentary diplomacy.

5.1 INSTITUTIONALIZATION

Institutionalization can be potentially a driving force of further parliamentary cooperation. In this part we analyse what mechanisms are in place and to what extent these mechanisms have been developed. We especially focus on the role of the parliamentary assembly, the committees and co-rapporteurs as well as the secretariats.

Parliamentarians see the *plenary assembly* as an essential forum for cooperation in terms of sharing their views, expressing positions passing common resolutions, as well as working out joint proposals for the EaP summit.²⁰ The change in the rules of procedure from a two-third majority to a simple majority²¹ may demonstrate a move from a consensual to a more majority-based decision-making implying, that amongst other, the EP delegation has the majority to adopt resolutions without necessarily taking on board the partners. At the same time, the same voting procedure, introduced by the EP, was rejected in the context of the committees. In an interview with the EP it was expressed that parliamentarians, ‘want to have a larger basis for adopting reports in the committees, they want to show that it is a very consensual text before forwarding it to the plenary. But this we have to accept and to understand that they need time. We need progress but at the pace which is possible’.²²

²⁰ Interview, MEP, Alliance of Liberals and Democrats for Europe, European Parliament (Brussels, 28 May 2013); Interview, MEP, Progressive Alliance of Socialists and Democrats, European Parliament (Brussels, 27 May 2013).

²¹ Interview, European Parliament officials (Brussels, 20 Jun. 2013); see also, Euronest, *Rules of Procedure*, Art. 16(5) (2013), <http://www.euronest.europarl.europa.eu/euronest/webdav/site/mySite/shared/rules_of_procedure/Rules_of_Procedure_EN.pdf> (accessed 10 Jul. 2015).

²² Interview, European Parliament officials (Brussels, 20 Jun. 2013).

The consensual decision-making in the committees is reflected in the Euronest's rules of procedure which states that the committees 'shall function in a strictly joint manner'.²³ To this end, committees which are headed by two co-chairs representing the EP and EaP partners meet at least twice a year. In fact, committees have taken along the role of preparing plenary meetings as one of the meetings always takes place directly before the plenary meeting. Usually adopting committee reports by consensus, parliamentarians express satisfaction with the work of the committees. However, it should not be underestimated that especially MEPs, by stressing EU norms and values, have a special impact on the partners during the working sessions.

Committees and co-rapporteurs are effective means of parliamentary cooperation, since this is where the questions are discussed in detail and the reports (as well as motions for resolutions and recommendations) are produced. According to the rules of procedure, each of the four committees is headed by two co-chairs, representing both Euronest components. Importantly, committees have at least two meetings per year, one of which is held before the plenary meeting, which takes place once a year. It is demonstrated that reports are usually supported by the committee members, some suggestions are being made in the course of discussion. Showing the methods of work and stressing the EU norms and values, MEPs inform the partners of their working methods. In general, the parliamentarians express satisfaction with the work of the committees.

Every report presented at committee meetings is jointly prepared by two delegates, one coming from the EP and one from the partner countries' parliament. Therefore, the institute of co-rapporteurs requires regular communication of two parliamentarians and agreement on all the position of a report. At the same time, some pitfalls, can be detected: co-rapporteurs may not sufficiently communicate to each other, preferring instead to be in touch with the secretariat of the EP delegation.²⁴ Another problem is that sometimes presentation of reports is delivered not by the parliamentarian responsible for its preparation, but by a substitute. This leads to the question on how the reports are prepared and whether sufficient communication took place in the course of its preparation. Next to these institutionalized mechanisms, individual parliamentarians have used the committees to launch additional events in the framework of Euronest (e.g., regular workshops on energy organized by members of the Euronest committee on energy security).²⁵

²³ *Supra* n. 20, Art. 25.

²⁴ *Supra* n. 21.

²⁵ Euronest, *Workshop 'Eastern Partnership prospects on energy efficiency and renewable energy'*, Draft programme (2013), <http://www.euronest.europarl.europa.eu/euronest/webdav/site/mySite/shared/workshop%20vilnius%202013/draft_programme_workshop_vilnius_2013.pdf> (accessed 10 Jul. 2015).

