

<b>Institution:</b> University of Birmingham		
<b>Unit of Assessment:</b> UoA 19, Politics and International Studies		
<b>Title of case study:</b> Shaping EU policy towards the Eastern Partnership Countries		
<b>Period when the underpinning research was undertaken:</b> 2008-2019		
<b>Details of staff conducting the underpinning research from the submitting unit:</b>		
<b>Name(s):</b>	<b>Role(s) (e.g. job title):</b>	<b>Period(s) employed by submitting HEI:</b>
Kataryna Wolczuk	Professor of East European Politics	1995-present
<b>Period when the claimed impact occurred:</b> 2017-2020		
<b>Is this case study continued from a case study submitted in 2014?</b> No		
<p><b>1. Summary of the impact</b></p> <p>Professor Kataryna Wolczuk has transformed the way in which the European Parliament and the European Commission use and implement the Association Agreements (AAs) for the Eastern Partnership (EaP) countries. Her work on Ukraine has been adopted as a model for other associated countries. In particular, EU policy makers have changed their definition of policy success. As a result, the policy focus has shifted from <b>monitoring sector by sector, to a focus on state building and capacity building</b>. Specifically, she has:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>Influenced the European Parliament's policy decisions</b> in relation to the Eastern Partnership Countries, including a new focus on institutional architecture and organisational capacity;</li> <li><b>Shifted policy development of the European Commission</b> from monitoring progress to state rebuilding;</li> </ol> <p><b>Changed the policy and practice of the European Court of Auditors</b> in Ukraine, involving a move away from procedural compliance and towards policy effectiveness.</p>		
<p><b>2. Underpinning research</b></p> <p>The Eastern Partnership (EaP) is a joint policy initiative between the EU, its Member States and its Eastern neighbours, including Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine, to promote stability, good governance and co-operation. Policy towards the post-Soviet states in the EU's Eastern Neighbourhood is a critical and challenging area for the EU's foreign policy as the post-Soviet space has become an area of increasing geopolitical competition between the EU and Russia. The EU seeks to promote stability in this contested neighbourhood by offering EaP states a deeper form of integration, but without a membership perspective.</p> <p>Association Agreements (AAs) are the legal treaties that lay out the strategy and framework for this cooperation, incorporating the development of political, social, cultural, trade and security links. The EU's approach has centred on concluding AAs with EaP states, but these have resulted in a powerful backlash from Russia. Successful implementation of the AAs has been challenged further by the fact that AAs are complex legal documents, which the partner countries often are unable to implement due to a lack of capacity and resources, while the EU lacks the experience and expertise to help them tackle the challenges they face. Much of the EU's focus has been on 'exporting' its rules rather than the needs and priorities of the partner countries.</p> <p>Professor Kataryna Wolczuk's long-standing and multi-faceted research expertise on the post-Soviet states — covering both domestic politics and relations with the EU — has enabled her to provide integrated, trans-disciplinary and cross-country analyses that stress the priority of state (re)building over simple implementation of the AAs. Over the last decade, Wolczuk has combined research insights from scholarship on the EU's institutional architecture and foreign policy, international law and international development with analysis of domestic politics and public administration in Ukraine, Moldova and Georgia. Key findings from her research show that</p>		

the implementation of AAs represents huge challenges in terms of the scope, depth and cost of change required for the associated countries for the following reasons:

**F1.** Contrary to EU assumptions, the case for the adoption of EU rules as a route to fast and cost-effective modernisation of the post-Soviet countries is not clear-cut. This means that important adaptations are required [R1, R2], in part because the reforms promoted by the EU directly undermine the sources of deeply entrenched corruption, triggering strong resistance from those who benefit from the status quo [R3, R4].

**F2.** Weak state capacity hinders the implementation of the AAs in Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine [R5, R6]. In particular, while the countries have taken on massive commitments vis-à-vis the EU, domestic institutions (such as government, ministries and parliaments) are too weak and lack sufficient capacity, coordination and resources to enact complex and ambitious agreements. State-building remains a priority, and indeed a precondition, for effective AA implementation. At the same time, the narrow focus, technocratic approach and short time scales of EU technical assistance are not conducive to institution building in the post-Soviet countries [R3].

**F3.** Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine ostensibly have adopted 'best practices' of implementing the AAs, but so far only in a rather superficial and ineffective way. To a considerable degree, the associated countries only pay lip service to EU requirements, given that they lack requisite political leadership, institutional capacity and coordination mechanisms to implement the agreements [R1].

Based on this diagnosis of the problem, Wolczuk has further concluded that:

**F4.** Only once EU institutions clearly recognise the shortcomings outlined in F1–F3 will they be in a position to promote realistic targets and offer suitable, tailored support [R6]. In order to achieve the reforms required in Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine, the EU must adopt a more flexible, realistic and differentiated approach, prioritising state-building in order to develop capacity to implement the agreements and to modernise the countries in the process of deepening their relationships with the EU [R1, R2].

