EU’s Promotion of Regional Co-operation in Southeast Europe: A Norm Diffusion Perspective

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Abstract

This study provides an analysis of EU’s promotion of regional co-operation in the Southeast Europe (SEE) through the lenses of norm diffusion theory. While attempting to answer the question of how and why norm diffusion takes place, if it does happen; both the EU and the SEE are evaluated in an interaction in order to sketch out their mutual engagement in the diffusion process. A minor but related attempt is to see whether EU is a normative power in that regard in the SEE. Applying a constructivist analysis, this study looks at each level of norm diffusion one by one in the particular case of the SEE. It is argued that norm diffusion process for regional co-operation in the SEE is not a completed process since the last stage of internalization of the norm has not been realized yet. The reason is the asocial and non-communicative diffusion strategies the Union has employed. Strict conditionality offering great carrots in return to compliance with regional co-operation has come to define the latter within a reward mentality rather than having a value of its own. This is also claimed to undermine the normative powerness of the Union. Nevertheless, it is suggested that as long as regional co-operation culminates in positive outcomes for regional problems, practice will reinforce the normative value of regional co-operation and thus may lead to an internalization process.

Key words: EU, Southeast Europe, regional co-operation, norm diffusion, normative power
1) Introduction

1.1 The Subject of the Study

The dissolution of Yugoslavia, with its regional wars and conflicts, was of devastating nature the Balkans and highly disturbing for Europe since the former is a natural part of the latter’s security structure. Despite this centrality, the EU, in its backyard, was simply passive, deeply entangled to differences among its Member States, thus unable to prevent severe human sufferings and the partition of Yugoslavia.

However, after the signatures dried on Dayton Peace Agreements in 1995, the Union started to address the Balkan problem. The latter was divided into two categories: ex-Yugoslavian countries except Slovenia under the banner of Southeast Europe (SEE) or Western Balkans, which were war-torn, underdeveloped and poor countries on the one hand; and Romania, Bulgaria and Slovenia as accession countries on the other hand. Its policy towards the SEE consisted of a prescription of regional co-operation, a promise to aid the regional states economically and technically. It was not until 1999 that a more comprehensive approach was designed for the region within the framework of Stabilisation and Association Process (SAP), underpinned by the Stability Pact (SP). Inherent to the SAP, regional co-operation was still essentially prioritized, while the degree to which relations with the EU could be deepened was largely extended. Carrots ranging from mere trade liberalization to a prospect for EU membership were offered to every Southeast European country (SEEC) provided that they fulfilled certain criteria, beginning with a commitment to regional co-operation and continuing with conditions similar to Copenhagen enlargement criteria. The SAP was a gradual program that offered incremental carrots in return to incremental conditionality. However, essentially, the characteristic about the Union’s approach towards the SEE has always been a remarkable fundamentality of the notion of regional co-operation. Every type of bilateral relations with the EU depended on a credible engagement in co-operative behaviour with neighbouring states.
1.2 The Purpose, Problem and Theory of the Study

This study aims to deal with this process by which the EU is promoting regional co-operation in the SEE. Such an attempt is needed and also is desirable because encouragement of regional co-operation constitutes the cement of EU’s approach towards the region and that a better understanding of the motivations behind it, its level of success, its content and substance are necessary.

This study is based on the belief that the best lenses through which one should look at the process are those of norm diffusion theory. The selection of the theory is by no means arbitrary. Norm diffusion theory is a powerful indispensable tool for an attempt to investigate EU’s efforts to embed regional co-operation in the SEE for several reasons. First, norm diffusion theory is a constructivist understanding which suggests that throughout the diffusion process, the norm-maker and the norm-taker (Checkel 1999) are involved in a mutual interaction that shapes the final outcome of it. Such an ontological stance is the most appropriate way of looking into Union’s attempts to promote regional co-operation in the SEE because it does not only address the EU part, but it also overcomes the general bias of downplaying the norm-taker part.

Second, it addresses norm diffusion as a process, rather than a one-time effort, thus proposing very suitable grounds on which EU’s gradual promotion of regional co-operation can be evaluated without missing the historical perspectives.

Third, norm diffusion theory, being a constructivist approach, also takes notice of the importance of the structure-agent problem without prioritizing one over the other. This provides the advantage of developing a fair analysis in the sense that the diffusion of a norm takes place within a certain context and is influenced by it, even to the possible extent of making the process fail. Diffusion of the particular norm may be intended to completely alter the structure, yet it is still influenced by the structure it wishes to change.