Another key mechanism of parliamentary cooperation is building of *political families*. Although the MEPs and EP secretariat admit that their Eastern European counterparts can only to a limited extent be considered as belonging to the same family groups, active attempts at approximation were made in the recent years. The final goal would be to have priority of European political families, rather than national delegations.²⁶ One example is the European People's Party, which has parties affiliated with the EPP by the observer status in each EaP countries. Besides creation of EPP Euronest group and regular sessions during the ordinary meetings of the Euronest Parliamentary Assembly starting from 2012 (meetings take place twice a year), People's Party Eastern Partnership Summit was established in Batumi the same year. At the constituent meeting, it was stated that 'the Eastern Partnership should offer a clear perspective for EU-membership to the Eastern Partners who are willing and acting accordingly'.²⁷ Up to 2015, the party family has carried out a number of joint activities such as European People's Party Eastern Partnership Leaders' Summit, EPP Euronest group meetings, as well as invited the counterparts to the meetings of the EPP ministerial meetings.²⁸

Secretariats of Euronest play an important role in terms of agenda-setting and institutional memory. Each delegation to Euronest is assisted by its own secretariat, since the establishment of a permanent secretariat would provide little added value when calculated against all costs and resources needed. In practice, given its larger resources and experience, as well as the fact that the EaP was the initiative of the EP, the secretariat of the EP delegation has taken on a leading role compared to the national secretariats. Not only was it the responsibility of the EP secretariat to organize meetings, assists co-rapporteurs with preparatory work establishing the rules of procedure, setting up Euronest website and taking minutes at various sessions, but it was also responsible for covering translation and interpretations costs. Hence, the EP delegation secretariat has become an important institutional actor in Euronest itself. Next to organization of meetings, the support for ongoing reports and individual delegates, it has contributed to the institutional memory and to providing a broader outlook of Euronest. The EP's delegation secretariat not only overviews the bilateral contacts between the EP and individual Euronest countries, it also ensures non-duplication of work between those and Euronest. Regarding best practices, the EP delegation secretariat was able to introduce its positive experience with standing rules of procedure with other PAs and

²⁶ *Ibid.*

²⁷ European People's Party, *1st European People's Party Eastern Partnership Summit Batumi Declaration* (2012), <<http://www.epp.eu/sites/default/files/content/documents/Batumi%20Declaration.pdf>> (accessed 10 Jul. 2015).

²⁸ European People's Party, *2nd European People's Party Eastern Partnership Leaders' Summit, Yerevan Declaration* (2012), <<http://www.epp.eu/sites/default/files/content/documents/Yerevan%20Declaration.pdf>> (accessed 10 Jul. 2015).

introduced it for Euronest. A number of initiatives also come from the successful experience of their implementation in the framework of other assemblies (e.g., ‘Euronest Scola’ project was borrowed from ‘Euromed Scola’, a seminar for young leaders was planned to be taken up as it demonstrated success in Israel and Palestine).

Despite this positive role played by the EP delegation secretariat, it urges the secretariats of the EaP delegations to take up some responsibilities. For instance, it was planned that the organizational functions will be carried out by the secretariat of the delegation hosting ordinary meetings. In a long-term perspective, the secretariats should become interchangeable. Some attempts to approximate the working methods of various secretariats were taken. Thus, up to 2015 the Office for Promotion of Parliamentary Democracy at the EP, organized two trainings. The trainings aimed at the partner parliaments’ officials to learn the working practices of the EP, which could be further applied in the cooperation within the PA. The outcomes of the trainings were not completely satisfactory mainly due to the fact that national parliaments not always sent the staff directly involved in the work of Euronest, but members of the protocol service who were not aware and not interested in the working methods in Euronest.²⁹ However, up until now, there was little support from the national secretariats, which is to a large extent a matter of administrative capacity (national secretariats usually consist of one person). To enhance the involvement of the national secretariats, the EP delegation secretariat plans to move the issue to the political level.³⁰ Thus, while the secretariats of the national delegations take the reactive role and mainly technically support their delegations, the secretariat of the EP exercises more functions and can be seen as a motor of Euronest.

