flash-it
Social sciences and humanities

Policy Snapshot

Policy-relevant findings from selected EU research projects

Issue 6 | July 2013

EU policy priority The European Union in the World

Research focus Global Engagement and Governance

Featured projects CHINESEVIEWSOFEU, EU4SEAS, EUMAGINE, EUROBROADMAP, MERCURY

Research results on:

- **Perceptions of the EU abroad**
- **European multilateralism**
- **Sub-regionalism in Europe's sea basins**

European Commission

European Research Area

SEVENTH FRAMEWORK PROGRAMME

Socio-economic Sciences and Humanities

Policy Context

The EU's Global Perspective

"Increased economic engagement with middle and global powers, and in particular emerging countries, will be a key lever for Europe's growth."[1]

-- Pascal Lamy, Director-General of the World Trade Organization

EUROPE 2020
A European strategy for smart, sustainable and inclusive growth

Many areas of great interest to the European Union require multilateral solutions. These areas include:

- sustainable development
- security (including non-proliferation, disarmament and cyber-security)
- financial regulation, trade and investment
- climate change
- biodiversity
- development and use of new technologies

The EU's own internal policies, meanwhile, can have a direct effect on third countries. Often such policy impacts can only be realised through close cooperation with international partners. Therefore, "against this backdrop of increasing interdependence and in light of its commitment to effective multilateralism, the EU has a vital interest in actively participating in de-

cision making processes on a global scale...."[2] The UN, the WTO, the G8 and the G20 are examples of multilateral fora that accommodate such processes .

In terms of global governance, the EU has sought to establish a role for itself as a promoter of democracy, the rule of law, human rights and open trade.[3] But the degree to which the EU is positively associated with these principles varies among regions and demographic groups around the globe. In a world of growing interdependencies where the ability to project "soft power" is critical, such perceptions matter. They can have an impact not only on investment and trade flows, but also on immigration patterns.

The WTO predicts that "90% of the growth addressed to the European Union in the next ten years will originate outside Europe, with one-third of it originating in China alone".[4] It is extremely important, therefore, to carry out research aimed at understanding how the EU is viewed in countries that could play a significant role in determining Europe's future. Monitoring international perceptions of Europe - and understanding how those perceptions are formed - is a vital task for research.

The changing interactions between world regions and the emergence of new global players are giving rise to major economic, political, institutional, cultural and social challenges in the current international system. New geopolitical relations, conflicts and threats are also emerging, showing that global interdependence and global stability may not be automatically related. An improved knowledge base is needed to identify and tackle these issues.

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[1] "Engaging with Middle and Global Players", Speech by WTO Director-General Pascal Lamy to Institute Notre Europe, Brussels, 15 May 2013.

[2] Joint Communication from the European Commission and High Representative of the European Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy to the European Parliament and the Council, Global Europe: A new approach to financing EU external action, COM(2011) 865, 07.12.2011

[3] COM(2011) 865

[4] "Engaging with Middle and Global Players"

Research Findings

From selected SSH projects

▶ MERCURY - Multilateralism and the EU in the contemporary global order

What defines the EU's approach to multilateralism? Can the "European way" of multilateralism overcome boundaries between states, nations and cultures - between weak and strong, rich and poor? These are among the compelling questions explored by the MERCURY project, a consortium that brought together researchers from Europe, Asia and Africa.

Assessing the EU's engagement in international multilateral efforts over the decade through 2009, MERCURY produced numerous policy-relevant findings. These include the DATEX database[5] featuring quantitative analysis of EU legal instruments affecting external relations in areas ranging from the EU's Common Foreign and Security Policy to its Common Commercial Policy and environmental policy.

