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## **Abstract**

The research was conducted by Nusrat Ismayilzada, a master student in the field of Area Studies at the Khazar University, and the topic of the research is “The resilience turn in EU foreign policy”.

This thesis investigates the implementation of the European Union's (EU) foreign policy in the Eastern Partnership before and after the EU Global Strategy (EUGS) and examines if there has been a paradigm shift towards resilience in practice. There is an apparent disagreement in the previous literature on the EUGS' implications, and this paper argues more empirical study of the topic is needed. The aim of this research thereby is to empirically analyze whether a change in EU foreign policy toward a resilience paradigm has occurred in practice, following the introduction of the EUGS. The major source of data is the EU's annual action programmes for the Eastern Partnership countries, which are adopted to organize and manage external aid. The findings are mixed, with a modest tendency towards resilience-building, but no game-changing shift of paradigm is observed. I contend that the EUGS' resilience-building focus and approach of principled pragmatism should be viewed as an attempt by the EU to be honest about the foreign policy it had already been pursuing.

## **Referat**

Bu araşdırma Xəzər Universitetinin Regionşünaslıq üzrə magistr tələbəsi Nüsrət İsmayilzadə tərəfindən aparılıb və tədqiqat mövzusu belədir: “Avropa İttifaqının xarici siyasətində dayanıqlılıq dönüşü”.

Bu tezis Aİ Qlobal Strategiyasından (AİQS) əvvəl və sonra Şərqi Tərəfdaşlığında Avropa İttifaqının (Aİ) xarici siyasətinin həyata keçirilməsini araşdırır və praktikada dayanıqlılığa doğru paradigmanın dəyişikliyinə olub-olmadığını öyrənir. Əvvəlki ədəbiyyatda AİQS-in təsirləri ilə bağlı aşkar fikir ayrılığı var və bu tezis mövzusunun daha empirik öyrənilməsinin lazım olduğunu iddia edir. Beləliklə, bu tədqiqatın məqsədi AİQS-in təqdim edilməsindən sonra Aİ-nin xarici siyasətində dayanıqlılıq paradigmasına doğru dəyişikliyin praktikada baş verib-vermədiyini empirik təhlil etməkdir. Əsas məlumat mənbəyi Aİ-nin xarici yardımını təşkil etmək və idarə etmək üçün qəbul etdiyi Şərqi Tərəfdaşlığı ölkələri üçün illik fəaliyyət proqramlarıdır. Tapıntılar qarışıqdır, dayanıqlılığı artırmağa doğru kiçik meyillər müşahidə olunur, lakin paradigmanın ciddi şəkildə dəyişməsi müşahidə edilmir. Mən iddia edirəm ki, AİQS-nin dayanıqlılığın artırılmasına fokuslanması və prinsiplial pragmatizm yanaşması Aİ-nin bu vaxta qədər artıq həyata keçirməkdə olduğu xarici siyasətlə bağlı dürüst olmaq cəhdi kimi qiymətləndirilməlidir.

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## **Introduction**

Liberal values seem to be in decline for more than a decade. The 2022 report by the Freedom House shows that liberal freedoms and political rights continued to shrink worldwide in 2021 as well. The European Union, a bright match of liberal values and one of the greatest economic powers in the world, has been witnessing hardships in terms of European debt crisis, refugee crisis, Brexit, Covid-19 pandemic, the rise of far-rightist political parties inside, terrorism, Russian hybrid warfare and etc. These challenges have sparked existential concern, which seems to jeopardize the Union's stability, cohesiveness and resistance (Tocci, 2020). To the south and east of the Union the geopolitical situation is deteriorating which has raised questions about the European capacity to act as a champion of liberal values and its ambitions to act as a normative power in its foreign policy (Juncos, 2017). This thesis examines the EU's foreign policy before and after the announcement of the EU Global Strategy (EUGS) for foreign and security policy, in light of the geopolitical developments in Europe and the assertions that the EU's ambitiousness on the global arena has declined. Because the EU is one of the most globally influential players, a shift in its foreign policy is likely to have far-reaching effects for all of its members and neighboring states, rendering it crucially important for in-depth study.

It was expectable that the EUGS suggested a significant shift, when it was launched in June 2016, from its antecedent, the European Security Strategy (ESS). According to academics, as a result of geopolitical conditions inside and outside the EU, it has become harder to take ambitious liberal actions than it had been taking until recent years (Smith, 2017; Biscop, 2016; Altafin and others, 2017). To counteract this negative trend, the EUGS unveiled an ambitious strategy based on the concept of "principled pragmatism," which mentions that the Union will be driven by unequivocal and strong principles derived as much from a realistic evaluation of the existing geopolitical environment as from an idealistic desire to make the world a better place (EUGS, 2016). In the continuation of this approach, the strategy also defines the resilience of neighboring societies and states as one of the main external policy priorities of the EU. The term "resilience", which was absent in the previous strategies is used more often than democracy and human rights (Wagner and Anholt, 2016; Juncos, 2017).

The EUGS' new stress on resilience-building has been hailed as a key priority, prompting academics and policymakers to proclaim a paradigm shift in EU foreign policy that will affect how foreign policy is formulated and implemented in the upcoming decades (Smith, 2017; Grevi, 2016; Wagner and Anholt, 2016; Juncos and Joseph, 2020). Numerous researchers argue that the EUGS` concept

of pragmatism signals a move away from conventional liberal interventionist norms and values towards a resilience paradigm emphasizing security in the neighbourhood (Altafin and others, 2017; Stollenwerk 2021). However, another point of view is that the new concepts such as “resilience” or “principled pragmatism” do not necessarily bring about considerable changes to the practice (Nitoiu and Simionov, 2021). While the EUGS appears to reflect the EU’s idealistic aspirations, some scholars contend that the strategy should be judged against what the EU can practically achieve given its continuous fragmentation and endogenous diversities (Smith, 2016). These skeptics argue that many of the proclaimed changes that underpin the paradigm shift might be merely wishful thinking and excessively optimistic EU goals (ibid).

Although the EU is a prominent global actor in international arena, we apparently know little about the changes that its new strategy implies. This paper examines the claim that the move in the EU foreign policy towards resilience implies a wider shift of paradigm away from liberal interventionist strategy which has guided Western policymaking in the last decades. There have been few empirical research conducted that look into the practical implications of the new strategy. I propose that additional empirical study is needed to determine if a paradigm shift has occurred and what it could entail for the EU’s support of democracy and human rights. This research attempts to close the empirical gap by exploring the foreign policy practice of the EU in the Eastern Partnership (EaP) region using the case study of annual action programmes (AAP) for the six programme countries: Azerbaijan, Armenia, Georgia, Belarus, Ukraine and Moldova.

On one hand, some scholars regarded the launch of the EUGS as a shift of paradigm in EU foreign policy towards the resilience ideology ( Biscop, 2016; Altafin and others, 2017; Stollenwerk, 2021), while others viewed it as overly optimistic and a typical narrative change (Smith, 2016; Juncos 2017; Nitoiu and Simionov, 2021). The resilience approach can easily be dismissed as mere narrative or another label in the EU’s jargon just like the terms “comprehensive approach and effective multilateralism (Juncos 2017). However, as with these other notions, repetition resilience in EU circles may have the impact of mobilizing activity in certain areas, including defining the EU’s international role (ibid). Simultaneously, it is important to note that this concept might entail an overarching difference in EU foreign policy formulation, impacting how democratization and security policy is supported in the upcoming years.

The aim of this research is to examine whether or not a paradigm shift towards resilience in the foreign policy implementation of the European Union occurred after the adoption of the EUGS. It is important to investigate the ambiguous implications of the EUGS, as the credibility of the EU as an

actor driven by norms and values depends on the consistency and efficacy of its policies (Wagner and Anholt, 2016; Altafin and others, 2017). I intend to contribute to a better understanding of the EU's foreign policy in general, not just towards EaP countries, but also in other zones of interest, based on resilience and liberal interventionist theories in conjunction with the past research on the EUGS. The study focuses on the conduction of EU foreign policy in the EaP countries before and after the EUGS was launched. The case selection is premised on the idea that learning the EU's aims and instruments in this region is inextricably linked to the main drivers of the behaviours of the Union in its broader foreign policy (Smith, 2016; Noutcheva, 2015).

Thus, I will try to address the following research question:

Do we observe a practical shift towards resilience paradigm in the foreign policy of the European Union after the adoption of the EUGS, if yes how?

This is an essential question to address since the EU, being a prominent global actor, has an impact on the promotion of democracy and development worldwide. If there has occurred a shift towards resilience paradigm in the implementation of EU policies, it is critical to acquire as much empirical evidence as possible about the impacts of that transition. Studying more about the EUGS and its effects on the policies towards EaP, we can possibly make some generalizations about the overall foreign policy of the EU.

The thesis is structured in the following order. First, theoretical framework will be presented. Second, the research design and methodology used will be outlined where the reasons behind the selected method, case and material will be explained. Following the methodology, the previous literature will be reviewed and then a framework for the analysis will be provided. After the analysis is presented, the findings of the research will be interpreted and compared to the theoretical framework and previous literature. In the end, prospective directions for the research of the topic will be discussed.

### **Theoretical Framework**

In this section, the theoretical framework for the research will be set out. Due to the fact that the purpose of this research is to examine the assertions of a paradigm shift in the foreign policy of the EU, it is vital to understand what comprises distinct attributes and peculiarities of the resilience and liberal interventionist paradigms. Having determined what differentiates the two paradigms from each other, we can categorize narratives provided by the two paradigms and explore whether a paradigm shift occurred in practice. Thus, we should attempt to illuminate and absorb how the notions of resilience and liberal interventionism are defined in the literature, before we can conduct

a constructive study. The aim of this chapter is to provide a comprehensive explanation of the two paradigms and their use in international political narratives, focusing particularly on the EU foreign policy. Below, I will coherently review some of the most popular views about liberal interventionism and resilience which will cast a light on the two approaches and lay out a foundation for the analysis.

### *Liberal interventionism*

The liberal interventionist paradigm is based on a number of fundamental premises regarding the principles of state-building and functioning of societies, as a phenomenon peculiar to the liberal world order. In the last decades, Western foreign policy has been defined by a faith in liberal democracy, a belief in a moral duty, and a conviction in a supreme entitlement to act on behalf of universal liberal principles. Nearly all Western interventions of the last decades have been driven and justified by interveners asserting a moral obligation to protect those who are subject to human rights violations and to ensure the rule of law for the benefit of the world societies (Manea, 2017; Chandler, 2012). This approach has been an inseparable part of the Western foreign policy in post-Cold war era and is often referred as the liberal interventionist paradigm (Paris, 2014; Balthasar, 2017). Although the mechanisms varied over time, liberal values such as political liberties, human rights and democracy have been promoted by Western democracies which are motivated with the conviction that these norms are universal and relevant for all societies (Sorensen, 2011). The liberal interventionism accentuates the responsibility of foreign interveners as global guardians of liberal freedoms with the commitment to protect and secure the residents of fragile states, based on the faith in a moral right to protect liberal principles globally (Paris, 2014).

According to this paradigm, interveners are driven by the conviction that elite barriers established by corrupt governments and fragile or failing national institutions are the source of failures in the spread of a liberal international order of sustainable growth, peace, and post-conflict rehabilitation (Pugh, 2014; Chandler, 2013). In order to solve this problem, interveners use different mechanisms of foreign intervention to substitute failing institutions and governments for liberal democratic and rule-of-law frameworks. According to this approach of state-building, the governmental institutions influence and designate the consequences of social relations (Chandler, 2013; Boerbau, 2013; Joseph, 2014). These institutions are seen to act separately of grassroots social processes and to sit above the remaining part of society. This position is based on the liberal notion that, if allowed independent from elite restraints, the social area will inherently act as a force for good which prompts democratization and economic growth (Pugh, 2014; Chandler, 2013).