5.2 SOCIALIZATION

The EU positions itself as a model for regional development in the cooperation with other regions.³¹ Analysis of Euronest documents shows that all the EaP parliamentary delegations subscribe for the European values, and, therefore, Euronest should act as a facilitator of norms adoption. Hence, the Constituent Act of the Euronest PA states that ‘Euronest shall assist in the harmonization of the national legislation of the Eastern European Partners with the EU legislation, including by means of implementation of the appropriate projects at bilateral and

²⁹ *Supra* n. 22.

³⁰ *Supra* n. 18.

³¹ O. Costa & C. Dri, *How does the European Parliament contribute to the construction of the EU’s interregional dialogue?*, in *Intersecting interregionalism: regions, global governance and the EU*, 143 (F. Baert, T. Scaramagli & F. Soderbaum, eds, Springer, 2014).

multilateral level'.³² The Euronest's reports and resolutions contain an ample amount of references to the EU legislation and encouragements of the EaP to proceed with the legislation approximations and reforms.³³ The third ordinary meeting of Euronest adopted a resolution entitled 'Resolution on approximation of the national legislation of Eastern Partnership countries with EU legislation in the economic field' which puts forward further measures for legal approximation.³⁴ Therefore, the documents of Euronest clearly position the EP as a socializer for the EaP countries.³⁵

Socialization, although not always explicitly expressed, is seen by the members of the European Parliament as one of the main aims of the Euronest PA.³⁶ In the context of the Euronest PA, one of the founding fathers of Euronest claimed that the EU's contribution to the development of the EaP countries should be 'socialization, Europeanization, mental change, gradual transmission of patterns, standards, values'.³⁷ The representative of the Progressive Alliance of Socialists and Democrats pointed out that the EP should be a lobbyist of the further integration, both in the EaP countries, but also for the European institutions.³⁸

At least three of the EaP countries express their EU membership aspirations (Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine). Obviously, this provides the necessary leverage on their parliaments to more closely follow the norms adoption from the European Parliament. At the same time, the EaP parliamentarians emphasize more

³² *Supra* n. 14, Art. 6(g).

³³ Euronest, *Resolution on energy security in connection with energy market and harmonisation between the Eastern European partner and the EU countries*, Art. 22 (2013), <http://www.euronest.europarl.europa.eu/euronest/webdav/site/mySite/shared/general_documents/third_ordinary_session_2013/Resolutions/resolution_ener_28052013_en.pdf> (accessed 10 Jul. 2015); Euronest, *Resolution on regional security challenges in Eastern European partner countries*, Art. 42 (2013), <http://www.euronest.europarl.europa.eu/euronest/webdav/site/mySite/shared/general_documents/third_ordinary_session_2013/Resolutions/resolution_pol_28052013_en.pdf> (accessed 10 Jul. 2015); Euronest, *Resolution on challenges for the future of democracy, including the question of free and independent media in Eastern Partnership and EU countries*, Art. 34 (2012), <http://www.euronest.europarl.europa.eu/euronest/webdav/site/mySite/shared/general_documents/second_ordinary_session_2012/2012_baku_pol_res_final.pdf> (accessed 10 Jul. 2015).

³⁴ Euronest, *Resolution on approximation of the national legislation of Eastern Partnership countries with EU legislation in the economic field* (2013) <http://www.euronest.europarl.europa.eu/euronest/webdav/site/mySite/shared/general_documents/third_ordinary_session_2013/Resolutions/resolution_econ_28052013_en.pdf> (accessed 10 Jul. 2015).

³⁵ An empirical study by H. Kostanyan and B. Vandecasteele, applying on the basis of Checkel three types of socialization (strategic calculation, role playing and normative persuasion) concludes that for the moment, socialization takes place only at the level of strategic calculations, thus, the level of socialization is very low. See *Supra* n. 3.

³⁶ Interview, MEP, Alliance of Liberals and Democrats for Europe, European Parliament (Brussels, 28 May 2013); Interview, MEP, European People's Party Group, European Parliament (Brussels, 29 May 2013); Interview, Member of the delegation of the Parliament of Georgia, European Parliament (Brussels, 28 May 2013).

³⁷ Interview, MEP, European People's Party Group, European Parliament (Brussels, 29 May 2013).