Fourth, norm diffusion theory does not ignore utilitarian concerns of both norm-makers and norm-takers. It argues that there are clear motivations for them to engage in the diffusion process, however, nothing is given or fixed and that preferences, interests or identities may change throughout the process.

Fifth, it fits with the notion of regional co-operation which is believed by the EU to be a certain appropriate pattern of behaviour and which is framed by the Union as a norm in the particular context of the SEE.

The theoretical stance being as such, it is also imperative to point out the aim of this study. An issue is never worthy of being researched if it does not arise any problems or puzzles. Otherwise, it would be a mere description without any analysis. That being said, an investigation of EU’s promotion of regional co-operation in the SEE offers some important questions. How does the EU intend to diffuse regional co-operation into the SEE and why it is engaged in such an endeavour? Is the SEE receptive to the diffusion? If so, why is it willing to
conform to this new norm that is being entreprenured by the Union? Is this a genuine diffusion or is it an instrumental calculation on both sides? Why is regional co-operation central to EU’s mentality? Is this a communicative diffusion or is it a more coercive process?

Related to all these questions, it is also possible to analyze whether the EU is a normative power in the SEE by diffusing regional co-operation to the region. The notion of regional co-operation is a very appropriate norm that fits very well into questioning the EU-SEE relations within normative power framework because it has always been very central in the Union’s approach towards the region. The criterion for a norm entrepreneur or a normative power to intrinsically possess the promoted norm’s attributes holds for this selection because EU is a successful example of regional co-operation and integration that are achieved through good neighbourly relations and closest co-operation. Therefore, trying to understand the promotion of regional co-operation to the SEE would also relate to EU’s normative “powerness” in the region.

To sum up, the main questions to be explored are:

- How and why does the EU try to promote regional co-operation as a norm in the SEE and how and why and is the SEE conforming to it?

Minor to this:
- Depending on the level of diffusion process achieved so far, is the EU a normative power in the SEE by diffusing the norm of regional co-operation?

1.3 The Plan of the Study

While attempting to answer these questions, this study first introduces the norm diffusion process and the concept of a normative power in the 2nd chapter in order to provide the outline within which the empirical case is evaluated. Next, the 3rd chapter deals with the exploration of regional co-operation diffusion in the SEE. Here the stages of norm diffusion process are respectively brought to the case of SEE in order to see how, why and to what extent diffusion is happening. The EU and the SEE are presented respectively as the norm-maker/norm entrepreneur and the norm-taker, alongside their relation with the structural context. Finally, the study is finalized with Chapter 4 which consists of concluding remarks on the questions of inquiry.

1.4 Delimitations of the Study

This study treats the EU as a monolithic actor, which is unitary in its external affairs. However, in reality, there are differing views among the Member
States about the approach that is to be taken towards the region. Some of the diffusion strategies are not appreciated by some Members and that the Commission has been very enthusiastic in pushing for the closest possible relations with the region. These institutional or national differences are not addressed in this study since a sub-systemic level of analysis is conducted: European VS Balkan. While EU represents the European regional actor, the SEE stands for the Balkan regional actor. The same delimitation, accordingly, applies to the generalization of the SEE. The latter is indeed a very heterogeneous entity, yet it is regarded as one actor for the sake of simplicity. This also reflects the way EU is dealing with the region.

As a methodological limitation, this study could have been built on first hand interviews because they generally offer insightful perspective about the regional diffusion level. However, conducting these interviews on the ground, meaning in the SEE countries is a very financially and time-wise demanding project that I had to skip for the time being. Instead, I preferred to rely on second-hand interviews and surveys.

1.5 Methodology and Sources

This study relies on the critical analysis of the information collected from many authors’ books and articles, as well as official documents published by the Union. Key authors have been identified after an extensive literature screening and policy-shaping official documents have been reached from EU’s own website. The latter has been beneficial in identifying the speech acts or policy frameworks through which EU frames regional co-operation. Similarly, process-tracing which refers to reconstructing the sequence of main events and decisions in an evolutionary process (Björkdahl 2002 p.33) is fundamental to this study. It consists of tracing discourses, speech acts, policy guidelines throughout a time span in which norm entrepreneurs promote their ideas. It allows for an appreciation of normative influence across the time by looking at the rhetoric, communication, organizational and procedural changes of the entrepreneur (ibid. p.34).