The idea that a market democracy or a liberal democratic government and a market-based economy, are the most solid foundation for both internal and international peace, is the second premise of liberalism (Manea, 2017). As per this paradigm, peace and democracy are supposed to be secured through exportation of the liberal model of state. This has usually meant a universal one-size-fits-all approach in practice, with mainstream liberal public structures of democracy and market frameworks being introduced to other states (Chandler, 2013). Measures to apply liberal systems in places vary from thorough reforms of constitutional structure, government and courts, to formation of political representation and structure of police and military (Manea, 2017; Chandler, 2013). Regarding the matters of agency, that is responsible for the effects of the intervention, liberal interventionists believe that this responsibility rests with the interveners themselves. Residents in failing nations are mostly seen as sufferers of failed states or government-sponsored violations of rights, and are treated accordingly (Paris, 2014; Chandler 2012). An instance of the faith in the universal reasonableness of liberal principles can be detected in the national security strategy of the United States which mentions that justice and liberty must be protected because these values are right and valid for all people and that no nation is exempt from them (The White House, 2002, P.3). As an implication of this perspective on liberal principles, the sovereignty of the states has to give space to foreign intervention in circumstances when justice, freedom, and global human rights are seen to be threatened (Newman and others, 2009; Chandler, 2012).

Critics contend that liberal interventionist paradigm has resulted in an excessive and possibly oppressive rhetoric where the liberal assumption of the entitlement to intervene is based on the perceived supreme knowledge, ethics and resources of the intervener (Chandler, 2015). The main difficulty for interveners is that the promotion of liberal principles, such as human rights and freedoms, must be tolerant of different cultures and peoples while maintaining the view that they are universal values valid for all peoples at the same time (Sorensen, 2011). Another difficulty with liberal interventionism, according to critics, is that states-interveners have attempted to implement liberal systems in methods that jeopardize damaging these values, often causing accusations of neo-imperialism and duplicity (Paris, 2014; Balthasar, 2017). Furthermore, others argue that the liberal interventionism has proven to be less effective than expected, has resulted in unforeseen outcomes and collateral effects, and has demonstrated substantial weaknesses in properly reacting to mass violence (Paris, 2014; Balthasar, 2017). Policymakers have attempted to develop universally accepted framework benchmarks for just interventions in order to avoid the systemic deficiencies of liberal interventionism. As a result of this, in 2005, the concept of responsibility to protect (R2P)



was unanimously accepted by the UN General Assembly (UNGA, 2005). But, according to some scholars, even under the R2P, initiatives ostensibly in the interests of the global community which simultaneously contradicts principles of sovereignty and non-intervention have frequently ended up being harmful (Paris, 2014; Manea, 2017). This difficulty is generally known as the paradox of the liberal peace and has grown more obvious as notions of institutionalism and constructivism have become increasingly dominant in the global peace-building and development debates (Manea, 2017). Taking into account the aforementioned constraints of liberal interventionism, policymakers have worked to devise new international governance techniques to spread liberal principles globally.

### *Resilience*

The resilience paradigm is a relatively new concept in the realm of social and political disciplines. Proponents of the resilience paradigm see opportunities for democratic progress where earlier approaches have faced opposition. Opponents of this approach, however, caution against neoliberal inclinations to pass blame and responsibility to the grassroots of society. This chapter will introduce an explanation for the resilience paradigm, as well as overview some of the most important premises of this concept.

Although the concept of resilience has long been circulated in fields such as engineering, biology, and psychology, it is a newcomer to the fields of global governance and political theory. When academics began to link the notion of resilience to liberal societal changes and global governance in the early 2000s, the concept began to have an impact on the discipline (Bourbeau, 2013). Since resilience is such a broad and multidimensional concept that spans over numerous fields and philosophies, extending from psychology to development studies, the resilience discourse has usually been approached from a variety of theoretical standpoints, resulting in conceptual ambiguity and frequent disagreements (Chandler, 2012; Bourbeau, 2013). One of the most widely understood aspects of resilience is the idea of 'bouncing back' or rebounding from crises or concussions (Brasset and others, 2013). Resilience has a large variety of meanings and interpretations in today's political theory, ranging from humanitarian relief and the environment to security policy and foreign interventions. To understand the concept of resilience, one of the most important elements is that in recent decades, new perspectives on societal life and state-building have influenced foreign policy thinking, undermining the liberal interventionism's underlying principles (Pugh, 2014). As a solution for the liberal peace paradox, policy practitioners began looking for modes of intervention that would better consider social complexity and local responsibility, leading to numerous reconsiderations of the assumptions of liberal interventionism (Paris, 2014; Chandler, 2013). In this

case, the interventions operate through appealing to the autonomy and independence of the society from the government by stressing local solutions, empowerment, capacity-building, and creativity (Cross, 2016; Brassat and others, 2013; Smith, 2017).

In contrast to the liberal interventionist idea that elite obstructions are to blame for the failure of conducting economic and democratic reforms, the resilience approach views economic and democratic problems as intrinsic to societies and people themselves (Evans and Reid, 2013; Chandler, 2013; Pugh, 2014). In order to avoid issues of sovereignty and foreign ownership, the resilience paradigm diverts attention from universal principles of liberal state-building instead focuses on local players and grassroots solutions (Altafin and others, 2017). The resilience paradigm therefore reverses the liberal notion of laissez-faire in societies, and societal engagement becomes the foundation for social progress and peace (Chandler, 2013). As a result, reform strategies emphasize assessment, peer reviews, and support for grassroots actors and bottom-up growth (Joseph, 2014). The ultimate solutions are assumed to originate from inside vulnerable societies themselves, and cannot be imposed by foreign agents; rather, they are facilitated and motivated by inculcated awareness of counterproductive behaviors. Thus, local solutions and strategies are deemed to be critical for effective transformation, placing local actors at the center of dealing with the societal problems, cooperating with the relevant partners, and enacting correct strategies (Joseph, 2014).

One significant point to note is that one of the most crucial distinctions between the two paradigms is not so much about whether interventions are carried out with coercion, but rather how responsibility of the actors are conceived (Wagner and Anholt, 2016). As previously stated, liberal interventionism views residents of unstable or failing states as victims in need of help. However, the resilience approach which places societal difficulties at the forefront of the rhetoric, instead views citizens vulnerable individuals caught in unreasonable and flawed social systems (Kaufmann, 2016). Therefore residents' agency in governance shifts from passive sufferers to participator but vulnerable actors in need of assistance and support. From the flip side, the interveners, strive to disassociate themselves from rhetoric of superior understanding, unilateral dependency, and responsibility by withdrawing their role of foreign subject (Finkenbusch, 2017). The interveners introduce themselves as facilitators of local response to local problems, instead of guardians of liberal principles (Schmidt, 2015; Bourbeau, 2013). Some academics are concerned that the promotion of liberal freedoms and values will be dismissed, resulting in the democratization versus stability dilemma,

where the more democratization measures from outside are required, the less likely they will be carried out due to the fear of destabilization (Borzen and Hullen, 2014).

Skeptics claim that that resilience should be viewed as a byproduct of other policies in the first place, and that the desire to increase resilience through foreign intervention may be too optimistic (Rhinard, 2017). Some critics perceive the resilience paradigm as a means for interventionists to avoid taking responsibility for their steps by blaming failed initiatives on the local agents (Cavelty and others, 2015). Academics who share this viewpoint frequently portray resilience as a way of governing through insecurity and view it as a mechanism for the West to maintain the status quo of its fragile neighbors (ibid). Another opponent perspective is that the goal of resilience strategy is to perpetuate a failing country's status quo in order to better control its individuals and portray the impacts of foreign interventions as inevitable, promoting a mindset that gives up long-term ambitions of opposition and development (Heath Kelly, 2015). Some scholars warn that in the areas of humanitarian relief, the resilience approach departs from the conventional needs-based approach to foreign aid, in which measures are taken only when crises arise, and seem to be primarily preventative. As a result, this has led some academics to conclude that external funds will be allocated where they are likely to yield the most results, rather than where they are needed the most. Politicians are allegedly blurring the distinction between development and humanitarian assistance by using a resilience-building strategy, resulting in foreign aids being allocated for political purposes (Dany, 2015).

To wrap up, the resilience paradigm may be characterized in a variety of ways, and scholars and politicians have diverse interpretations of it. Proponents of the approach support the argument that resilience measures help nations, society, and people cope with and alleviate the consequences of crises and shocks. However, critics argue that the resilience strategy may have unforeseen or negative effects for weak states and their residents. Preventive and capacity-building politics also might lead to a recurrence of the dilemma of democratization versus stabilization. This thesis attempts to address this debate by looking into how and to what degree the resilience paradigm is applied in practice.

## **Methodology**

The aim of this research is to scrutinize if there has occurred a shift of paradigm after the adoption of the European Union Global Strategy in 2016. I argue that there is a lack of empirical research on this study. My research uses a comparative case study in which it analyzes the object of the research

before and after the adoption of the abovementioned strategy. Comparative case studies include differences, resemblances and tendencies focusing on two or more cases which have the same goal (Gerring, 2017). In my opinion, this is the most suitable methodological approach for this research as it enables us to make an extensive analysis of a few cases and to look at the practice of the EU foreign policy. As a rule of case studies, it will have two goals: the first goal is to give explanation for the case which is researched; the second goal is attempting to have implications for a wider scope of cases. A good example of case study must enable us to implement the results of our study on a wider context. I hope this will provide us with a better insight on the foreign policy of the EU towards EaP and on the resilience paradigm in the foreign policy of the EU.

The added value of the comparative case study is its in-depth evidence, namely the research should add some new evidence to the overall knowledge of the topic that is not on the surface or easily observable (Ibid). I argue that thanks to the analysis of EU annual action programmes and the data obtained from the investigation of some foreign policy practices by the EU, this thesis will present an example of suitable data that will add to the empirical investigation in the field of EU foreign policy. The widespread opinion in international relations is that the majority of the problematic issues of the policy-making emerge not from objective characteristics of real circumstances, but from social constructs perceived and analyzed in various forms (Fairclough, 2015). Using a comparative case study and deeply investigating the material we can find out whether or not a paradigm shift has occurred in practice.

### *Case Selection*

The European Union has been depicted as an international superpower and a driver of liberal transformation (Manea, 2017). That is why the practice of its foreign policy is interesting to study. Other than being a diplomatically strong actor, the EU is one of the biggest economies, trading partners and foreign investors of the world and it is considered to be the biggest sponsor of development assistance worldwide (European Commission, 2022). Although it is a global power, much of EU's external policy is concentrated on the neighboring regions, namely the Southern and Eastern neighbourhoods. This is also enshrined in the EUGS which holds that societal and state resilience in the neighboring regions is a key strategic priority for the EU (EUGS, 2016).

Despite the Southern and Eastern neighborhoods show significant differences in terms of opportunities and challenges, they are two crucial interest zones for the EU and both comprise the European Neighborhood policy. The focus of my paper is especially Eastern neighborhood. The Eastern Partnership (EaP) is a partnership programme between the EU and six of its eastern

neighbors: Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine. The professed aims of the EaP, which was initiated by Poland and Sweden in 2009, are to support stability, security and development of the region upholding democratic values and respecting human rights. Although there are differences between the partner countries, there are some challenges which are common for the whole partnership. These challenges include domestic stability and democratization problems, economic instability, much corruption etc. (Gaub and others, 2017).

There are other areas of interest to the EU, such as the Western Balkans, the Southern neighbourhood, sub-Saharan Africa, Russia, Turkey and China. This is the larger context or population where the EU exerts economic and diplomatic influence. The results of this research should be generalizable according to the idea that the EU's targets and tools in the neighbourhood is naturally tied with overall foreign policy of the Union.

This paper argues that the Eastern neighborhood is geopolitically most important and intriguing region for the foreign security policy of the EU. On one hand, the EU does not have much political leverage on the regional countries and any foreign policy miscalculation can be harmful. On the other hand, the security and stability of the region are in the very interests of the EU. That is why the EaP is an epitome of how the EU strikes a balance between liberal values and strategic interests. By learning the EU's foreign policy towards this region, we can come up with results that apply to the EU's other areas of importance in the world as well. Considering all of these, I claim the EaP to be the most suitable case for examining the occurrence of a paradigmatic shift towards resilience building. If the research finds out that a shift of paradigm has occurred in the EaP region it would confirm the aforementioned arguments, but does not imply that a shift is definitely going to take place, also, in other regions of interest for the EU. Moreover, if the conclusion implies that a shift is not observed in the EaP region, I contend that it is not going to take place in other interested regions either.