³⁸ Interview, MEP, Alliance of Liberals and Democrats for Europe, European Parliament (Brussels, 28 May 2013).

the equal status of the two parts of the Euronest,³⁹ the vision of the parliamentary assembly as a platform to collectively put pressure on the officials in the promotion of the EaP policy,⁴⁰ as a forum for discussions of bilateral and multilateral problems,⁴¹ as a platform for direct dialogue, building formal and informal relations.⁴² Thus, the EaP delegates focus more on the parliamentary diplomacy functions, rather than on Euronest as a means for socialization.

Obviously, norms diffusion is a long-term process and, therefore, it is important to understand to what extent the body is meant to be a socializer. Hence, although a low level of socialization has been taken place within Euronest in the first years of its functioning, it is indeed seen as a means for socialization (to a larger degree by the MEPs and less by the EaP parliamentarians) which is also explicitly reflected in the documents of Euronest.

Another perspective on socialization in Euronest was emphasized by an EP official – it is socializing by learning how to compromise and work in a multicultural, multilingual environment, which, given the fact that even originally controversial resolutions are being finally accepted, can be concluded to be quite successful.⁴³

5.3 PARLIAMENTARY DIPLOMACY

It has been noticed recently that the activities executed by parliaments in the field of foreign policy is overlooked in the academic literature.⁴⁴ It has also been realized that the role of parliaments in the foreign policy-making – take for example the EP – has been growing in the recent years. Based on the functions of Euronest stated in its rules of procedure ('the Euronest Parliamentary Assembly shall be the forum for parliamentary discussion, consultation, supervision and monitoring in respect of all questions relating to the Eastern Partnership'⁴⁵), we will analyse both formal and informal parliamentary information exchanges, which, can be seen as one of the major objectives of cooperation in

³⁹ Interview, Member of the delegation of the Parliament of Azerbaijan, European Parliament (Brussels, 28 May 2013).

⁴⁰ Interview, Member of the delegation of the Parliament of Ukraine, European Parliament (Brussels, 27 May 2013).

⁴¹ Interview, Member of the delegation of the Parliament of Georgia, European Parliament (Brussels, 28 May 2013).

⁴² Interview, Member of the delegation of the Parliament of Ukraine, European Parliament (Brussels, 27 May 2013).

⁴³ *Supra* n. 18.

⁴⁴ D. Peters, W. Wagner & N. Deitelhoff, *Parliaments and European Security Policy: Mapping the Parliamentary Field*, in *Understanding the Role of Bureaucracy in the European Security and Defence Policy* (S. Vanhoonaeker, H. Dijkstra & H. Maurer eds, European Integration online Papers (EIoP), Special Issue 1, Vol. 14, 2010).

⁴⁵ *Supra* n. 21, Art. 3.

inter-parliamentary assemblies. Importantly, the inter-parliamentary assembly is also a place for debate and, therefore, it is essential to reflect what are the internal dissents and whether the parties manage to agree upon a common view. Furthermore, powers of oversight and consultation play an important role and will be analysed below.⁴⁶

5.3[a] *Formal Exchanges*

During the formal exchanges, the delegates work in the four standing committees, discuss and adopt resolutions at the plenary sessions. These sessions present an opportunity to share ideas, views, values and norms. Information-sharing is seen as a major function of Euronest, since one of the problems in the EU's Eastern Partnership policy, as identified by the Eastern component of Euronest, is a lack of knowledge and communication between the EU and EaP countries. A member of the Azerbaijani delegation claimed that the Euronest PA is a means for the Eastern Partnership countries to be heard in the EU. He stressed that it is a frequent case, when the EP internally discusses an EaP country, debates are followed by a decision regarding this or that country. However, the fact that nobody from a target country is present doesn't contribute to the adoption of the best possible decisions.⁴⁷ In this regard, Euronest is perceived as a bridge not only between the parliamentarians but also the citizens they represent.

Furthermore, formal exchanges result in committees' reports and resolutions adopted at the plenary sessions. When evaluating committees' meetings, all the parliamentarians expressed their satisfaction and noticed the progress achieved in comparison to the first session. The ability to agree upon the topics for discussion and adopt common documents is already seen by all parliamentarians and the EP officials as an achievement.