**F5.** The EU itself lacks capacity and expertise to support the AA countries. Given the ambitious objectives of the AAs, the agreements cannot be regarded as merely bilateral free trade agreements. They require closer attention and dedicated expertise inside the EU institution. Therefore, the EU itself needs to develop the capacity to oversee the reforms and implementation of the agreements in the associated countries [R6]. This includes the need for the European Court of Auditors to incorporate local knowledge and focus more on effectiveness and results in its audits of AA countries [R2].

### 3. References to the research

- R1.** Wolczuk, K. (2008) 'Ukraine and its relations with the EU'. In Fisher, S. (ed) *Ukraine: Quo Vadis*, Chaillot Papers No. 108, Institute for Strategic Studies (Paris), 87–118.
- R2.** Wolczuk, K. and Zeroulis, D. (2018) 'Rebuilding Ukraine: An Assessment of EU Assistance', *Research Paper*, Chatham House, London. Available on [Chatham House website](#)
- R3.** Ash, T., Gunn, J., Lough, J., Lutsevych, O., Nixey, J., Sherr, J. and Wolczuk, K. (2017) *The Struggle for Ukraine*, Chatham House Report. London.
- R4.** Wolczuk, K. (2016). 'Managing the flows of gas and rules: Ukraine between the EU and Russia', *Eurasian Geography and Economics*, 57(1), 113–1370. DOI: 10.1080/15387216.2016.1174072
- R5.** Wolczuk, K. (2019). 'State building and European integration in Ukraine', *Eurasian Geography and Economics*, 60(3), 1–19. DOI: 10.1080/15387216.2019.1655463
- R6.** Wolczuk, K. (2019) 'The EU's Deepening Approach to Ukrainian Reform Is Paying Dividends', *Expert Comment*, Chatham House, London, 30 August.

### Evidence of quality

- ESRC grant ES/I01523X/1 (2011–2014) 'Exploring the Role of the EU in Domestic Change in Post-Soviet States' (Principal Investigator)

- ESRC grant ES/J013358/1 (2013–2016) ‘Russia and the EU in the Common Neighbourhood: Export of Governance and Legal (In)Compatibility’ under the ‘Rising Powers and Interdependent Futures’ ESRC network (Principal Investigator)
- FP7 grant GA 613354 (2014–2016) ‘Exploring the Security-Democracy Nexus in the Caucasus’ (University of Birmingham was a partner institution in the consortium led by Fondation Maison des Sciences de l'Homme)
- Horizon 2020 grant GA 693382 (2016–2019) EU-STRAT ‘The EU and Eastern Partnership Countries: An Inside-Out Analysis and Strategic Assessment’ (University of Birmingham was a partner institution in the consortium led by the Free University in Berlin)

#### 4. Details of the impact

Professor Kataryna Wolczuk has **transformed the way in which the European Parliament and European Commission use and implement the Association Agreements (AAs)** for the Eastern Partnership (EaP) countries. Her sustained engagement with these institutions has been influential in changing their approach to their relationships with EaP countries, despite a backdrop of political volatility in Moldova and Ukraine. Specifically, she has **shaped policy decisions** and **policy development of the European Parliament**, and changed the **practice of the European Court of Auditors** with regard to EaP countries.

##### 1. Influencing the European Parliament’s policy decisions in relation to the Eastern Partnership Countries

Wolczuk has **influenced changes in policy decisions and legal acts of the European Parliament** in two ways:

- Wolczuk has **enabled relevant members of the European Parliament to focus attention on the context and needs of the EaP countries** [C1]. Her recommendations on how to promote reforms in the AA countries have been explicitly incorporated into three Resolutions of the European Parliament [C2a–c]. These key legal acts, which set out how the EU will implement the AAs in the EaP countries, now include specific recommendations from Wolczuk centred on improving the institutional architecture of AA countries and creating organisational capacity and processes to implement the agreements [F2, F4]. The Secretariat of the European Parliament confirmed this, noting that “the findings of [Wolczuk’s] study have been duly taken into account in several EP reports and resolutions and have informed discussions” and that “Prof. Wolczuk’s research has been and remains instrumental for the work of the EP in relation to the Association countries” [C3].
- Wolczuk’s recommendation of using the Support Group for Ukraine (SGUA) **as a model for other associated countries** [F4, C4] **has also been adopted in the Resolutions and Reports by the European Parliament**, who have called on the European Commission and the European Union External Action Service (EEAS) to set up groups for Moldova and Georgia [C2a, #53; C2b, #11]. The SGUA has been essential to bring concentrated expertise to support reform in Ukraine and in helping the government to start applying the recommendations outlined in the AA implementation reports. Therefore, the commencement of similar groups is of vital importance to provide the governments of other associated countries with similar levels of support.

The uptake of Wolczuk’s recommendations in these areas were the result of her close work with the Secretariat of the European Parliament and presenting her research findings to the European Parliament’s Committee on Foreign Affairs, the largest committee in the European Parliament, of which they then requested a report [C4].