### *Material*

To find out whether or not the proclaimed shift of paradigm has taken place, my choice is to focus on the annual action programmes (AAP) by the European Neighborhood and Partnership Instrument (ENPI) launched in 2006 and its continuation the European Neighborhood Instrument launched in 2014. This framework was designed to provide external support suggested by the EU and it was one of the overall tools presenting direct assistance for the EU's foreign policy (European Council, 2006, 2014). In order to make tangible contribution to the political study, the research must focus on the material and discussion that are in line with the political processes that are analyzed (Fairclough,

2015). The selected material must be relevant and use concrete sources of information. The AAPs are specific programmes, as they express set objectives, intervention areas, expected outcomes, implementation procedures and the amount of funding allotted for the projects (European Council, 2006). I contend that the analysis of these documents will provide us with a holistic view of the EU's foreign policy towards the region before and after the proclaimed paradigm shift. To contract the scope of research, the material has been chosen from 2012-2014, the time interval immediately before the introduction of the EUGS and the later period after the adoption 2016-2021. In 2021 the effectiveness of the ENI ended and it was merged into Global Europe. The AAPs for 2015 and are not covered as they were prepared in the same period with the EUGS and could be under the influence of the procedure. The AAPs older than 2012 are beyond the scope of this paper as it is focused on the period directly before and after the adoption of the EUGS.

I contend that we can study the reflection of the EU's foreign policy, through the analysis of the AAPs with the aforementioned theoretical framework, in the region. To get a more comprehensive view of the proclaimed shift and to confirm the results of the text analysis the paper will look at the implementation of some projects in the programme countries. This will help us to support and complement the findings of our main source of data, AAPs and their validity will be strengthened.

### **Literature review**

When the EUGS was adopted in 2016, academics and politicians received it with great interest. A group of scholars deemed it as a method for the EU to demonstrate that it is still an influential diplomatic actor in the world. However, some understood this as a strategy on the fence, with more humble ambitions (Smith, 2017). To begin with, the concept of resilience entered EU lexicon even before the EUGS. The term has been used in some EU documents regarding humanitarian aid and development since the early 2000s (Wagner and Anholt, 2016). However, "the state and societal resilience-building in the neighborhood" was mentioned for the first time as a top priority for the EU in the EUGS (EUGS, 2016).

In the EUGS, the term resilience carries a wider meaning. It spans over the fields such as judiciary, governance, civil society, democracy, the market and security policy (Wagner and Anholt, 2016). According to the EUGS, the EU intends to support its neighbors through the development of the resilience of civil society, public structures, infrastructure, services and communications. In the EUGS the resilience is defined as "the ability of states and societies to reform, thus withstanding and recovering from internal and external crises" (EUGS, 2016). Although the EUGS considers a

resilient society as having democracy, trust in public structures and prosperity, it also mentions that “there are many ways to build inclusive, prosperous and secure societies” (EUGS, 2016). Because of this ‘pragmatic’ position, critics warned that the EU is tending to prefer securitization of non-democratic states over their democratization (Biscop, 2016; Smith, 2016). According to Juncos, the EU creates a paradox by introducing principled pragmatism through resilience building. On one hand, the EU mentions that it will stay loyal to liberal values. While on the other hand, it enacts pragmatic approach where it has to give up on the moral supremacy of its values. He claims that the EU will engage in empowering and stabilizing in the region through the resilience building approach (Juncos, 2017). Opponents of the idea argue that through this policy the EU tries to be palatable for the governments who resist reforms and can be provoked (Altafin and others, 2017). According to Smith (2017), the concept of resilience should be regarded as a move away from the discourse about the promotion of liberal values (Wagner and Anholt, 2016).

Advocates of this approach believe that the EUGS balances soft and hard power through combining its ideals with realities on the ground (Wagner and Anholt, 2016). Through this pragmatist policy, the EU can override the restrictions that put by the liberal peace paradox. It is beneficial in that it unites different actors in Europe to work for their own benefit (Ibid). Nathalie Tocci (2019) argues that the role of the European Union in the world is changing towards more resilient and pragmatic position. Altafin and others (2017), deem the resilience building approach as an attenuation of the liberal rhetoric to increase the effectiveness of the promotion of human rights through concentration on societies themselves. Moreover, the EU focuses on the societal life by applying development and humanitarian programs which can gain the strategy more importance (Ibid).

Another point included in the EUGS is that it will guide the member states when setting their foreign policy agenda. Some scholars warn that the strategy can be a justification for liberal states to distance themselves from taking responsibility on themselves. It is alarming that the importance of the promotion of democracy and rule of law can be down-prioritized by the interveners (Wagner and Anholt, 2016). The rhetoric of the EU foreign policy has before been to promote democratic values, economic and individual freedoms through universal conditions (Noutcheva, 2015). Through these conditions for economic support and trade opportunities, the EU used its economic and diplomatic power to incentivize reforms in the neighboring countries. The overt correlation between democratic transformation and external aid has guided the EU’s actions in its foreign policy (Ibid). It is alarmed that the EU may overlook reforms-resisting states by concentrating on resilience and stability (Wagner and Anholt, 2016).

Some researchers are questioning the occurrence of a paradigm shift and argue that the concept of resilience is just a renaming of strategy. Skeptics are convinced that the EUGS mentions so many principles, ideals and concerns that it is nearly impossible to simultaneously reach all of them. Due to the wide context of the EUGS, the EU will probably not manage to achieve all of its goals and consequently the strategy will be deemed as an ordinary document (Smith, 2016). The ubiquitous use of the concept in the EUGS is explained by the fact that it is too vague and includes a great deal of situations. The term has intrinsically ambiguous meaning and implies several responsible actors (Juncos, 2017). The disadvantage of the concept of resilience is that its implications are not straightforward and the mechanisms and objects of resilience-building are also ambiguous (Rhinard, 2017). All this ambiguity can be detrimental for the EU itself, because its significance relies on the efficiency and consistency of its actions (Altafin and others, 2017). Another argument is that vagueness about reliable EU potential and the great number of goals mentioned in the context of resilience is not practically relevant and the overall goal of resilience-building in the interest areas is too optimistic (Smith, 2016). Critics also mention that the EU does not point out how it is going to balance assistance to undemocratic regimes with its goal to spread democratic values, human rights and liberties that such governments dislike (Cavelty and others, 2015).

Considering all this previous research we learn that scholars disagree on the implications of the EUGS and the concept of resilience. We observe two approaches in the previous research. Some academics argue that increased focus on the concept of resilience points to a new approach in foreign policy while others claim the change only consists of new style of wording. In any case, one thing is clear that the unprecedented focus on the resilience-building by the EUGS is a phenomenon that was absent in the older strategies and it might possibly imply a change of foreign policy of the EU. However, the thing is that there is a lack of clarity as to which degree any practical shifts have been observed in the EU policy-making. I argue that additional empirical research is needed on this issue.

### **Framework of Analysis**

To examine our research question and investigate if the suggested paradigm shift has had any practical manifestation, we need to methodologically operationalize the theories. In order to analyze the data obtained from the material we need to formulate an analytical tool by outlining the theoretical information about the concept. One method to build up an analytical framework for the investigation of qualitative data is to focus on different categories that are used in political theory. The upside of using categories as a foundation of analytical framework is that they are



comparatively relevant to determine and they enable us to conduct a comparison (Kristina and Bergstrom, 2017).

Through the analytical framework the overall characteristics of the resilience building and liberal interventionism paradigms are briefly set out. The analysis will include the investigation of annual action programmes(AAP) for the abovementioned period on the basis of categorized questions. The analysis ensures that the categories extend to all directions of interest and they do not overlap with one another (Ibid). At the same time, we need to demonstrate that the framework is relevant for the analyzed data and the results of the research are applicable in the framework. I claim that following the two abovementioned theories, the analytical framework responds to these criteria. Through this framework, the findings of the research will impartially demonstrate how the foreign policy of the EU has been carried out practically and to identify which paradigms cover these actions. Following the literature review and theoretical framework presented in the previous sections, I contend that the two opponent paradigms of resilience building and liberal interventionism are categorized into four aspects or categories. These categories will help us look through the EU foreign policy from various aspects in both periods. The comprehensive understanding of the observed changes will be gained through the analysis. To verify a shift of paradigm, we need to prove that there is a shift from liberal interventionism towards resilience-building in all categories. However, as the third category of responsible agents is the most important one, it will have a decisive impact on the outcomes of this research.

The first category focuses on the aims of the foreign actions of the EU. The aims of the EU external policy are suitable to our research as they enable us to understand the ideals behind the actions. What are the long-term aims of the actions? Despite the previous research tells us that both approaches attempt to present economic and democratic transformation, they bifurcate when it comes to how the changes will take place. One believes the change will occur through the construction of liberal systems, while the other strives for the enhancement of local actors and resilient state.

The second category concentrates on the means of the implementation of EU policies. It concerns who are the targets of the policies and what methods are proposed to use by the EU documents. According to literature, the means and methods suggested by the theories largely vary, that is why they can help define which paradigm is selected. From the perspective of liberal interventionist policy the top-down approach is preferred and the focus is on the elites and government bodies. In

resilient paradigm, the bottom-up approach is employed and the focus is on the empowerment of individuals and societies.

Third aspect is the agents that are responsible for changes. This category has the most crucial role in the analysis as the concept of agency is a main determinant between the two approaches. According to scholars, the responsibilities of the interveners and the intervened considerably differ from the lenses of the liberal interventionism and resilience. As I mentioned in the theory section, the former sees the West as the guarantor of and responsible for the reforms, while the latter puts the responsibility on the locals and focuses on internal ownership. The resilience paradigm assesses the role of the West just as a facilitator of the changes.

The fourth category is focused on used implementation tools which explain the direct methods employed by the EU to reach its objectives. Tools of implementation vary in different policy levels, but they cover mechanisms that have coercive or softer character, such as imposition of sanctions restrictions or human rights articles in agreements, policy recommendations, enhancing law enforcement or technical support. This category also concerns the crucial dimension of tailor-made approaches such as twinning programmes or improvement of media freedom and is pivotal to evaluate programmes (see Graph 1).

*Graph 1. Categorization framework*

<b>Category</b>	<b>Resilience-building</b>	<b>Liberal interventionism</b>
Aims	Building a resilient state	Building a liberal state
Means of implementation	Bottom-up, individual/societal/grassroots focus	Top-down, state/institutional focus
Responsible agents	Local responsibility, interveners are facilitators	Western responsibility, interveners are protectors
Implementation tools	Empowering, tailor-made instruments, twinning	Coercive, universal instruments, conditional agreements, human rights clauses

To gain a better understanding of the findings of our research, we can indicate the position of our results on a scale from *liberal interventionism* to *resilience building* with a *combined approach* in the middle. The last one also varies on the dimension from liberal-based to resilience-based combined approach. This will enable us to categorize all our results over the conditional scale. To minimize the arbitrariness of the conclusions, I will employ a very conservative form of

categorization where the debatable interpretations will be evaluated after the most conspicuous observations.

### **Findings**

In this part I will provide the findings derived from the textual analysis, beginning with the observation made for the period before the proposition of the EUGS. The analysis has been built upon the four categories of the abovementioned framework and the findings before and after the adoption of the EUGS have been compared. As I mentioned in the section above, the evidence retrieved from the analysis is assessed on the labeling scale, ranging on the interval from the approach of *liberal interventionism* to approach of *resilience building*.

### **Aims of actions**

**Before the EUGS.** Concerning the first category, the investigated matter was what were the overarching aims of the policies. All annual action programmes include a part in which the overall objectives of the programmes are mentioned and often they are additionally divided into specific sub-objectives. That is why there are several objectives in each AAP that reinforce one another to an extent. In the period before the EUGS, the aims of the EU are mainly fixated upon the assistance for the institutions and governments and enhancement of law enforcement and judicial system in the Eastern partnership countries. Moreover, other than sharing of experience and development of institutional capabilities, most of the AAPs also include objectives targeting development of labour market, diversification of economies and fostering regional prosperity. An evident example that corresponds to both approaches of liberal interventionism and resilience building is the 2014 AAP for Moldova, in which the presented objectives are as follows: “*a) to enhance the institutional and human resource capacity of public administrations to elaborate and implement policy and to ensure the efficient and effective delivery of high-quality public services and; b) to support the Republic of Moldova to strengthen its economic, social and territorial cohesion in an environmentally sustainable fashion, developing rural areas and increasing the competitiveness of the agri-food sector through modernization and market integration*”<sup>1</sup>

This episode illustrates that the aims of the EU are to develop the ability of the Moldovan public institutions to build up and carry out efficient policies and services and to strengthen the sustainable local development across the country through integration. As we see, the institutions-directed aims are accompanied by goals of developing the rural territories and strengthening special local sectors that are lagging behind in modernization. These presented aims demonstrate a wider perception of

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<sup>1</sup> Annual Action Programme for Moldova for 2014. P.2.

state-building that tilts towards a combined approach in the aforementioned dimensional scale, albeit with an emphasis on liberal interventionism.