On the question of whether the EU contributes to the effective functioning of multilateral organisations, the researchers concluded that EU participation has "often acted as a stimulus for reforming the structures and membership of these organizations in order to make them more effective and representative". At the same time, however, the consortium found that "the divergent positions of the Union's member states and the multiple representation of the EU at the UN has so far inhibited the development of a unitary stance at the UN Security Council and of a single perspective on its reform."[6]

With respect to the EU's role in multilateral attempts at conflict resolution in the Middle East, the MERCURY project found Europe's participation in the "Middle East Quartet" to be problematic, highlighting "the potential pitfalls of ad hoc multilateralism". The researchers concluded that the Quartet's "activities have reflected the EU's unsuccessful attempts to frame American initiatives within a multilateral setting, or the US's successful attempts at providing a multilateral – and largely EU – cover for unilateral actions".[7] Noting that the Quartet "has not affirmed itself as either a genuinely multilateral or effective mediation forum", MERCURY suggests that prospects for conflict resolution in this context may be improved by enlarging the mediation structure to facilitate greater international consensus.

Helpfully, the project has gathered many of its most valuable findings together online in a set of thematic "e-papers". These 22 documents cover everything from conflict resolution in the EU neighborhood to EU externalization of market-related policies. Other notable topics addressed in the series include:

- The EU's trade policy and China
- EU development strategy in Africa
- Externalising migration policy
- The EU-China partnership on climate change
- The EU's role in reforming of the UN
- Fiscal multilateralism
- Multilateralism in the Mediterranean
- International involvement in solving the crisis in Darfur

The MERCURY e-papers together with a number of policy briefs can be found in the "publications" section of the following project-related website: www.mercury.uni-koeln.de

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[5] http://mercury.uni-koeln.de/fileadmin/user_upload/Mercury_DATEX_cfsp_trade_environment_Aug2011.pdf

[6] "Organised Multilateralism: The EU in Multilateral Fora", MERCURY Fourth Policy Brief, January 2012

[7] MERCURY Fourth Policy Brief

EUROBROADMAP - European Union and the world as seen from abroad

In order to engage successfully with the rest of the world, European Union needs to understand how the rest of the world sees it. The EURO-BROADMAP project has enhanced that understanding significantly. Combining the research prowess of 12 multidisciplinary teams (from France, Belgium, Portugal, Sweden, Malta, Romania, Turkey, Brazil, Cameroon, China and India), the consortium constructed a series of "mental maps" that graphically illustrate how Europe is perceived in a global context. The project also yielded valuable insights into the EU's notion of itself as a normative influence abroad.
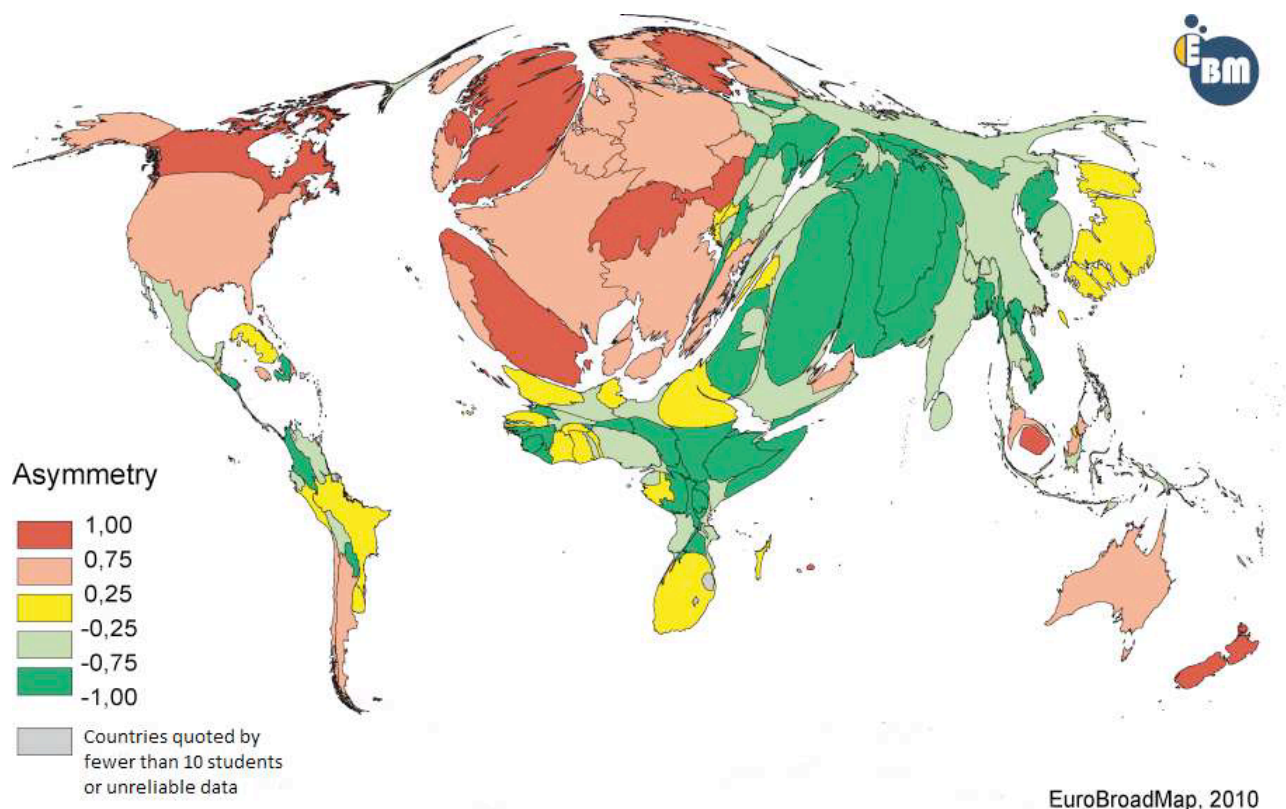
The centerpiece of EUROBROADMAP's work was a global survey that tested perceptions of the European Union and other areas. The data was collected through questionnaires completed by college students in 43 cities in 18 mostly non-European countries.