A good example is the adoption of a common resolution on the Ukraine crisis, which was initiated by the Ukrainian delegation and further elaborated amongst 'partners and the political groups to find compromises on the formula and to propose amendments to the resolution'.⁴⁸

⁴⁶ C. Caballero-Bourdot, *Interparliamentary scrutiny of the CFSP: avenues for the future*, ISS Occasional Paper 94 (2011); A. Cofelice & S. Stavridis, *The European Parliament as an International Parliamentary Institution (IPI)*, 19 (2) Eur. For. Aff. Rev. 145–178 (2014).

⁴⁷ Interview, Member of the delegation of the Parliament of Azerbaijan, European Parliament (Brussels, 28 May 2013).

⁴⁸ *Supra* n. 18.

At the same time, some lack of interest of the European parliamentarians to the Euronest PA was mentioned by the EaP delegates.⁴⁹ It is particularly seen in the rates of participation of the European parliamentarians in the Euronest sessions: the first session was attended by some thirty, the second by thirty-seven MEPs.⁵⁰ However, officials of the EP stressed that the rates of participation are quite normal and do not indicate lack of interest.⁵¹

5.3[b] *Informal Exchanges*

An important function of Euronest, which was pointed out by many interviewed parliamentarians is understanding building, mainly through development of personal contacts, but also through visits to the respective countries. A more advanced function is informal negotiations between the parliamentarians leading to shaping foreign policy positions or coalitions in Euronest. We will further discuss these functions in more detail.

Information-sharing and building of mutual understanding are important functions of a multilateral parliamentary assembly. The assembly facilitates contacts of the two components of Euronest, giving the EaP parliamentarians an idea about the positions and working procedures of the European Parliament. On the other hand, for many MEPs it is a unique opportunity to get to know parliamentarians from the EaP countries and to travel to Eastern European and South Caucasus partner countries. Additionally, Euronest is an important platform for cooperation of the parliamentarians from Armenia and Azerbaijan. The contradictions between the two countries significantly complicate the work of Euronest, however, the experience of working together can result in positive developments in a long-term perspective. As an illustration of how much significance personal contacts have, one of the members of the European Parliament emphasized:

For me the main objective is to have a platform where we, from the EP side, work together with members of parliaments of Eastern Partnership side. You get a better understanding for each others' positions, each other's problems, opportunities, solutions etc... We've had dinners, receptions and so on, and you get to know each other and that is a very positive element of the assembly, because, let's face it - if you start knowing each other, it's very hard to be less friendly towards each other. That is also in the whole process towards better

⁴⁹ Interview, Member of the delegation of the Parliament of Armenia, European Parliament (Brussels, 26 May 2013); Interview, Member of the delegation of the Parliament of Ukraine, European Parliament (Brussels, 27 May 2013).

⁵⁰ Euronest, *Minutes of the First ordinary session* (2011), <http://www.euronest.europarl.europa.eu/euronest/webdav/site/mySite/shared/general_documents/first_ordinary_session_2011/minutes_150911_en.pdf> (accessed 10 Jul. 2015); Euronest, *Minutes of the Second ordinary session* (2012), <http://www.euronest.europarl.europa.eu/euronest/webdav/site/mySite/shared/general_documents/second_ordinary_session_2012/2012_pv_2nd_session_baku_en.pdf> (accessed 10 Jul. 2015).

⁵¹ *Supra* n. 22.

interrelationships, I think that is very important. And maybe if we have some stability in the people attending we might even find friendships; that might be useful in the future, because you never know who will be the minister for foreign affairs in 10-15 years' time. Maybe these are people who were active in Euronest. A joint history is always extremely important if you want to get somewhere.⁵²

Euronest is also a platform for informal negotiations, which in the end impact on the decisions taken in the Euronest PA, and more broadly, to the Eastern Partnership policy in general. Thus, as the interviews show, some of the key figures from both components of Euronest have well-established contacts for a long time (for instance, a member of the Ukrainian delegation noted: 'for many years, probably, two decades I am in good contacts with members of the EP, with different national delegates... I have personal contacts with almost all of members of both components of Euronest'⁵³). These contacts played a vital role for the launching of Euronest itself. A recent example of informal contacts at work was given by both, the EU and EaP members of the Euronest EPP group, when they discussed the signing of the Association Agreement with Ukraine before the Vilnius Summit. The position of the opposition part of the Ukrainian delegation to Euronest, with which the European Parliament EPP delegation agreed, was not to sign the Association Agreement with the president V. Yanukovich, but wait for the change of the government and sign it with the pro-European coalition.⁵⁴