Some of the documents have a greater emphasis on the institutional changes. For example, in the AAP for Armenia for 2012 the set out objectives included: *“a) to develop a more independent, transparent, accountable, accessible and efficient judicial system; b) to foster enhanced trade relations between Armenia and the EU in the context of the negotiations for the DCFTA; c) to support Armenia to negotiate, conclude and implement new contractual relations with the EU.”*<sup>2</sup>

The set objectives in this fragment are corresponding to the period and encompass expression of two of the long-term goals of the EU regarding the EaP: to improve the situation with the rule of law and to enhance closer relations with the partnership countries. Following the objectives indicated in the AAP for 2012, the EU ostensibly intends liberal reforms in Armenia and poses the AAP in the approach of liberal interventionism.

However, not all the AAPs prior to the EUGS pursued the same goals. A prominent example for this is the AAP of 2012 in favor of Belarus. The presented objectives here are: *“to enhance people-to-people contacts between the EU and Belarusian society in order to foster the transfer of best practices and encourage mutual understanding, and to promote the driving forces of a green economy (legal rules, economic stimuli etc.).”*<sup>3</sup>

The Belarusian AAP for 2013 also aims at contributing to the improvement of healthcare of the people of Belarus, supporting development of the regions<sup>4</sup>.

The 2014 AAP in favor of Belarus also places an emphasis on social inclusion, development of human capital, broadening the offers of education system, apart from respecting human rights and democracy<sup>5</sup>.

In all AAPs for Belarus for the period prior to the introduction of the EUGS, there are objectives intended towards the people of Belarus and despite not all objectives have this element, it indicates that the EU tailored its aims taking into account the position of the country that it dealt with. Emphasizing empowerment of the local actors and promotion of development of the regions, the majority of the AAPs for Belarus tilt towards the resilience paradigm and represent an alteration of EU policy delivery in the period before the adoption of the EUGS.

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<sup>2</sup> Annual Action Programme for Armenia for 2012. P.2.

<sup>3</sup> Annual Action Programme for Belarus for 2012. P.2

<sup>4</sup> Annual Action Programme for Belarus for 2013. P.2

<sup>5</sup> Annual Action Programme for Belarus for 2014. P.2

Regarding Azerbaijan, the AAP for 2012 illustrates an unequivocal focus on the liberal interventionist approach. The followed aims in this document are supporting institutions that in charge of the implementation of the agreements between the EU and Azerbaijan. In addition to raising the capacity of certain public administrations and diversification of the economy, the objectives of the AAP for the following year included diminishing the regional disparities in Azerbaijan<sup>6</sup>. While this can be deemed as a minor example connoting to our resilience approach, the liberal interventionist weight of the documents held itself in the Azerbaijani AAP for 2014 as well. The document follows:” *to contribute to economic diversification by improving the education system while continuing efforts to improve democracy and human rights respect in Azerbaijan*”<sup>7</sup>.

However, the aims followed in the AAPs for Ukraine differ from that of Belarus, for example. The document for 2012 stresses raising capacities of Ukrainian institutions to formulate the Association Agreements, integration of Ukrainian migration system with that of Europe and allowing international financial assistance to promote energy and environmental projects. Here we observe a mere focus by the EU on the Ukrainian government and institutions to reform their policies<sup>8</sup>.

The Ukrainian AAP for 2013 enlarges its objectives touching upon various intentions, such as: “*a) to support the social, economic and territorial cohesion of Ukraine; b) to give further support to the implementation of the National Environmental Policy, in line with EU standards, norms and agreed priorities under the EU-Ukraine Association Agreement c) to promote sustainable and inclusive growth and to contribute to economic reforms and the gradual integration of Ukraine’s economy into the European Union’s Internal Market; d) to effectively raise Ukrainian institutions’ capacities in the preparation and implementation of the EU-Ukraine Association Agreement*”<sup>9</sup>. As in the case of AAP for the previous year, this document is also mainly stressing the goals concerning reforms that the public institutions of Ukraine should go through. The local actors and areas are not included in these objectives.

Due to the fragile situation in Ukraine, the EU did not manage to finalize a multi-annual programming exercise in Ukraine in 2014. As an equivalent of that the Commission implemented a Special Measure in favor of Ukraine. The outlined objectives in the Special Measure also included supporting stabilization of the economic situation, helping with transition encouraging political and

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<sup>6</sup> Annual Action Programme for Azerbaijan for 2013. P. 2

<sup>7</sup> Annual Action Programme for Azerbaijan for 2014. P. 2

<sup>8</sup> Annual Action Programme for Ukraine for 2012. P.2

<sup>9</sup> Annual Action Programme for Ukraine for 2013. P.2

economic reforms, with the involvement of civil society<sup>10</sup>. Unlike the Ukrainian AAPs of the previous 2 years the SM for 2014 have an element of non-state participation. However, the majority of the long-term goals and objectives are assimilation and alignment of the partnership countries with the EU. This evidence corresponds to liberal interventionist approach to state-building.

When we summarize the observations from the AAPs for all the 6 countries for the years previous to the EUGS, it becomes obvious that the overall inclination of the aims is tilting towards institutional improvement and territorial development. The EU seems to pursue a general liberal template of formulation of the goals. However, some examples show a distinguished approach with special resilience-oriented aims for selected countries. However, the overall observation concerning the aims for the term prior to the EUGS is that most of the AAPs tend towards the liberal interventionist paradigm with certain elements of resilience-building approach.

### **Following the EUGS**

Similar to the preceding period the often reiterated objectives in the AAPs are raising institutional capacity, territorial development and economic diversification. Some AAPs contain an extended list of objectives which seems to encompass the aspects that correspond to both resilience and liberal interventionism. An example which is illustrative of the AAPs covering objectives varying over the dimensional scheme is the AAP of 2016 for Azerbaijan. This document divides its objectives into financial, economic and judicial governance. The first one concerns with the improvement of fiscal policy, the second one pertains to the exportation of experience of small and medium-sized entrepreneurship and the third one considers the enhancement of the accessibility of justice in Azerbaijan<sup>11</sup>. In this case, three forms of objectives are stated and they demonstrate a variety of aims with aims extending from public administrations to individuals and vulnerable groups. The improvement of the financial system and judicial government are mere liberal interventionist aims, however, they are complemented with the intentions of local empowerment pertinent to resilience building paradigm. The overall aims of the Azerbaijani AAP for 2016, thus demonstrate a combined approach with the elements of both paradigms.

The Azerbaijani AAPs for 2017 and 2018 also appear to feature a combined approach. For example, the 2018 AAP set the objectives as follows: *“1) enhance education and training sector, relevant to the needs of the labour market; 2) align competency-based education standards with occupational*

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<sup>10</sup> Special Measure for Ukraine for 2014. P.2

<sup>11</sup> Annual Action Programme for Azerbaijan for 2016. P.2.

*standards of strategic economic sectors; and 3) develop, pilot and implement curricula and teaching/training materials*”<sup>12</sup>. In this extraction, we can observe the intentions to conduct both institutional and non-institutional transformation to solve the educational problems.

The 2021 Individual measure towards Azerbaijan is more prone to refer to the term resilience as a part of objectives. The document implies spurring Azerbaijan towards socio-economic rehabilitation and resilience, focusing on sustainable and inclusive development in rural areas and on formulation of a more resilient health system. The main emphasis here is on the local empowerment of the entities, despite a mention of systematic changes in the field of healthcare.

After the adoption of the EUGS, we can observe a change in the formulation of the objectives in the AAP documents. It is explained by the fact that the Eastern Partnership program is an ambitious strategy and some partner countries are seeking more comprehensive agreements than others. The EU is set to take into account not only its own aspirations but also that of the partner countries. The advantage of this situation is that the EU keeps the 6 partnership countries within one framework, despite they have different aims. This is a manifestation of resilience-building approach with tailored relations and context-specific aims. The other sign of a changed approach is the beginning of the use of the resilience concept among the objectives of the documents which was absolutely absent in the AAPs before the introduction of the EUGS.

The concept of resilience started to be used among the objectives of the documents as early as in 2017 Georgian and Moldovan AAPs. Hence the presented objectives in the Georgian AAP for 2017 were to support socio-economic growth of the regions of Georgia and to enhance economic resilience and growth via human capital development<sup>13</sup>. It is obvious that this document tends towards resilience-building approach with liberal elements accompanying it. However, the AAP for Georgia for the following year has a significant stress on the government itself: *“1) Increasing the security of Georgian citizens by strengthening good governance and the rule of law in Georgia; 2) reinforcing economic governance and democratic accountability in Georgia; and 3) deepening political, economic and trade relations between the EU and Georgia, raising awareness about EU support to Georgia and enhancing mobility of persons between the EU and Georgia*”<sup>14</sup>.

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<sup>12</sup> Annual Action Programme for Azerbaijan for 2018. P.2

<sup>13</sup> Annual Action Programme for Georgia for 2017. P.2

<sup>14</sup> Annual Action Programme for Georgia for 2018. P.2

The AAP in favor of Georgia for 2019, again, puts its objectives mostly from the resilience-building approach. Among other things, it mentions protection of consumers, boosting of exportation via improvement of food safety<sup>15</sup>.

In the AAP in favor of Moldova for 2017, the concept of resilience has begun to be used where the pursued objectives were the empowerment of the citizens, civil participation in the decision-making, supporting resilient economic development, promotion of EU values including, media freedom, improvement of the livelihood of the population via reducing health, protection of environment and promotion of smart exploitation of natural resources<sup>16</sup>. This example indicates an equivocal tendency towards the resilience-building approach with aims directed towards the empowerment of individuals and improvement of living standards of the population. However, these cases are in minority in the period following the EUGS and the majority of the objectives are to assist with raising institutional capacity, social and economic growth, sustainable development and to support business environment. The investigation of AAPs succeeding the launch of the EUGS demonstrates that the aims are resembling the earlier period, however with a difference that some of them express conspicuous reference to the resilience concept. All in all, we can put the aims of the AAPs of this period in the combined approach.

### **Conclusion**

Concerning the category of aims, the analysis indicated that the liberal interventionism approach was observed in both periods with coherent objectives in majority of AAPs preceding and succeeding the adoption of the EUGS. However, there is a small difference in tendencies of both periods. Regarding the older AAPs, most programmes illustrated the approach of liberal interventionism, with certain elements of a more combined inclination. With regards to the more recent period, the main emphasis is on the objectives covering citizens` empowerment, regional prosperity, support for non-state actors, through the mention of resilience-building. The general investigations of the aims of the period after the EUGS points to a small change of approach away from liberal interventionism, albeit with a steady emphasis on institutional support.

### **Means of implementation**

Regarding the category of means of implementation, the questions posed to the documents were which methods to achieve the objectives were proposed and which partners were targeted. With respect to project, various actions for finance management are used, mentioned frequently as

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<sup>15</sup> Annual Action Programme for Georgia for 2019. P.2

<sup>16</sup> Annual Action Programme for Moldova for 2017. P.2



management modes. The different types of management are defined according to the level of involvement of the European Commission in their arrangement and can be wrapped up into three modes of management<sup>17</sup>. The first type is direct management, which means the funding is directly managed by the Commission. The implementation tasks are fulfilled directly by the departments of the Commission, at the headquarters, in the EU delegations to respective countries or via executive agencies; no third parties are involved. In this mode, the Commission or the according agency acts as a major administration and it decides on behalf of the partner states. An example of such projects is the programme for Competitiveness of Enterprises and Small and Medium-sized Enterprises. The second mode is called indirect management in which the funding management is carried out by partner organizations or other authorities within or beyond the EU. In this mode the funding is partly or completely implemented through the support of entities, such as national authorities of partner states, international organizations, relevant authorities of the EU member states etc. The greatest part of the EU funding allotted for humanitarian aid and development is carried out under the indirect mode. The third mode is shared management in which the funding is jointly managed by the European Commission and national authorities of member states, such as ministries. About 70% of EU funding is managed this way<sup>18</sup>.