One of the mental maps constructed from the survey data shows which part of the world college students would like to live in or not live in in the near future (Figure 1). While the results are selective and cannot be regarded as representative on a world scale, the map shows a proportionally large cluster of attractive countries in northern and western Europe.

Among the project's main conclusions[8]:

- The term "Europe" is fuzzy, and its unqualified use is a political obstacle to the future development of the EU. It should be replaced with "European Union" in scientific discourse and political action.

- The notion of the EU having normative influence outside its boundaries is a myth that caters primarily to European public opinion.

- The northwestern part of the EU is most likely to attract highly qualified migrants. Alternative strategies for attracting migrants are needed to avoid increasing internal disparities.

Figure 1. Relative attractiveness of locations as perceived by college students in 18 countries

Asymmetry

■	1,00
■	0,75
■	0,25
■	-0,25
■	-0,75
■	-1,00
■	Countries quoted by fewer than 10 students or unreliable data

EuroBroadMap, 2010

[8] Project Final Report - EUROBROADMAP

▶ EUMAGINE - Imagining Europe from the outside. On the role of democracy and human rights perceptions in constructing migration aspirations and decision towards Europe

The European Union is a natural destination for aspiring migrants to the South and East looking to improve their lives. In order to better appreciate the factors driving migration to the EU, the EUMAGINE project surveyed the migration aspirations of populations in four counties considered "important emigration countries" from a European perspective: Morocco, Senegal, Turkey and Ukraine. With the exception of Senegal, which is a transit route from West Africa to Europe, all share geographical borders with the European Union.

The survey results (derived from face-to-face interviews with 8,000 people between 2010 and 2011) are noteworthy for a number of reasons. First, over half the respondents expressed aspirations to migrate (Figure 2), with some 3,600 saying they aspired to migrate specifically to "Europe".

Secondly, the results showed that while people are motivated by economic opportunities that may come with migration, "perceptions on educational opportunities and gender equality in Europe impact on migration aspiration" as well.[9]