5.3[c] *Consultation and Oversight*

According to the Constituent Act, Euronest has the following powers in terms of consultation and oversight:

- (c) to adopt resolutions and recommendations addressed to the Eastern Partnership Summit and the institutions, bodies and ministerial groups and conferences devoted to the development of the Partnership, in matters relating to the various aspects of the Partnership;
- (d) to deliver opinions on questions put to it by the Eastern Partnership Summit itself and by the ministerial conferences associated with the Eastern Partnership, for which it may call upon the former and the latter to consult the Assembly on any issues relating to the Eastern Partnership;
- (e) to establish appropriate relations between the Euronest Parliamentary Assembly, on the one hand, and the Summit and the various ministerial conferences and institutions associated with the Eastern Partnership, on the other.⁵⁵

⁵² Interview, MEP, Alliance of Liberals and Democrats for Europe, European Parliament (Brussels, 28 May 2013).

⁵³ Interview, Member of the delegation of the Parliament of Ukraine, European Parliament (Brussels, 27 May 2013).

⁵⁴ Interview, MEP, European People's Party Group, European Parliament (Brussels, 29 May 2013).

⁵⁵ *Supra* n. 14, Art. 6.

The most important mechanism of consultation is a message of the Euronest Parliamentary Assembly to the Summit of the Eastern Partnership delivered by the two representatives of Euronest. It took some time and effort to establish this mechanism. Euronest is represented at the summit by two co-presidents. Recalling the first year of Euronest's functioning, a Ukrainian parliamentarian mentioned that 'there were serious debates whether the two of the co-chairmen of the Euronest PA can be present in the Eastern Partnership Summits'.⁵⁶ At the Warsaw summit (second summit of the EaP), the parties managed to create a precedent when the two co-presidents of the Euronest were present at the summit. At the same time, it was also characterized by the EP officials as a bitter-sweet success, since although the co-presidents were invited, they did not deliver the message from Euronest, which was a bad experience.⁵⁷

At the third ordinary meeting of the Euronest PA in Brussels (May 2013) a lot of attention was devoted to the preparation of the recommendations to the Vilnius summit which was hoped to become a turning point in the EU-EaP relationships. Preparation of the recommendations was seen by the members of parliaments as a way to express people's aspirations and provide an added value to the EaP project through parliamentary representatives' view on the partnership.⁵⁸ However, even at the Euronest third ordinary meeting neither parliamentarians themselves, nor the secretariats were sure that the co-presidents would be invited to the Vilnius summit. Eventually, the co-presidents were invited and delivered the message produced by the Bureau of the Euronest PA before the summit meeting.

In its message, the assembly refers to the common values and points out the major objectives for the Eastern Partnership policy. The PA called for enhancing the approximation of the EaP towards the EU via signing Association Agreements including DCFTA. One of the major recommendations expressed by the PA is the 'need to assure adequate funding' and a tailor-made approach to the projects undertaken in the EaP countries. Besides, the assembly calls upon the short-term projects which would affect the people's daily life, normalization of relations with Belarus and enhancing the cooperation in security sphere.⁵⁹ Following the precedent established in 2011, both co-presidents of Euronest E. Kirilov and B. Tarasyuk were present at the Vilnius Summit.

⁵⁶ Interview, Member of the delegation of the Parliament of Ukraine, European Parliament (Brussels, 27 May 2013).

⁵⁷ *Supra* n. 22.

⁵⁸ European Parliament, *MEPs and eastern MPs eye breakthrough in relations*, Press release (2013), <<http://www.europarl.europa.eu/sides/getDoc.do?pubRef=-//EP//TEXT+IM-PRESS+20130527IPR10533+0+DOC+XML+V0//EN>> (accessed 10 Jul. 2015).

⁵⁹ Euronest, *Message approved by the Bureau of the Euronest PA on 2 November 2013 in Kiev* (2013), <http://www.euronest.europarl.europa.eu/euronest/webdav/site/mySite/shared/general_documents/ep_summit/message_vilnius_nov2013.pdf> (accessed 10 Jul. 2015).