### **Pre-EUGS period**

The analysis of the pre-EUGS period indicates that almost every AAP funding is run with direct management, with some examples of a harmony indirect or shared mode. Information about this category is provided in each annex to the AAPs. The programmes with the use of indirect management, are primarily alongside with international institutions, such as the International Organization for Migration, European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (ERBD), the World Health Organization and the United Nations Development Programme. In some AAPs, the authorities of EU member states were assigned budget management tasks instead of the Commission.

All AAPs include a section where the stakeholders and beneficiaries of the programme are mentioned. The investigation of the pre-EUGS period shows that nearly all programmes, except for some, mention the government or other public institutions as the beneficiaries of the actions. Even in the cases where other actors are the targets, such as Civil Society Organizations (CSO) or SMEs, the state institutions still have a main role in the programme. The AAPs for Azerbaijan in the pre-EUGS

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<sup>17</sup> European Commission, 2022

<sup>18</sup> European Commission, 2022

period are the representative example of this tendency. In the Azerbaijani AAP for 2014, one of the introduced actions is support for CSOs via grant agreements implementing direct management. The major beneficiaries for this programme are Ministry of Justice (MoJ), local executive agencies in certain cities, the State Civil Society Organizations Council, the Ombudsman office, and the Civil Society Facility National Platform. Although, the focus of the action is the capacity-building of the CSOs, state institutions are accentuated the necessary targets. The program also mentions that freedom of civil society will not be effective without cooperation with the MoJ of Azerbaijan<sup>19</sup>. This example shows that the EU mainly concentrates on top-down administrative targets as they are supposed to have necessary authority over the improvement of civil society. Drawing on the arguments mentioned in the theoretical framework, this approach demonstrates a liberal perception of how societal transformation should be supported. Despite the fact that there are also references to bottom-up actions in the AAPs, the overall accentuation is on the institutional targets. About this particular document, we can say that it is in line with the concept of liberal interventionism, tending a bit towards a combined approach.

Most of the AAPs for the period before the EUGS, do not mention bottom-up means and beneficiaries at all. They use entirely institutional approach. An instance for that is 2012 Moldovan AAP in which the aim is the capacity-building of Moldovan people for the labor market. In this document, the EU mentions that the Ministry of education is in charge of presenting qualifications. New curriculum methods need to be approved by this ministry. The EU mentions Ministries of Labor and Economy, Republican Centre for vocational education and training (VET) development, National Employment Agency, National Federations on Employees and Employers, Committees on Food Industry and Agriculture, and on Construction and the National Council on Occupational Standards, Certification and Accreditation as the other major targets<sup>20</sup>. Despite the fact that this document the EU follows bottom-up goals raising the employability of the citizens, the method and means of implementation are from top-down approach. Although the EU ostensibly seeks to include a large variety of stakeholders, the major emphasis is still on the governmental institutions. Therefore, this AAP can be deemed as a bright example of liberal interventionist approach.

The AAPs for Armenia for the pre-EUGS period have also mainly focused on the governmental administrations as its stakeholders. For example, the 2012 Armenian AAP stipulates: *“The main stakeholder of the programme is the Ministry of Justice, which is in charge of developing policy for*

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<sup>19</sup> Annual Action Programme for Azerbaijan for 2014. Annex 2, p.35.

<sup>20</sup> Annual Action Programme for Moldova for 2012. Annex 3. P. 6

*the whole justice sector. Other stakeholders are Council of Justice, Council of Court Chairmen (executive body of judicial self-governance), Judicial Department, Judicial School, Prosecutor's Office, Chamber of Advocates, Police and relevant Civil Society Organisations*"<sup>21</sup>. However, this phenomenon is slightly mitigated in the AAP for 2013. This document has referred to societal organizations apart from government institutions. For example, at national level industry trade associations, universities, industry sector clusters, innovation centres and at regional level SME associations, local chambers of trade, business centres, higher and secondary education institutions and local civil society organizations are mentioned as stakeholders<sup>22</sup>. But in the AAP for the following year, we again observe a strong emphasis of government institutions as stakeholders. For example, Ministry of Economy is described as being in charge of organization of private sector development-oriented policies and National Competitiveness Foundation of Armenia as playing important role in the coordination of overall competitiveness agenda and also guarding policy coherence across the different entities and sectors. A mention of strengthening the Small and Medium-sized Enterprises development national centre of Armenia and Enterprise Incubator Foundation is also made<sup>23</sup>. Hence, we can argue that in these documents the EU plans to use liberal interventionist methods in its policy implementation, slightly leaning towards combined actions.

However, in this category, there are exceptions from often used institutional approach, just like in the category of aims. For example, the 2012 AAP for Belarus, which showed resilient tendencies in the category of aims, has elements of resilience-building in the category of means as well. The major stakeholders of the programme are national and regional state institutions in the coherent fields, local administrations, public structures in respective sectors, private enterprises involved in science and education, private culture and industries, media, non-governmental organizations in the fields of education, research, youth, performing and visual arts communities. The targets of the programme include students, researcher, public servants, activists, journalists, artists and representatives of business organizations<sup>24</sup>. This example shows that the EU applies a comprehensive approach by emphasizing support for national and regional public institutions and entities separated from the government, including the civil society at the same time. Following the aforementioned theories, the EU's approach in this document should be deemed as a typical example of combined approach tending towards resilience-building. However, this case is an

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<sup>21</sup> Annual Action Programme 2012 for Armenia. Annex 1. P.7

<sup>22</sup> Annual Action Programme 2013 for Armenia. Annex 2. P.7

<sup>23</sup> Annual Action Programme 2014 for Armenia. Annex 1. P.13

<sup>24</sup> Annual Action Programme 2012 for Belarus. Annex 2. P.5

exception and the analysis indicates that the programmes regarding Belarus present the most expressive resilience-building methods in the pre-EUGS period. As we presented through the examples above, most of the actions for the period previous to the EUGS contain a top-down approach in which the target groups are primarily government bodies. Entities separated from government, such as civil society organizations and interest unions are mentioned, but they have an accompanying role.

### **Post-EUGS period**

In the period after the launch of the EUGS, there are no significant changes observed in the modalities of financial management. The direct mode of management is the major mode, complemented with elements of indirect and shared management via similar type of entities as in the preceding period. However, differences are detected in the targets and approaches to the implementation of actions. A popular means of implementation among the AAPs for the period succeeding the launch of EUGS can be detected in the Ukrainian AAPs. The Special Measure (SM) for 2016, for example, has objectives as assisting Ukraine to devise and carry out necessary reforms set forth by the Association Agreement. The mode of financial management is mixed, containing elements of direct, indirect and joint management. The implementation of the measures implied focusing on governance issues, legislative development, evidence-based policy, media, transport, financial services, labor inspections, reforms developed through EBRD- Ukraine Stabilization and Sustainable Growth Multi-Donor Account, high-level advice to the authorities, administrative reforms, business Ombudsman, National Reform Council<sup>25</sup>. The key targets in this measure are the governmental authorities. This programme is not completely top-down, as there are also elements of bottom-up targets. That is why it can be deemed to use combined approach leaning towards liberal interventionism.

The 2018 AAP for Ukraine indicates a more balanced position in terms of its means of implementation. The Action displays 3 components: “1) *An additional EU contribution will be provided to a Multi-Donor Trust Fund (MDTF) in order to support the activities of the Ukrainian Energy Efficiency Fund (EEF or the Fund) created to implement country-wide energy efficient programmes (...)* 2) *A complementary action will be aimed at raising awareness and grass-roots civic support for energy efficiency investments at local level, to familiarise about energy saving measures and to promote the support mechanisms of the EEF.* 3) *An accompanying measure in training energy auditors is foreseen to prepare specialists to support the implementation of energy*

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<sup>25</sup> Special Measure 1. For Ukraine for 2016. Annex 2. P.2

*efficiency reforms and preparation and verification of activities of the EEF*”<sup>26</sup>. The actions in this document show a focus on the local actors. The mentioned stakeholders are Prime Minister, Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Regional Development, Housing, Construction and Communal Services, the Parliament, local authorities, civil society organizations, including Home Owners Associations, private and state-owned banks, international donors. This is a harmony of both state institutions and non-state actors, therefore can be evaluated as a combined approach in our measuring scale. In fact, the actions to assist national authorities and non-state actors simultaneously, were present in the pre-EUGS period, but it has been accentuated more clearly and often in the programmes following the EUGS.

Despite the EUGS seems to have given rise to a reviewed approach to the cooperation in the later period, not all actions employed the same methods and means and there are typical cases of an absolute top-down approach in the post-EUGS period as well. In the Georgian AAP concerning 2017, the general objective is to support socio-economic and regional growth through indirect and direct management. The major target of this programme is the government of Georgia. The major measures to take included making legal system fairer and faster for businesses, sophistication of financial infrastructure and business development through integration<sup>27</sup>. This document highlights the official top-down influence of the authorities over the structural reforms. Therefore the EU uses a conventional liberal interventionist approach of institutional development and official targets. Although this instance is not representative of the general analysis of the period, it indicates that the EU did not totally alter its approach from the more previous period. The AAP for Georgia concerning 2018 also stresses the state structures as its major stakeholder, however, still mentioning non-state actors: *“The main stakeholders of the programme are the Ministry of Finance (MoF), the Budget Committee of the Parliament, the State Audit Office and the State Procurement Agency of Georgia. The Administration of the Government, which steers public administration reforms, is also closely associated with this programme. (...) Stakeholders also include bilateral donors (mainly USAID and some EU Member States) and International Financial Institutions (IFIs) involved in different forms of support to public finance reforms and, most importantly, civil society organisations which have been, and will be closely associated throughout the preparation and the implementation of this important governance programme”*<sup>28</sup>. Overall, AAPs for Georgia in this period show the patterns of liberal interventionism leaning towards combined approach.

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<sup>26</sup> Annual Action Programme for Ukraine for 2018. Annex 1. P. 2-3.

<sup>27</sup> Annual Action Programme for Georgia for 2017. Annex 1. P.2

<sup>28</sup> Annual Action Programme for Georgia for 2018. Annex 2. P.6-7

However, there are unconventional cases for this period, such as the AAP for Azerbaijan of 2017. In this document, interaction with non-public enterprises and entities from the grassroots is a principal tendency of the action. The project is implemented through direct financial management the aim of which was to assist the government in order to strengthen economic diversification while supporting development of the regions at the same time. The target groups and final beneficiaries of the project were producers and producer groups in the vegetable and food sector, Small and Medium enterprises, cooperatives, communities and groups of action, agriculture groups supported by communities and civil society organizations active in this field and the rural population of Lankaran<sup>29</sup>. In this document, the target groups are at the societal level in a particular region aiming at a significant transformation of the economy. Although this specific programme is geared towards the development of a particular region, the implications of this method is observed in most AAPs of the post-EUGS period. Having mentioned that the prerogatives of the resilience paradigm imply bottom-up interaction and tailored support for actors the AAP of 2017 in favor of Azerbaijan represent the resilience building approach. But this trend is not continued in the following AAPs for Azerbaijan.

The main stakeholders of the action programmes remain governmental institutions at national, regional and local levels in AAPs for the following years. The AAP of 2018 or the Multi-Annual Action programme of 2019-2020 for Azerbaijan both emphasize public institutions as their key stakeholders, but also have mentioned some targets for non-state actors<sup>30 31</sup>. These are examples of the manifestation of liberalism-oriented combined approach to the implementation methods of the actions.

## **Conclusion**

The study of the category of implementation means indicates that the liberal interventionist approach holds itself in both analyzed periods. The presented modes of financial management were primarily the same in both periods with a major focus on direct management and several examples of indirect and shared management. In the period before the launch of the EUGS, the main targets were public institutions and agencies. The top-down approach was prevalent, although some elements of bottom-up targets were also detected. The general analysis of the period succeeding the EUGS demonstrates that civil society actors, small and medium-sized enterprises and other grassroots entities appear to have a more often presence than before. Institutional approaches of

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<sup>29</sup> Annual Action Programme for Azerbaijan for 2017. Annex 1. P.5

<sup>30</sup> Annual Action Programme for Azerbaijan for 2018. Annex. P. 6

<sup>31</sup> Multiannual Action Programme for Azerbaijan for 2019-2020. Annex. P.6

targeting governmental bodies are still taking part in nearly every project, but they are accompanied in a larger extent by the elements of bottom-up approach of non-state entities. Having done the overall analysis of the implementation means, the revelation is that a general tendency in method appears to slightly shift towards a combined approach in or dimensional scheme, but the presence of liberal interventionist approach retained.