Thirdly, it was found that the majority of respondents expressing an aspiration to migrate also have "concrete plans" to migrate. Indeed, 65% of those who said they aspired to migrate to Europe in the next five years also claimed to have plans to head for a specific destination.
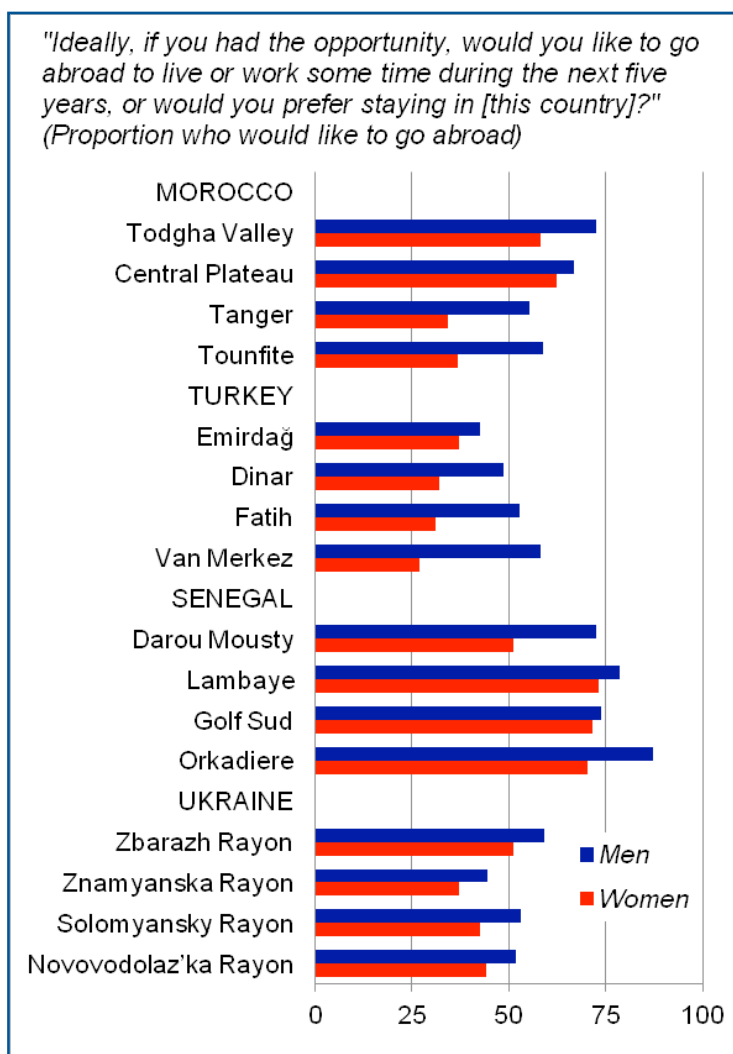
There were considerable differences among the migration aspirations and plans of those surveyed in the four countries. In Morocco, for example, 93% of those expressing migration aspirations had concrete plans to carry through with their wish to migrate. In the other three countries the portion of aspiring migrants who also claimed to have concrete plans ranged between 49 and 55%.

The researchers identified several key factors that influence immigration to Europe from the regions studied. The factors include:

- perceptions of human rights in Europe vs. own country
- transnational family networks
- family (dis)approval of migration to Europe
- perceptions of job opportunities in Europe

The project concluded that if European policy makers want to influence migration, they have to be "sensitive" of these factors, adding that improving education and healthcare and reducing poverty in emigration areas would "most likely reduce migration plans".

Figure 2: Migration aspiration samples

Source: EUMAGINE Newsletter Issue 2

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[9] EUMAGINE: Project Paper 14: Eumagine final report with policy considerations

▶ CHINESEVIEWSOFEU - Disaggregating Chinese perceptions of the EU and the implications for the EU's China policy

The growing power and influence of China presents the EU with multiple challenges and opportunities. Aside from its interest in strengthening vital trade relations with China, the EU is also engaged in a political dialogue as well as a human rights dialogue with Beijing. It is therefore of critical importance that the European Union accurately comprehend how it is perceived by the Chinese people and their leaders. That was the basic premise behind the project CHINESEVIEWSOFEU.

In a collaboration between European and Chinese research institutions, the project captured the views of over 2,000 people representing various "elite" groups in China. These included government officials, government officials, scholars, civil society activists, business people and media practitioners. The survey yielded the following insights [10]:

- 46% of respondents overall did not view China-EU relations as positive and only 34% saw relations as friendly.

- More than 80% of 200 government officials surveyed had a good impression of the EU and its citizens, substantially better than their impressions of the US, Russia or Japan, and better than the impression of the EU held by the Chinese general public.

- 70% over the officials surveyed said their knowledge of the EU was insufficient

- More than eight out of ten Chinese respondents have a positive to very positive attitude towards the EU.