A representative of the EP noted that the fact that the co-presidents of Euronest were invited to express the view of the assembly on the EaP is already an evidence of Euronest being recognized by other institutions of the EaP:

the co-presidents are invited to the summits of the EaP, it clearly shows that there is a recognition – the more Euronest deliberates the resolutions, statements, which are the result of compromise, the more Euronest is acknowledged by the European institutions and the institutions of the partner countries.⁶⁰

The analysis demonstrates that the Euronest PA is seen by the participating parliamentarians as a platform for parliamentary diplomacy. In the sessions of Euronest the primary objective is the establishment of personal contacts, understanding building, which may further lead to actual foreign policy decisions taken in Euronest, as well as scrutiny of the Eastern Partnership policy and its strengthening in form of recommendations.

When it comes to oversight functions, the Constituent Act indicates that the objective of the Euronest is to ‘help to support, promote and consolidate in practical terms the Eastern Partnership’.⁶¹ In order to do so, Euronest uses the information from the open sources, the reports prepared by the co-rapporteurs, it can also require reports from ministerial bodies of the Eastern Partnership, the Presidency-in-Office of the Summit, the Council of Ministers of the EU or the European Commission (in oral and written form).⁶²

Assessing the oversight functions in the Eastern Partnership policy, the parliamentary assembly:

- refers to the progresses made in the EaP countries;
- expresses its consent with the EaP policies;
- requires for more active or tailor-made actions towards the partner countries;
- encourages the EaP for further reforms;
- underlines the importance of increased and more careful spending on the EaP.⁶³

Oversight is facilitated by the reports of officials and representatives of other EaP bodies at the sessions of Euronest. Thus, the reports were delivered by the representatives of the European Commission, including Stefan Fule, European Commissioner for Enlargement and European Neighbourhood, Luc Van Den Brande, Vice-President of the Committee of the Regions, Natalia Yerashevich,

⁶⁰ *Supra* n. 22.

⁶¹ *Supra* n. 14, Art. 2.

⁶² *Supra* n. 21, Arts 21, 22.

⁶³ *Supra* n. 33.

Director of the Secretariat of the Steering Committee of the Eastern Partnership Civil Society Forum etc.

5.3[d] *Contestation*

Next to formal, informal exchanges, consultation and oversight and given the fact that a parliamentary assembly is an arena for discussion and exchanging views, contestation and dissent can also characterize parliamentary diplomacy in Euronest. Indeed, in the interviews, parliamentarians referred to two kinds of contestation: within delegations/ideological contestation (e.g., *Ukraine, Georgia, EP: EEP v. S&D*) and between delegations (e.g., *Armenia v. Azerbaijan*).

5.3[d][i] *Contestation within One Delegation*

There is a lot of evidence that delegations do not act as a single actor, but they are often divided and express different positions. The main reason of this kind of contestation is varying ideological views of members of different political parties. For instance, the European representatives of the centre-right on the one hand and left and centre-left parties on the other hand, have opposing views on the developments in the EaP countries and on policies of the EU towards this region, which naturally affect the work of Euronest.

For example, securing European values and development model is an absolute priority for the European Peoples' Party. Therefore, a purely declarative subscription to the norms by the Eastern partners is not enough – it must be proved by domestic developments. For that reason, the condition of Y. Timoshenko release from prison was the prerequisite for signing the Association Agreement with Ukraine, fully backed by the EPP group. On the other hand, the working methods of the EPP were criticized by the member of the Group of the Progressive Alliance of Socialists and Democrats, M. Siwiec:

A source of tension was the case of Yulia Tymoshenko. The EPP, mainly its Polish members – had prepared the resolution condemning the sentence of the former PM partially in secrecy. It was passed by a majority, but a slender one for such an important issue. For the future, the EPP members should reconsider whether it is a good way to handle this type of problems.⁶⁴

The Group of the Progressive Alliance of Socialists and Democrats advocates 'Jean Monnet approach' of moving forward in the fields where cooperation is