## **Responsible agents**

### **Pre-EUGS period**

The operational questions presented to the material examine which agent or agents carry the responsibility for the implementation of policies and who is deemed to have ownership of the activities, for the category of responsible agents. In most of the actions investigated for the period prior to the EUGS, governments, relevant ministries and impacted agencies have been granted direct or indirect ownership for the actions. An instructive example is the AAP for Georgia concerning 2014. The programme implies that the agreements between the EU and Georgia would be delivered via direct and indirect management with UN and European organizations. Despite the stakeholders of this specific action vary from the government bodies to small and medium enterprises and regional actors, the ownership for carrying out the project is on the Ministry of Economy and Sustainable Development (MoESD). This ministry is also responsible for the Entrepreneurship Development Agency and Georgian Agency for Technology and Innovation<sup>32</sup>. In this example the accountable agent for the implementation of the project is a ministry or the national government. As we mentioned in the theoretical framework one of the most outstanding discrepancies between the two paradigms is the role of agencies. The liberal institutionalism draws on the idea that the interveners are responsible for and owners of the state-building. Conversely, the paradigm of resilience holds that the responsibility should be internalized and the external intervener should not have the ownership for the processes. Having known this, we can claim that the AAPs just like the last example follow the approach of resilience as the ownership is under the government bodies.

The next popular trend in the AAPs for this period is the shared accountability between diverse national institutions and non-state stakeholders. These actions regard governments as the main implementing actor, but they are supported and monitored by external agencies. A telling example for this approach is the Ukrainian AAP for 2013. The project contains a mixed method through shared and direct management. The aim of the programme is the promotion of the implementation of agreements with the EU. The accountable stakeholders for the activities are the affected

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<sup>32</sup> Annual Action Programme for Georgia for 2014. Annex 2. P.39

ministries and agencies, related civil society organizations and also the donor community<sup>33</sup>. Such programmes accentuate the government bodies and civil society groups as the owners and main participants in carrying out the EU-EaP understandings. The EU, which is referred as the donor community, is sometimes mentioned as an indirect owner with secondary responsibility at most, albeit with a monitoring function. Because of the more active roles of the foreign actors in these AAPs they take the middle position in our dimensional scheme and present a combined approach with themselves. These AAPs mix the elements of liberal institutionalism and resilience-building, tending towards one or the other end of the dimensional spectrum.

However, some of the investigated AAPs for this period share more of accountability with the governmental bodies. The 2013 AAP in favor of Armenia can be deemed as an illustrative example for such approach. The collective objective of the programme is to support the government to carry out its agreements with the EU. In the prioritization and coordination of the fields of support the key agents are the Ministry of Economy and the National coordinator of EU support, alongside with affected civil society groups and the delegation of the EU. The Minister of Economy is granted to co-chair the steering committee of Comprehensive Institution Building programme, together with the EU delegation. The steering committee is comprised of all affected ministries and agencies that provide coordination with other donors in their fields<sup>34</sup>. In this document, the EU delegation shares a part of the responsibilities of implementation with the minister. Taking part in the steering committees, the EU undertakes a more active role than the abovementioned cases, where the EU supervises the activities of governments. Although, it does not mean to go as far as to claim that the accountability and ownership is in line with liberal interventionist character, it demonstrates an extent of external governance that regards the role of the EU as an intervener from outside. This sort of AAPs can be deemed as the examples of a combined approach leaning towards liberal interventionist edge on the scale.

Not all programmes contain elements of external responsibility and monitoring over the implementation of actions. They merely focus on the governmental bodies to oversee the use of provided assistance. An example for this approach is the AAP in favor of Moldova concerning 2014. An action within this programme mentions: *“The donor coordination in Moldova is led by the Government of Moldova. There is a formal donor coordination mechanism approved by the Government that sets-forth all the procedural aspects and institutional grounds for coordination of*

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<sup>33</sup> Annual Action Programme for Ukraine for 2013. Annex 4. P.85

<sup>34</sup> Annual Action Programme for Armenia for 2013. Annex 3. P. 4



*bilateral and multilateral foreign aid. In addition, the State Chancellery organises annual donor meetings and presents annual reports on the use of foreign assistance provided to Moldova*<sup>35</sup>. This project does not mention the external actors in the coordination of foreign aid, stressing solely the function of the government. This approach chimes well with the resilience-building character of accountability over the implementation of the projects.

### **Post-EUGS period**

The findings from the period succeeding the adoption of the EUGS indicate a trend of governmental accountability and ownership, just as in the previous period. But some cases show that the EU applies a joint ownership via steering committees or with other actors such as civil society groups or numerous related organizations. An illustrative example of this tendency might be found in the Armenian AAP concerning 2017 in which the overall objective is to promote justice reform and enhance its judicial system according to EU standards. Although the state has the primary ownership and the Ministry of Justice (MoJ) is accountable body for carrying out policies, the accountability is shared with the EU delegation. The programme mentions that the supervision over the action will be entrusted to a committee which is co-chaired by the Ministry of Economic Development and MoJ. The staff of the committee consists of the Government, judicial department, representatives of the Court of Cassation, the delegation of the EU, the Chamber of Advocates, representatives of other affected state and non-state agencies and international organizations like World Bank, UNDP and German Agency for International Cooperation (GIZ)<sup>36</sup>. The tendency of entrusting national actors other than government bodies with the oversight of the project is popular among the AAPs of the period and can be detected in actions for every country. However, in several AAPs, foreign actors such as international organizations, the delegation of the EU and agencies of EU member states are involved in the implementation and management of the actions. In the aforementioned AAP for Armenia, this phenomenon is articulated with the idea that a decent transformation project should be coherent with the best EU standards and take into account the remarks of the EU peers. Given the increased EU accountability, such AAPs are deemed to be of a combined approach tending towards liberal institutionalism. A reason for this tendency could be that the implementation of the actions had not been conducted as it was expected by the EU, motivating to have a larger oversight.

In order to keep control of implementation of projects and spending of its funding, the EU holds steering committees. However, in some projects, these committees play a less important role in the

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<sup>35</sup> Annual Action Programme for Moldova for 2014. Annex 1. P. 18

<sup>36</sup> Annual Action Programme for Armenia for 2017. Annex 2. P.14

management of the projects and they have only monitoring functions. This approach is inherent in several AAPs and one example is the Moldovan AAP for 2016. An overall objective of this programme is raising capacities of the government and other public institutions to carry out the Association Agenda (AA). The stated stakeholders of this project were the State Chancellery and the relevant ministries, central executive agencies and affected civil society organizations. The coordination of the action will be primarily conducted by the State Chancellery. The monitoring over the fulfillment of the AA would be coordinated by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and European Integration<sup>37</sup>. As it appears the Moldovan governmental bodies have tight ownership for the expressed actions. But it is also mentioned that in order to supervise and guide each individual action the steering committees would be created consisting of State Chancellery and the EU delegation and other stakeholders related to the actions. The main peculiarity of this case is that the function of these committees is less stressed on implementation and more focused on oversight. Although it may seem as an unimportant difference, it demonstrates a significant disparity in terms of responsible agencies. In the AAPs of this sort, stress on domestic agents alongside with the less explicit role of the EU urge us to conclude that some AAPs for the period following the EUGS present a combined approach.

The AAP in favor of Georgia concerning 2019, focuses mainly on the governmental institutions in its section of stakeholders. The duty-bearers of the action included Human Rights Council headed by the Prime Minister, Human Rights Secretariat, Public Defender's office under the Constitution of Georgia, Human rights protection department in the Ministry of Internal Affairs, the Office of the Personal Data protection inspector, Gender Equality Council at the Parliament of the Georgia headed by the Deputy Chairman of the Parliament and Interagency Commission on Gender Equality, domestic violence and violence against women. Apart from these coordinating agencies, the Ministry of Internally Displaced persons of Occupied Territories, Labour, Health and Social Affairs, Ministry of Justice and Ministry of Internal Affairs are also mentioned as responsible actors in this field. However, as the responsible agent for the management of the actions the EU delegation is stressed out: *"The Delegation of the European Union to Georgia will be responsible for the management of the Programme and will monitor its overall implementation. It will also be the focal point for any communication with the contractors or the beneficiary institutions"*<sup>38</sup>. Overall, this sort of AAPs demonstrates trends of presenting both internal actors and the EU as the responsible agents

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<sup>37</sup> Annual Action Programme for Moldova for 2016. Annex 2. P.4

<sup>38</sup> Annual Action Programme for Georgia for 2019. Annex 1. P. 34

for the programmes. Therefore, we need to put them under combined approach in the dimensional spectrum.

The further investigation demonstrates that the functions of the civil society groups and other non-state actors are frequently related to oversight and monitoring. However, some cases of the period succeeding the launch of the EUGS grant non-governmental actors with more responsibility and explicit ownership. For example, the Ukrainian AAP concerning 2016, civil society organizations are regarded as highly relevant, albeit not the principal, stakeholders accountable for the achievement of the aims of the anti-corruption reforms. It is mentioned in the document that most of the laws adopted as a part of the anti-corruption package were prepared with the help of the non-governmental organizations which were supported by donor funding. The civil society groups were also very active in the promotion of anti-corruption reforms throughout the country and overseeing how the launched legislation carried out in practice<sup>39</sup>. In this project, the civil society organizations are presented both as the champions and supporters of reforms that have a power to impact the national government to fulfill the programme. Although the EU keeps its overseeing role, the liability lies under internal capabilities. Therefore, we can conclude that the Special Measure 1 for Ukraine concerning 2016 tilts towards the resilience-building approach. Although civil society groups were not absent in the period prior to the EUGS, they have a more active role in the later period. Therefore, the major novelty presented by the EUGS, concerning responsible agents was that the function of the CSOs began to receive more focus than before. This argument confirms the evidence retrieved from the aforementioned AAPs that demonstrate strengthened focus on non-state internal ownership in comparison with pre-EUGS period.

However, not all AAPs for the post-EUGS period explicitly stress out the role of non-governmental organizations as the responsible agents of the actions. Many of them focus primarily on national authorities and their regional branches as the major stakeholders of the actions. The AAP for Azerbaijan concerning 2021 is an illustrative example for that: *“The main stakeholders of this action are the Azerbaijani government’s implementing and regulatory authorities in the health sector, including the Ministry of Health (MoH), the State Agency for Mandatory Health Insurance (SAMHI), the Management Union of the Medical Territorial Units (TABIB), their regional branches and the citizens as final beneficiaries, as well the Ministry of Labour and Social Protection of Population, the Ministry of Education and civil society”*<sup>40</sup>. In this case, also, the responsibility over

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<sup>39</sup> Special Measure 1 for Ukraine for 2016. Annex 1. P.8

<sup>40</sup> Annual Action Programme for Azerbaijan. Annex. P.14

the elaboration and implementation of the programme is internalized leading us to conclude that this document follows a resilience-building approach in terms of responsibility.

## **Conclusion**

The study of this category demonstrates a constant internal ownership and responsibility in both pre and post-EUGS periods. National authorities and governmental bodies were primarily mentioned as being accountable for the implementation of the actions and non-state actors, such as civil society groups and small and medium enterprises and municipalities were mentioned as accountable agents for supervision and oversight of the implementation. For the period preceding the launch of the EUGS, the EU had predominantly supervisory role in the projects with focus on evaluation, monitoring and audit which implies a general resilience-building approach with elements of the liberal institutionalism. When it comes to the post-EUGS period, the presence and participation of the steering committees increased in some examples and the role of the EU became more explicit. This tendency led some of the programmes to move towards a more liberal approach, however with a stable placement under a combined approach. To sum up, the ratio between foreign and domestic ownership and accountability appears to be more or less stable, indicating no significant differences between the two periods.