##### 2. Significantly influencing policy change within the European Commission and European Parliament from monitoring progress to state rebuilding

A significant policy change within the EU has been informed by Wolczuk’s work. Specifically, instead of focusing on the adoption of EU rules in implementing the strategy, **the policy’s central focus has shifted towards prioritising state-building in Ukraine** [F2, F4]. The Deputy Director-General for European Neighbourhood and Enlargement Negotiations recognised the importance of Wolczuk’s work to this change, stating that “the EU’s novel support in Ukraine is verging on transformational not only for Ukraine but for the EU’s role as an

international actor” and emphasising that “this brings invaluable lessons and experience for the EU’s role in the Eastern neighbourhood and beyond” [C5]. This approach came from Wolczuk’s contribution through the seminars co-designed and delivered with multiple Directors-General of the European Commission, as well as the co-authoring of a paper with the Deputy Director-General for European Neighbourhood and Enlargement Negotiations [C5]. This approach has been central to the work of the SGUA, who have since 2015 adopted the view “that the profound reform of the public sector was necessary”, a reflection of Wolczuk’s findings [F4; C6]. The importance of this approach has been confirmed in the key policy planning document of the von der Leyen Commission since 2019. This confidential list of policy priorities, prepared for the College of the European Commission (consisting of all EU Commissioners), justifies continued funding for the SGUA with a specific reference to Wolczuk’s research [R6; C7].

Wolczuk has stimulated policy debate within the European Parliament, particularly the Euronest Parliamentary Assembly, resulting in a shift of the discourse around AAs. Previously, the focus had been on the progress of the AA’s implementation in different sectors, such as energy and transport, but this has now transformed to emphasise state weakness as being the key impediment to their implementation [F2]. This has enabled policy makers working in this area to shift focus from the “export of EU rules” to the AA countries to the need to build state capacity as a pre-condition to implement these rules [C8]. This has fed into the European Parliament’s reports on the implementation of the AAs [C9a–c], which now explicitly call for “a focus on capacity in terms of human resources and expertise, to ensure full implementation of relevant legislation and the monitoring thereof” [C9a, p.3].

### **3. Changing the policy and practice of the European Court of Auditors**

Wolczuk has assisted the European Court of Auditors (ECA) in **changing its practices on the audit of the EU’s assistance to Ukraine**. The ECA, the EU’s independent external auditor responsible for evaluating EU’s assistance to any ‘third country’, conducted their audit of Ukraine by collecting in-depth information and focusing on the results of the EU’s assistance, as recommended by Wolczuk [F5]. While previously the focus of the audits was on procedural compliance which merely sought to import EU ‘best practice’ to Ukraine, the focus now is explicitly on the substance of the projects and ensuring that an audit is focused on the effectiveness of the projects and how well they are tailored to Ukraine’s needs. A member of the ECA acknowledged the need to change the methods adopted in previous audits, stating that “we understood that EU best practices was not necessarily a solution for Ukraine” [C10], in line with Wolczuk’s research findings. The ECA’s staff consulted with Wolczuk in September 2019 at Chatham House in London, stating their intention to enact her recommendations on how to improve their auditing process for Ukraine as a reason for the meeting taking place. During the meeting, the auditors focussed on the nature of corruption in Ukraine and what is needed to eradicate it in order to “achieve a better understanding of local context and learn from past successes and shortcomings” [R3; C10].

### **5. Sources to corroborate the impact**

**C1.** Testimony of a Member of the European Parliament and a co-chair of the EURONEST Assembly (13<sup>th</sup> February 2019) [Available as PDF]

**C2.** Resolutions of the European Parliament on the Implementation of the Association Agreements (2018)

- a. [Georgia](#) [Available as PDF]
- b. [Moldova](#) [Available as PDF]
- c. [Ukraine](#) [Available as PDF]

**C3.** Testimony from the Secretariat of the European Parliament [Available as PDF]

**C4.** [‘The Development of an Institutional Framework for the Implementation of the Association Agreements in Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine: a comparative perspective’](#). Study, Brussels: European Parliament, 2018. [Available as PDF]

**C5.** K. Mathernova and K. Wolczuk (2020) ‘The Eastern Partnership. Between Fundamentals and Integration’, *New Eastern Europe*, Sept.–Oct. No.5, 108–114 [Available as PDF]

**C6.** De Groot, B., Maslowska, M., Schleuning, S. and Wagner, P.M. (2019) '[Overcoming challenges with innovation: Capacity building in transition countries – examples from the Eastern Partnership and Ukraine](#)', *New Eastern Europe*, No.6 [Available as PDF]

**C7.** Corroborating contact: Deputy Director General, European Commission [provided to panel]

**C8.** Minutes of the Meetings of the Working Group on the Association Agreements, the EURONEST Assembly, Brussels, June 2018 and January 2019 [Available as PDF]

**C9.** Reports on the implementation of the Association Agreements by the Foreign Affairs Committee of the European Parliament (2018)

a. [Georgia](#) [Available as PDF]

b. [Moldova](#) [Available as PDF]

c. [Ukraine](#) [Available as PDF]

**C10.** Corroborating contact: Member of the European Court of Auditors [provided to panel]