In addition to them, second-hand resources of conducted interviews and surveys which reflect the voice of the SEE have also been employed in an attempt to achieve the most possible objectivity. They have been extra useful since the study dwells upon a constructivist understanding, thus paying equal attention to the EU and the SEE simultaneously. The diffusion process is after all a mutual interaction where both sides play equivalently important cards.

The study in that sense has a qualitative epistemology that draws on an interpretive understanding that stresses the dynamic, constructed and evolving nature of social reality (Devine 2002 p.201). Actors’ behaviours are to be evaluated in their social context since they live, form opinion and act in it, but also construct it (ibid. p.201). This should be seen as an extension of the constructivist understanding to fairly appreciate the role of both actors and structure.
2) Normative Power and Norm Diffusion

2.1 Theorizing Normative Power

The concept of normative power is a recent development in the debate of EU foreign policy literature. It has been invented by Ian Manners in an attempt to introduce a new dimension which, Manners believes, has been downplayed because of the dichotomy between civilian and military power. While civilian power relies on non-military tools and goals of the EU, and military power pertains to the realm of hard power capabilities; normative power refers to the ideational impact of EU’s identity. Manners argues (2002 p.239) that normative power has an emphasis on cognitive processes, with both substantive and symbolic components, rather than an empirical emphasis on EU’s institutions and policies, which are state-like features. Such a power operates through ideas and opinions and must be able to shape conceptions of the normal (ibid. pp.239-240). It affiliates with concepts such as power over opinion, cultural influence, ideational impact, ideological power.

The motivation that induced Manners to formulate the concept of normative power was to sketch out the distinctive, but long-put-aside character of the EU, which is out there just because the Union stands out as such. Drawing on the concept of civilian power, yet surpassing it, normative power is particularly characteristic to the Union. The norms that the EU represents are constitutive elements of its identity. Manners and Whitman argue (2003 p.390) that these elements enable the Union to exceed the culture of Westphalian system connotations.

Manners believes (2000 pp.29-30) normative power escapes state-like attributes since it is an attempt to move away from an empirical emphasis on EU’s institutions to an admission of the need to include its cognitive processes including both tangible and intangible elements. Arguing that civilian and military power belong to state-centric ontology of the Westphalian culture, normative power contrasts with them by exceeding the mere instrumentality to embrace universality in its relations (ibid. p.30, Manners 2005 p.8). Normative power is thus dominated by an endeavour to spread oughtness and to generate appropriate behaviour that the power’s norms predispose. In this way it transcends selfish instrumentality to achieve a level of “cosmopolitan good”, even if this reinforces its identity and its interests. This criterion will be further elaborated below in the norm diffusion section.
Therefore, rather than trying to shape the international arena through concrete mechanisms of change, a normative power depends on the values and norms it represents and accommodates in its own identity. Manners’s model, in turn, is based on the uniqueness of the EU as normative power (2002 p.240).

It is through the operationalization of these ideas and norms that the normative power diffuses its own thinking of what is appropriate. This process is generally called the norm diffusion where norm-followers and norm-makers or norm entrepreneurs are engaged in a dynamic mutual process of interaction. The latter is the tool through which the normative power asserts its identity and makes its power marked in the fora suitable to operate in.

This leads us to conclude that we can identify a normative power by its impact on what is considered appropriate behaviour by other actors (Diez 2005 p.615). However, one can question what the way to have an impact on other actors’ perception of appropriate behaviour is. Referring to ideological power, Galtung argues (1973 p.36) that this power is influential because the power sender’s ideas penetrate and shape the will of the power-recipient through the media of culture. I would, in the same line but in different terms, rather suggest that norm diffusion as a process is the unique tool for the normative power to make its impact in world politics. This is also what Mark Leonard calls (2005 pp.34-37) as the “transformative power” which is an actor that change others through spreading certain norms.

Given the primacy of the norm diffusion process for a normative power, the next section should be devoted to a closer understanding of the diffusion phenomenon in order to clarify the distinctiveness of the concept of normative power.