## **Implementation tools**

### **Pre-EUGS period**

Concerning the last category, implementation tools, the question posed to the programmes was: Which tools were used by the EU in practice to reach its objectives? The amount of details and description of tools presented by the different programmes vary. However, in each AAP, there is apart that explain the main activities under the section of ‘description of the action’ which is in line with the understanding of the tools of implementation. The investigation of the document indicates that the resorted tools are more or less similar for most of the AAPs, and the activities vary from instruments resorted for administrative capacity-building to judiciary support and capacity-building of civil servants. An illustrative instance of the instruments used in the time predating to the EUGS, is the 2012 AAP in favor of Azerbaijan. The general objective of the action is to raise the institutional capacities of the public structures, aiming at the delivery of the reforms under the Azerbaijan`s agreements with the EU. The activities to achieve the proposed objective included providing necessary resources to maintain cooperation with Azerbaijan based on European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP) action plan, the Partnership and Cooperation Agreement (PCA), via twinning instrument including the delivery of technical support and policy recommendations. The

Programme Administration office at the Ministry of economic development would be supported through specific technical aid. The comprehensive institution building programme funds allotted to this action would be spent on three governmental Institutional reform plans: 1) deepening of integration and trade; 2) human rights, rule of law and migration; 3) training of public servants on EU studies. The last component of actions was to help the government accelerate its attempts to diversify the economy, focusing on the deprived regions or groups of population<sup>41</sup>.

The concept of twinning and technical support are the most commonly resorted tools and are present in almost all of the AAPs adopted before the launch of the EUGS. The instruments focusing on policy discussion and specialist recommendation help the EU in capacity-building and empowerment of the societies. This approach corresponds to the essentials of the resilience paradigm presented in the theoretical framework. Overall, the tools used in the programmes of the sort of the 2012 AAP for Azerbaijan, tend towards the approach of resilience-building in the dimensional scale. Despite the tools proposed in this example illustrate the general trend of the period before the launch of the EUGS, not all AAPs deliver the same activities.

The Moldovan AAP concerning 2013 presents another common group of tools found in the documents of the period. The objective of this AAP is to promote the resolution of the Transnistrian conflict through confidence-building between the rivaling sides, facilitate technical dialogue and support the working groups. The instruments to achieve these objectives include technical support facility, retained assistance to the working groups on increasing confidence, to present mutually agreed expertise, economic integration, customs, transport, statistics, banking sphere, visa liberalization and impact of these actions on the Transnistrian region<sup>42</sup>. This programme uses technical assistance to present guidance on a great variety of activities in order to help the resolution of the conflict. The AAP illustrates a set of activities aimed at the settlement of the Transnistrian conflict, showing a resilient approach where the intervener acts as a facilitator. Despite less of the AAPs of this period are oriented towards settlement of conflicts, a large variety of tools presented in this instance is a common tendency which implies a context-sensitive nature with tailor-made approach positioning under the resilience-building edge of the dimensional scale.

The prevalent trend in the implementation instruments category for the pre-EUGS period is to focus on civil society and grassroots actors. One of the representative examples of this phenomenon is found in the 2013 AAP in favor of Belarus. One overall objective of this action is to promote the

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<sup>41</sup> Annual Action Programme for Azerbaijan for 2012. Annex 1. P.5

<sup>42</sup> Annual Action Programme for Moldova for 2013. Annex 2. P.6

sustainable development of the regions of Belarus. The main activities to reach this objective are as follows: *“Establishment of partnerships among local/regional stakeholders; Social mobilisation for creation of support structures (community organisations); Training/study visits and other support for institutional capacity building; Participatory planning and mainstreaming of community plans; Micro-project proposal preparation, appraisal, approval and funding of community projects (call for proposals under grant programme); Awareness raising and creation of info-centres to support project activities”*<sup>43</sup>. In this excerpt the main instrument proposed, is to empower the locals of the regions through capacity-building measures and technical support. We can therefore mention that the 2013 AAP for Belarus is in line with the resilience-building approach in terms of implementation tools.

The prevalence of the instruments focusing on support and empowerment of the locals and authorities is also a case in the Ukrainian AAPs of the period. The programme adopted in 2012, has an overall objective of raising capacities of the Ukrainian institutions to prepare and implement the Association Agreement and main activities to reach these goals included: *“harmonising Ukrainian food safety legislation with EU; development of an effective institutional and policy making framework in the SPS area; training of relevant officials on implementing new legislation and using working methods of a modern food safety control service; supporting openness, transparency and stakeholder involvement in food safety policy development, monitoring implementation, and risk communication; establishment of risk assessment as the basis of preparation of food safety policy and implementation of official controls; establishment of a national network of accredited and functioning official laboratories; establishment of border control procedures in accordance with EU norms and standards”*<sup>44</sup>. This action programme has the instruments of implementation which corresponds to the essentials of the resilience-building approach

Apart from twinning, policy recommendation and technical assistance, most AAPs include financial transfers and performance evaluation as tools of programme implementation. As a typical example of such approach is the 2014 AAP in favor of Georgia. An objective of this AAP is to improve the system of justice, enhance the rule of law and to strengthen the protection of human rights according to EU standards. The main activities proposed in the programme include the directed and ongoing policy dialogue, transfer of the funding against particular performance, supervision and periodic evaluation of performance against indicators and targets, reporting on progress and obstacles

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<sup>43</sup> Annual Action Programme for Belarus for 2013. Annex 2. P.6

<sup>44</sup> Annual Action Programme for Ukraine for 2012. Annex 2. P.10

emerging in the reforms implementation and governmental empowerment and capacity-building through commitment to accomplish specific requirements through compliance by disbursement terms<sup>45</sup>. According to this AAP, the EU constantly assesses and monitors the performance of the Georgian government in implementation of the presented reforms and their compliance with the requirements. Meanwhile the assistance of the EU offered to Georgia on a conditional basis which implies a particular extent of the coercive foreign management. On the one hand, the tools of existing policy dialogue and financial tranches against certain performances serve an empowering aim and are context-sensitive. On the other hand, their substance is corresponding to a more liberal interventionist approach than technical support and twinning programmes. Therefore, we can conclude that the Georgian AAP for 2014 is regarded to be between a resilience-building and combined approaches.

### **Post-EUGS period**

In the post-EUGS analysis of the fourth category, the findings are very similar to the previous period. Tools as technical support, twinning, legislative assistance and policy advice were present in all investigated AAPs. Performance evaluation and monitoring activities are also significant part of the policy period as in the preceding period. An illustrative example for this period exists in the 2017 AAP in favor of Belarus. An objective of this programme is to enhance the circumstances for the development of the private sector through the improvement in the country. The AAP is conducted via direct management with a mixed institutional/grassroots approach and carried out through diagnostic and fostering access of SMEs to financial management abilities and services and capacity-building of business support organizations. The diagnostic will be conducted through stakeholder dialogue, evaluation, advice and the aim will be to find out gaps in the access to services that SMEs face. The capacity-building training would be presented to those business support organizations that reach substantial groups of SMEs to support them and meet their needs for development<sup>46</sup>. By concentrating on increasing capacities of small and medium enterprises through stakeholder dialogue and ability evaluation, this programme indicates an illustrative example of non-coercive tools of the resilient approach.

Another set of tools which are prevalent in AAPs for the period following the adoption of the EUGS is the activity to conduct assessments alongside with stakeholder dialogue in order to define weaknesses in the capacities of the target groups. That means the conduction of surveys, studies and

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<sup>45</sup> Annual Action Programme for Georgia for 2014. Annex 1. P.14

<sup>46</sup> Annual Action Programme for Belarus for 2017. Annex 2. P.10

detailed analyses has increased which helped the EU prepare and implement new policies in the EaP region. The increase in the usage of surveys aiming at the growth of efficiency and resilience is one of the most noticeable changes that has been found in the investigation and corresponds to the mentioned focus of the EUGS. As indicated above, such activities were detected in the preceding AAPs too, but this trend became more common in the programmes after the adoption of the EUGS. However, the most prevalent activities prepared and implemented by the EU in the post-EUGS period, raising the capacities of the public institutions through policy dialogue or presenting the practices of the EU. The Armenian AAP for 2016 illustrates this tendency in a representative way. The overall objective of this programme is to foster transparency, efficiency of the national authorities and accountability through direct management and financial support. The resorted instruments to achieve these aims are fostering the policy development of public institutions, support to professionalism in public service through improvement of the training capacities, promotion of transparency and accountability of national institutions and creating openness for the participation of the civil society, introduction of modern e-governance solutions to present high level of public services<sup>47</sup>. Activities as policy coordination, raising the training capacities and the introduction of the e-governance are explicit examples of instruments that aim to empower the stakeholders. These tools have a non-coercive character and they show a tendency towards resilience-building approach. Just as the objectives to foster the development of the regions, the tools to raise the capacities of institutions were aimed at the regional projects varying from digitalization to waste management.

The aforementioned character of EU instruments remains unchanged in more recent AAPs as well. The 2020 AAP in favor of Ukraine presents the tools which illustrate the post-EUGS period. One of the objectives of the programme was strengthening inclusive and participatory democracy in Ukraine. The indicative activities to reach this objective include: *“Provide grants in support to transaction costs of social enterprises and zero interest loans; Continue tailored technical support and physical space (at a subsidised price) for business development and day-to-day management; Provide grants and technical expertise supporting transaction costs incurred by transition to an income generation business model; Promote community engagement and social innovation, support new civic actors, social entrepreneurs and aspiring civic leaders in elaborating new business models for their future organisations, and develop practical tools for their organisational development; Raise awareness on the necessity to rebuild the philanthropic sector post-COVID-19*

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<sup>47</sup> Annual Action Programme for Armenia for 2016. Annex 1. P.19



crisis; *Promote social entrepreneurship, including for traditional skills and crafts within historical minorities of Ukraine, as an alternative process of local community building*”<sup>48</sup>. The excerpt shows that the EU focused on providing financial and organizational support to the civil society and uses instruments of resilience-building approach to achieve its objectives.

Another tendency observed in the documents for the following period is the strong focus on regional development and rural policy by the EU. Activities directed towards the support for civil society organizations and other local interest groups are predominantly present in the AAPs of the post-EUGS period. As we mentioned above the civil society groups are often supported via the instruments of the EU in the AAPs preceding the adoption of the EUGS. However, they have been granted a more outstanding role in the following AAPs. An example of such AAPs, is the Moldovan one which was adopted in 2017. An overall objective of this programme is citizens` empowerment through involving them national, regional and local decision-making processes. To achieve these aims the proposed tools include providing capacity-building activities to civil society through workshops, quality assurance, trainings, studies, instructions etc. in order to enable them to oversee management, procurement of infrastructure in sanitation, water and waste management and sanitation<sup>49</sup>. Through facilitating workshops and conducting studies aimed at the affected civil society groups, the EU employs instruments of non-coercive nature such as informing and instructing in order to build the capacities of grassroots actors which is in line with the resilience-building approach.

Similar tendency is observed in the AAPs for different countries for different years. For example, the Azerbaijani AAP for 2021 has the overall objective to support Azerbaijan`s socio-economic recovery by focusing on sustainable and inclusive development in rural areas. To achieve this objective the proposed instruments are as follows: *“Bringing together members of selected communities for a participatory process of developing community development plans and exploring opportunities to resolve critical issues that the communities are facing through community mobilisation, further resource mobilisation or catalysing effects of the project grants (the initiatives are expected to include small-scale investment in rural infrastructure based on collective needs and developing concrete mechanisms for supporting local women farmers` ability to participate in the agri-food value chains); Improvement of rural infrastructure through the implementation of the grant scheme; Development of capacities and provision of complementary tools for integrating local*

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<sup>48</sup> Annual Action Programme for Ukraine for 2020. Annex 2. P.12

<sup>49</sup> Annual Action Programme for Moldova for 2017. Annex 1. P.15

*women farmers and members of other vulnerable groups within the selected value chains from farm to fork into production, processing and/or marketing levels and for ensuring decent work opportunities*"<sup>50</sup>. The applied tools, in this excerpt, are development of communities and rural infrastructure, and capacity-building of locals. These tools carry a non-coercive character which is an indicator of the EU following a resilient approach in the programme.

### **Conclusion**

The investigation of the category of implementation tools demonstrate that the instruments used by the EU in both periods reflect the indications of resilience-building. Before 2016, the applied tools were of a resilient nature focusing on twinning, capacity-building, technical assistance, twinning. However, in rare cases the tools used were of a conditional and coercive character slightly moving towards the liberal institutionalist part of the scale of categories. For the period succeeding the Global Strategy, all AAPs indicated non-coercive instruments with a low level of conditionality representing a clear resilience-building approach. Only rare examples of a combined approach were detected in the analysis. The overall finding of the investigation thereby is that the EU similarly preferred the resilience-building fashion of implementation tools in both time periods. In the next chapter, the interpretation of the above findings will be presented through a holistic discussion of the study.

