



Jean Monnet Centre of Excellence – Tensions at the Fringes of the EU – regaining the Union's purpose

The European Union in the Wider Europe: Still a Force for Europeanization?

Queen's University Belfast, Senate Room
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SEMINAR REPORT

The workshop comprised three sessions. The first one, led by **Prof. John O'Brennan** (Maynooth University) assessed the EU's effectiveness in promoting core EU values as part of its faltering enlargement process to include Turkey and the Western Balkans. The second session, led by **Dr. Fabienne Bossuyt** (Ghent University) focused on the Eastern European countries involved in the European Neighbourhood Policy and the Eastern Partnership, assessing the effectiveness of EU's mechanisms and strategies for promoting values are particularly given mediating contextual factors. In both sessions, consideration was given to the future prospects for EU-inspired Europeanization and how key EU objectives in terms of promoting core values might be delivered. The third session, led by **Dr. Katy Hayward** (Queen's University Belfast) switched attention to the potential for 'reverse Europeanization' in the case of the United Kingdom as part of the 'Brexit' process and the implications such a dynamic will have for policy and the UK polity.

The workshop was introduced by **Prof David Phinnemore** (Queen's University Belfast). In his opening speech, he raised the question about the conditions under which the EU can be an engine of change for non-member European states. Going through the literature on Europeanisation, he recalled how thinking about Europeanisation of non-member states only began in the 2000's, within the context of a raising academic interest in the Balkans, the question of enlargement, and a sense of enthusiasm about the potential impact of the EU in the wider Europe. However, such enthusiasm has dwindled in recent years at the same time that we have witnessed a stagnation of the enlargement process. What are the factors explaining these later trends? Is the EU an engine for change only in specific environments? And if so, are we going to move into "reverse Europeanisation"?



In the first session, **Prof. John O'Brennan** (Maynooth University) asked why, after an extraordinary amount of theoretical work on Europeanisation and an optimism that conditionality would spill over to aspiring states, there is still a significant gap between transposition and implementation, while the accession process of candidate countries is either going backwards (Turkey) or has achieved very little to date (Western Balkans). In his view, this is due to an "enlargement

fatigue" that deepened during and after the financial crisis, alongside other factors such as the fragility of peace in Bosnia-Herzegovina and the fact that Turkey is increasingly being seen as a potential

adversary of the EU. On the other hand, in five states of the Eastern enlargement (Romania, Bulgaria, Hungary, Poland and Croatia) the scale of regression is quite evident. In his view, one of the reasons for this is that, once accession was achieved, there was no incentive for elites to proceed with the process of adaptation. He argued that understanding these phenomena requires a de-Europeanisation of the Europeanisation literature which has, so far, tended to be quite Eurocentric. A shared idea in this literature was that Europeanisation would change the behaviour of elites, but this has not only not happened, but we are witnessing a process of “reversed Europeanisation” in states such as Hungary and Poland (a process of regression from mainstream practices and norms) while in candidate states such as Turkey, conditionality did not work, as the elites got tired of an overly-demanding accession processes. Two crucial factors here are, in his view, the political will of the elites and that the promise of accession is credible enough. However, if we look at the examples of Romania and Bulgaria, they show us that there is another kind of Europeanisation - a bottom-up process, which can have a great impact. Yet, the problem is that the Commission has so far favoured these top-down processes.



In the second session, **Dr Fabienne Bossuyt** (Ghent University) examined Europeanisation in the countries integrated in the European Eastern Partnership: Ukraine, Moldova Belarus, Azerbaijan, Georgia and Armenia. She described the main two mechanisms of EU impact –conditionality and socialisation through the internationalisation of EU values and norms. However, in her view, the effectiveness of conditionality depends

on the attractiveness and credibility of incentives. She concluded that the EU can only have limited impact in terms of triggering lasting political reforms in these countries and this is due to a number of EU, domestic and external constraining factors, all of which are interlinked. One important EU constraining factor lies in an approach that gives primacy too EU’s own interests rather than its values. Domestic factors include endemic corruption, a lack of elites’ interest in western-style democracy and the view that incentives are not good enough to pay for the price of domestic reforms at the elite level. External factors include the Russian influence, in particular its attempts to control what it sees as belonging to its “own backyard”. She finished her presentation by identifying four key elements for successful Europeanisation, namely: a differentiated approach, shared ownership, awareness of domestic realities and strong incentives.

In the last session, **Dr. Katy Hayward** (Queen’s University Belfast) began her presentation by raising the question about the extent to which the UK was ever Europeanised. If Europeanisation is defined as a top down process leading to shared norms, identities and discourses then there seems to be no strong evidence of Europeanisation in the UK. Yet, if that is the case, ie., if Europeanisation has been a “light touch” in the UK, why is it then that Cameron went ahead with the referendum? Is it because he never thought that it would win the leavers? How did we got here? Dr. Hayward located the beginning of a process of “reverse Europeanisation” in the deal that Cameron secured with the Council in Feb 2016 and his over-confidence about the concessions that he could get from the EU. Yet, those elements of the deal that offered most succour to the Brexiteers/Eurosceptics are the ones that are most likely to be made redundant through Brexit.

On the other hand, if we consider the position of the Republic of Ireland through Brexit we see the successful effects of horizontal Europeanisation, as the European Union has fostered very close ties between the countries of the UK and Ireland. She concluded with three questions: 1) Should some elements of Europeanization be preserved even through Brexit? If so, which ones? 2) Should reverse Europeanization be possible? Actively aim for a multi-tier Europe, with some countries being able to retreat within membership? 3) In what ways will the horizontal elements of Europeanization be affected? Will there be horizontal effects of reverse Europeanization in Ireland through Brexit?



In the discussion that followed, Dr. Timofey Agarin raised the point that reversed Europeanisation can also affect countries like Moldova, Poland and others, not only the UK. Prof. John O'Brennan put forward the idea that perhaps there is not much to be "reversed" in the UK, because here the way the EU has permeated the minds of the elites through socialisation is much less than in other countries. Yet, on the other hand, we have witnessed the emergence of Europeanised people in the UK, and maybe a new kind of European consciousness is being developed through Brexit. According to Prof. David Phinnemore, there are limits to reversed Europeanisation and it is possible that some non-member states become actually more Europeanised than some member states. With respect to the UK, one test will be, in his view, an economic test – that is, if the UK becomes poorer than the rest of the Member States, it might be more Europeanised.