⁶⁴ P. Lickiewicz, *Azerbaijan: MEP Marek Siwiec comments on Euronest PA session (2014)*, <<http://eastbook.eu/en/2012/04/material-en/news-en/azerbaijan-mep-marek-siwiec-comments-on-euronest-pa-session/>> (accessed 11 Jul. 2015).

possible. They also stress that cooperation in many areas, and not mere concentration on values, will be beneficial:

it was important to make this link with not only foreign policy affairs, but also make the link with economy, social affairs, environment, energy etc. and then, I think, it was important that people in the EP who have responsibilities in different fields, that they should be actively engaged in Euronest, because otherwise we would run the risk that the Euronest Assembly would be just another foreign policy conference. So, to me it was important to make it something more. I think, we also learned through the enlargement process during the last years...that the process has to be wide, it has to deal with really wide scope of issues, and that's why we also formed these committees in the Euronest Assembly focusing on things which are really important for economic and social reasons.⁶⁵

Furthermore, since the national delegations of the EaP countries are formed on proportional principle, it is often the case that the delegations are made up of the governing and opposition parties, which can be a source of tensions. For instance, the Ukrainian delegation failed to choose a chair of the delegation for the third plenary session due to the conflicts between the governing party ('the Party of Regions') and the pro-European opposition coalition. The Georgian delegation was also divided as a result of parliamentary elections of 2012 when the ruling party of M. Saakashvili lost the majority to the 'Georgian dream' party.

5.3[d][ii] Contestation between Delegations

Contestation between delegations is represented by a single case: the confrontation between Armenia and Azerbaijan. The issue of Nagorno-Karabakh is so sensitive for both countries, that even a discussion may cause a refusal of both parties to cooperate within one multilateral institution. This was demonstrated already at the first meeting of Euronest, when the debates around the principles of territorial integrity and right of nations to self-determination led to the bitter outcome when no resolution was adopted. The contradictions between the two delegations also threatened the adoption of resolutions at the second ordinary meeting in Baku (2012), when president G. Aliev clearly provoked the Armenian delegation in his speech in the plenary session calling Armenians fascists.⁶⁶ The delegation of Armenia was about to leave the room, which could lead to the complete collapse of the entire project of regional multilateral parliamentary assembly. The conflict was put out with the mediation of the EP delegation. Although some positive

⁶⁵ Interview, MEP, Alliance of Liberals and Democrats for Europe, European Parliament (Brussels, 28 May 2013).

⁶⁶ Interview, MEP, European United Left/Nordic Green Left Group, European Parliament (Brussels, 29 May 2013).

dynamics took place at the third plenary session in Brussels, the Azerbaijani delegation actually decided not to attend the fourth Euronest ordinary session as it would take place in Armenia. It thereby implicitly avoided further contestation with the Armenian counterparts. Rather than using Euronest as a forum for contestation and mediation this incident shows how the sheer absence of a delegation can undermine the purpose of multilateral parliamentary diplomacy.

6 CONCLUSIONS

The present study shows that all the three possible explanations play a role in driving the Euronest Parliamentary Assembly. First, institutions of the inter-parliamentary assembly are still underdeveloped. Co-rapporteurs, political party families and secretariats seem to have a lot of potential in driving further development of Euronest, but it was almost unanimously agreed by the interviewees that the process of institution-building is a long-term process and the state of development of these institutions is in its infancy. Second, socialization proved to be seen as a driver of the multilateral parliamentary assembly, with some reservations, however. First of all, there are varying views on the socializing function of Euronest among European and EaP components. While the EP often underlines the importance of diffusing European norms to neighbouring countries, the EaP members, in general, tend to stress parliamentary diplomacy functions, rather than its socializing potential. Secondly, the attitude of the EaP countries also diverges. For the states with the EU membership aspirations, approximation of norms is important, while their counterparts (such as Azerbaijan and Armenia) emphasize the equal partnership and express dissatisfaction with the asymmetrical approach. Third, a major driver of the parliamentary cooperation is the parliamentary diplomacy. Establishing personal contacts, a better understanding of each other and others' political culture was seen as a main objective of Euronest. Moreover, the Euronest PA also helps to address questions of the democratic deficit by supervizing the EaP and providing the summit of the EaP with recommendations. At the same time, informal policy-making is almost as important as formal procedures, leading to decisions which can even potentially shape the Eastern Partnership policy.