### **Interpretation of the findings**

In this research, a collection of findings have been demonstrated which set forth differences and similarities between the terms preceding and succeeding the launch of the EUGS. The summary of the findings of each AAP has been provided in the Graph 1. All the AAPs have been analyzed from four categories and the findings are summarized. The findings for each country and for each period are marked on a scale of 1 to 5, with 1 expressing liberal interventionist approach and 5 meaning resilience-building. The definition of other marks are given below the graph. As the coding has been done by a single researcher, it unavoidably contains a degree of bias and arbitrariness. This is because some AAPs were hard to place under this or that positions in the dimensional scale. However, such AAPs were in minority, most programmes can effectively find its place on the scale. I have pointed out the analyses of most documents in the previous chapter and articulated my judgments in detail. I argue that the degree of my bias does not heavily influence the results of this study.

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<sup>50</sup> Annual Action Programme for Azerbaijan for 2021. Annex . P.17

Graph 1. Summary of results

	2012-2014						2016-2021					
Country	AZ	AM	BL	GE	MD	UA	AZ	AM	BL	GE	MD	UA
<b>Aims</b>	2	1	5	1	2	1	2	3	5	4	4	1
<b>Means of Implementation</b>	2	2	4	2	3	3	3	3	4	2	4	3
<b>Responsible Agents</b>	5	2	2	5	5	3	5	3	2	5	3	5
<b>Implementation tools</b>	5	5	5	4	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	4

1=Liberal Interventionist approach, 2= Liberal-based combined approach, 3=Combined approach, 4= Resilience-based combined approach, 5=Resilience-building approach

Now, the implications of this research can be discussed and interpreted on the basis of the presented findings of the analysis.

In the first category, aims, we found out that there is an overall liberal institutionalist approach in the period before the EUGS and a combined approach in the aftermath. The change is small. Most of the AAPs of both terms imply aims directed towards raising institutional capacities, enhancing rule of law and regional development. To wrap up, the EU primarily sets aims of liberal interventionist nature in both periods. Adding the concept of resilience into the objectives` chapters of some AAPs can be deemed as the most significant manifestation of a move towards resilience-building in this category. The latter is in line with the arguments of the literature which contends that the European Union Global Strategy should be deemed just as a strategy rebranding. The findings of the category of responsible agents reinforce this argument. As mentioned above, the category of responsible agents is one of the critical aspects to distinguish the two paradigms as the understanding of agency is substantially contradictory. There were no significant changes found in the analysis and internal responsibility is the most predominant trend detected in both before and after the adoption of the EUGS. Four of the countries have subject to a combined or resilience-building strategy, while the rest of the program countries lean toward a liberal interventionist combined approach, according to the overall review. Prior to the launch of the EUGS, the EU employed resilience-building measures in the EaP region, validating earlier research that views the Global Strategy as merely a rebranding of terminology. The most noticeable change identified in the investigation of this category was an

expanded EU engagement in the execution of the programmes through a reinvigorated role of steering committees. This evidence refutes the Smith's (2016) claim that the Global Strategy would imply a less active role for the EU in its engagement with EaP countries.

However, the study revealed a somewhat different approach in terms of which internal agents were selected as the responsible actors for the implementation of actions. In the recent period, non-state players such as civil society groups and NGOs were increasingly shown as the owners of both policy preparation and execution, showing a share of responsibilities that reflects the resilience-building concept. Thus we can claim that the EUGS' heavy focus on civil society represents a significant shift from prior strategies. The increased attention on CSOs can be characterized as a reevaluation of the EU's perspective contributing to a greater involvement of non-governmental agents in the post-EUGS period. Although the EUGS seeks to boost up civil society actors, the activities carried out are substantially the same as before, making assertions of a paradigm change appear unrealistic.

In terms of the category of implementation means, the findings portray a slightly discordant image. The rationale for this dimension is based on the premise that the methods and targets suggested by the liberal interventionist and resilience paradigms are vastly different. The examination of this dimension reveals a minor shift in the approach over time from a liberal-based combined approach before the EUGS slightly towards a resilience-based combined approach after the EUGS. Despite the developments in this category are not groundbreaking, obviously there are some indications of a shift in mindset toward state-building. As the advocates of the resilience paradigm suggest, the shift would signal a more competent strategy, mixing hard and soft power to bypass traditional obstacles. Having mentioned the greater bottom-up focus in the post-EUGS period, I contend that the EU is adopting a renewed, more pragmatic policy based on tailored solutions and context-sensitive modifications. This finding supports the literature alleging a shift in EU foreign policy, but it is insufficient to declare a paradigm shift.

In terms of the category of implementation tools, the findings reveal that the EU utilizes the same kind of tools during both terms, with little or no variation. The EU appears to focus on instruments to encourage change in line with a resilience-building strategy by arranging trainings, EU-conducted research, seminars, and high-level gatherings for civil society groups and other grassroots actors. On the other hand, because this approach was popular during both periods, I argue that it is ungrounded to say that the EUGS had any tangible effects on this category. Nonetheless, the outcome is consistent with the resilience paradigm, and the observations from this category support the

conclusion that the EU adopted a resilience-building approach prior to the introduction of the EUGS. The Belarusian AAPs are the clearest instances of this. Most of the aims, methods and tools utilized in engagement with Belarus clearly show a resilience-building attitude, in spite of the traditional combined to liberal interventionist trend of the period preceding the EUGS. This attitude is consistent with the argument that the EU, to an extent, had already adopted a resilience-building strategy in its foreign policy prior to the launch of the EUGS, and this study argues that the concept of principled pragmatism needs to be viewed as a continuation of an existing approach.

All in all, can we detect a shift in the foreign policy paradigm of the EU towards the EaP? Based on the findings of this study, I argue the simple answer is no. Although the study revealed an inclination towards a greater focus on bottom-up initiatives and a bigger involvement for civil society, no large-scale practical changes appear to have occurred following the launch of the EUGS. Moreover, the research demonstrates multiple examples of EU resilience-building actions implemented before the EUGS, implying that the concepts underlying the resilience paradigm were already in place at that time. These findings confirm Juncos` (2017) assertions that the EU is trapped between old and new worlds, and also pose questions about the EUGS' practical effects. Drawing on these findings, the EUGS' resilience-building strategy and principled pragmatism appear to be less about a substantial shift of paradigm and more about the Union trying to be honest with a part of the policy it already pursues. This might be understood as a means for the EU to somehow relieve itself of the burden of moral prerogatives and recognize its role as interest-driven international player. Building upon the aforementioned argument that the EaP is the most suitable case for completely implementing the resilience paradigm, the findings of this research direct us to the conclusion that a paradigm change in the remaining part of the interest areas is unlikely to take place. Since generalisation is an evaluation technique, it's vital to remember that there are differences between parts of the interest areas that might influence the implementation of resilience paradigm in different ways. Nonetheless, this paper claims that a paradigm change in EU foreign policy toward a resilience paradigm has been unable to occur.

#### *The implications of war in Ukraine*

In terms of military strategy, resilience implies the ability of regular citizens to defend themselves from aggressors. The resilient society does not solely count on the national military to protect it, it takes actions of defence itself. With that being mentioned, the approach is the same as in other fields where resilience measures are already applied, such as economy, health and development. Thus,

resilience entails for people to help themselves during crises and not expect the intervention of a larger power to protect them (Julian, 2022).

From military perspective, the EU gives the role of intervener to North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO). Since 2014 NATO has been teaching Ukraine to fight its own war against future aggressions of Russia. The focus on military resilience-building is observed in Baltic states where the society is involved in preparations for the protection of the state. In these states resilience-building implies raising the will of the people to participate directly in defence (Andzans and others, 2021).

However, resilience is not only about resisting an attack after it occurs, but also preventing attacks by projecting an image of resilience to possible aggressors. The latter was not successful in Ukraine as Russia had confidence in the weakness of Ukraine to start an invasion against it. Clearly though, the Russian invasion did not go on as it was desired, as the government and people of Ukraine showed their resilience against the invasion which led Russia to target civilians and infrastructure.

Following the Russian invasion of Ukraine, we already see a desire to join NATO from ever-neutral Finland and Sweden. At this point, we do not know what price these states will pay as notoriously promised by Russia. However, the existing resilience measures continue to be attractive for nations throughout Europe following Russia's invasion of Ukraine.

## **Conclusion**

In this research, I looked at how one of the world's most powerful political actors, the European Union, implements its foreign policy. I have emphasized that, because the EU has such a strong effect on global democratisation and development, it is critical to research and understand how its foreign policy is implemented. Since numerous academics and policymakers have suggested that the EUGS implicates a shift of paradigm towards resilience which will alter how the EU prepares and conducts its foreign policy, this research has attempted to answer this question: Do we observe a practical shift towards resilience in the foreign policy of the European Union after the adoption of the EUGS, if yes how? The aim of this study has thus been to empirically analyze whether or not a movement in EU foreign policy toward the resilience paradigm has occurred in practice since the EUGS was introduced. The research was conducted through an analysis of the EU's annual action programmes for the EaP countries.

This thesis, I contend, has made two major contributions to the study of foreign policy of the EU. First, I provided a theoretical contribution by building an analytical framework that would allow future research to analyze paradigm transitions from liberal interventionism towards resilience-

building. Through this theoretical framework, I compared the premises of two paradigms of foreign policy. The framework makes it easy to understand the chosen approaches of foreign policy of this or that actor. It also enables us to detect new foreign policy trends towards resilience. Second, where there was previously an empirical gap, the practical findings have supplied an examination of the alleged paradigm change. The topic has been theoretically studied by many scholars and they have come to different conclusions. However, the empirical analysis of the paradigm shift has not sufficiently drawn attention of scholars which proves that there has been a large caveat in the study. My research seeks to fill this gap. On the other hand, this analysis sets an example for other researchers to conduct such empirical analysis and provide a better understanding of the topic. According to the findings of this study, there were no significant practical shifts following the introduction of the EUGS, and the EU was already employing resilience-building measures. As a result, I suggest that the EUGS should be viewed as an attempt by the EU to be honest about how its foreign policy is formulated and what it can achieve, rather than evidence of a shift of paradigm. Drawing on the argument that the EaP is the most likely region for the implementation of the resilience paradigm, the results of the research show that the EUGS is unlikely to motivate a shift resilience paradigm in other interest areas as well. However, further research into the Global strategy's empirical substance is required in order to assess ultimate impacts of the resilience concept on foreign policy implementation of the EU.

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#### **Appendix-Analyzed documents**

*(All the documents can be accessed via the website: [https://ec.europa.eu/neighbourhood-enlargement/european-neighbourhood-policy/countries-region\\_en](https://ec.europa.eu/neighbourhood-enlargement/european-neighbourhood-policy/countries-region_en))*

Annual Action Programme for Armenia for 2012  
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Annual Action Programme for Azerbaijan for 2012  
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Annual Action Programme for Azerbaijan for 2016  
Annual Action Programme for Azerbaijan for 2017

Annual Action Programme for Azerbaijan for 2018  
Multiannual Action Programme for Azerbaijan for 2019-2020  
Annual Action Programme for Azerbaijan for 2021  
Annual Action Programme for Belarus for 2012  
Annual Action Programme for Belarus for 2013  
Annual Action Programme for Belarus for 2014  
Annual Action Programme for Belarus for 2016  
Annual Action Programme for Belarus for 2017  
Special Measures for Belarus for 2018  
Special Measures for Belarus for 2019  
Special Measures for Belarus for 2020  
Special Measures for Belarus for 2021  
Annual Action Programme for Georgia for 2012  
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Annual Action Programme for Georgia for 2020  
Annual Action Programme for Moldova for 2012  
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Annual Action Programme for Moldova for 2020  
Annual Action Programme- part 2 for Moldova for 2020  
Individual Measure for Moldova for 2021  
Annual Action Programme for Ukraine for 2012  
Annual Action Programme-part 2 for Ukraine for 2012

Annual Action Programme for Ukraine for 2013  
Special Measure for Ukraine for 2014  
Special Measure-1 for Ukraine for 2016  
Special Measure-2 for Ukraine for 2016  
Special Measure-3 for Ukraine for 2016  
Annual Action Programme for Ukraine for 2018  
Annual Action Programme-part 2 for Ukraine for 2018  
Annual Action Programme for Ukraine for 2019  
Annual Action Programme for Ukraine for 2020  
Annual Action Programme-part 2 for Ukraine for 2020  
Annual Action Plan for Ukraine for 2021