- Very few respondents have ever been to EU countries or are in touch with people from the EU.

The researchers concluded that if the EU wishes to improve its image in China, it should actively endeavor to enhance and broaden the knowledge that Chinese people have about the EU and Europe.

▶ EU4SEAS - The EU and sub-regional multilateralism in Europe's sea basins: neighbourhood, enlargement and multilateral cooperation

Relations between geographically or politically linked countries are managed at different levels. Often larger regional concerns are given priority, but there is good reason to focus on "sub-regional" relations. The EU4SEAS project - which focused on countries surrounding the Baltic Sea, Black Sea, Caspian Sea and Mediterranean Sea - highlighted the potential benefits to the EU of taking a sub-regional approach, particularly with respect to managing external relations with its eastern and southern neighbours.

The EU4SEAS consortium identified five "gaps" that sub-regional strategies might be helpful in bridging in the interest of the EU [11]. These gaps are between:

- EU Member States and non-member states
- EU candidate states and neighbouring states
- A differentiation approach and a global approach
- Internal policies and external policies
- A long-term strategic vision and short-term tactical actions

The first gap mentioned above is of particular importance, say the researchers, because it has become "the most relevant fault-line at the sub-regional scale". By utilizing a sub-regional approach in addressing that gap, the EU could "partially counter the 'hard border' effect that is particularly visible when enlargement happens", the researchers argue.

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[10] CHINESEVIEWSOFEU - SUMMARY REPORT ON POLICY IMPLICATIONS; Policy Papers 1 & 2

[11] http://flash-it.eu/dmdocuments/eu4seas_policy_paper_subregionalism_vaquer.pdf

SSH research projects highlighted in this snapshot

The following research projects provided key content for this document. All of these projects were developed within the European Commission's Seventh Framework Programme for Research and Technological Development (FP7) under the theme Socio-economic Sciences and Humanities.

Project	Title	Start Date	End Date	Website
CHINESEVIEWSOFEU	Disaggregating Chinese perceptions of the EU and the implications for the EU's China policy	01/02/09	30/01/12	www.nottingham.ac.uk/cpi/research/funded-projects/chinese-eu/consortium.aspx
EU4SEAS	The EU and sub-regional multilateralism in Europe's sea basins: neighbourhood, enlargement and multilateral cooperation	01/01/09	31/12/11	www.flash-it.eu/eu4seas
EUMAGINE	Imagining Europe from the outside. On the role of democracy and human rights perceptions in constructing migration aspirations and decision towards Europe	01/01/10	31/12/12	www.eumagine.org
EUROBROADMAP	European Union and the world as seen from abroad	01/01/09	31/12/11	www.eurobroadmap.eu/
MERCURY	Multilateralism and the EU in the contemporary global order	01/02/09	30/01/12	www.mercury.uni-koeln.de/

Related FP7 research project

REFGOV	Reflexive Governance in the Public Interest	01/06/05	31/05/10	refgov.cpdr.ucl.ac.be/

About FLASH-IT

FLASH-IT is a European Union dissemination project offering enhanced access to research findings in Socio-economic Sciences and Humanities (SSH).

Part of a broader effort to consolidate knowledge resources within the European Research Area, FLASH-IT aims to help bridge the communications gap between Europe's research and policymaking communities.

Using a custom-built IT interface, FLASH-IT provides consolidated results from EU-funded SSH research projects that are thematically linked to the Europe 2020 priorities of smart growth, sustainable growth, inclusive growth and economic governance.

FLASH-IT focuses on five distinctive yet mutually reinforcing priorities, corresponding to those of the Europe 2020 strategy for smart, sustainable and inclusive growth and to the societal challenges addressed by Europe's 'Horizon 2020' research programme.

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SUSTAINABLE GROWTH

THE EUROPEAN UNION IN THE WORLD

INCLUSIVE GROWTH

LOOKING AHEAD ON SOCIETAL CHALLENGES

FLASH-IT strives to accommodate the interests of a broad range of stakeholders – public bodies, researchers, corporations and civil society organisations – and is particularly geared toward serving the needs of evidence-based policymaking initiatives.