### 2.2 Norm Diffusion: Definitions

When it comes to define a norm, this study adopts a constructivist approach. Accordingly, this definition should exceed, but may incorporate, the neo-liberal institutionalist or regime theory approach which argue that norms only facilitate co-operation among self-interested actors and that they constrain the behaviour of states (agents), but do not affect their identities or interests (Checkel 1999 p.84). The constructivist perspective, on the other hand, suggests that norms have three qualities:

1. They are prescriptive standards of behaviour trying to create regular and coherent practices
2. They involve a feeling of obligation and embody a sense of appropriateness and concerns about proper behaviour because actors are forced to conform to certain norms of appropriateness (March and Olsen 1998 pp.943-969).
3. They incorporate collective expectations regarding proper behaviour of actors, in a given context or with a certain identity (Björkdahl 2002 p.40).
Therefore, on the basis of this characterization of the norms, there should be no doubt that they are patterns of behaviour, yet they refer to the way an appropriate behaviour ought to be. As Björkdahl suggests (ibid. p.43) this prescriptive oughtness should be the distinctive quality of norms. This oughtness, in turn, is influential upon the norm-taker’s preferences and interests, even to the extent to impact on its identity. This is the constructivist interpretation of normative change. Hence comes the ultimate norm definition: intersubjective understandings that constitute actors’ interests and identities, and create expectations as well as prescribe how appropriate behaviour ought to be by expressing values and defining rights and obligations (ibid. p.43).

When it comes to organize norms, Manners (2000 p.31) suggests three main banners under which he deals with norms: moral, social and utilitarian norms. Moral norms, being prescriptive and bearing oughtness (Finnemore and Sikkink 1998 p.891), do not relate to rationality or optimizing behaviour (Shannon 2000 p.295), but they point to the distinction between the moral and the immoral (Spruyt 2000 p.67). Social norms, labeled as constitutive or taken-as-granted (ibid p.68), are central for the construction of an actor’s identity and its interests (Shannon 2000 p. 294-295). They make group members accept and play by certain rules that imposes predictability to their behaviours and credibility to their statements (Spruyt 2000 p.68). It is through socialization into this way of behaviour that the actor becomes a member of the group and thus the norm becomes a constitutive element to its identity and preferences. Finally, utilitarian norms serve to functional purposes, regulate behaviour, reveal information, reduce uncertainty by institutionalizing conventions and signal expectations (ibid. p.69). Manners argues (2000 p.32) that generally norms accommodate these three characteristics altogether.

Diffusion, on the other side of the coin, refers to a process whereby there occurs a transmission or spread of one actor’s ideas, information or institutions to another actor(s) (Checkel 1999 p.85). When applied to norm diffusion, this process stands for a transfer of certain codes of appropriate behaviour from an actor to another one through various means. Then, there is a need to specify how this process takes place, under what conditions it is realized and why norm entrepreneurs initiate it. This, I deal with in the next subsection.

### 2.3 Norm Diffusion: A process

#### 2.3.1 Identifying structural interaction

The literature on norms and norm diffusion vary in their conceptualization of the diffusion process, yet often a consensus can be found in organizing it into three phases (Finnemore and Sikkink 1998 p.899):

- Norm emergence
• Broad norm acceptance, i.e norm cascade, diffusion, socialization
• Internalization or institutionalization

Norms are not just out there, but they are socially constructed. While the norm entrepreneur (the agent) operates in a specific context, it is engaged in a mutually constitutive environment with the structure around itself. The structure is influential upon the evolution of the norm, whereas the latter may be targeted to alter the conditions of the structure or the context.

For a normative power, the biggest role is to become a norm entrepreneur who is an actor engaged in a mutually constitutive relationship with the structure in an attempt to promote a norm which the entrepreneur deems appropriate to do so. Norm entrepreneurs are norm promoters who try to convince a critical mass of states to embrace new norms (*ibid.* p.895). They possess solid understandings about appropriate behaviour and they select a persuasive idea and invest energy in developing a norm in order to modify behaviour so as to improve the normative context in which the norm entrepreneur operates (Björkdahl 2002 p.59). These actors engage in a dynamic process of agenda setting through their soft power capabilities and they aim to alter the behaviour of others in line with the new norm they are promoting.

However, just to define a norm entrepreneur is never enough to point out how norms come to be and how they are spread. This would have been enough if one had not adopted a constructivist position. From this angle, there is an ongoing interaction between the agents, first themselves, and then the structure. Therefore, it is imperative to address the structure or the context within which both the norm and the entrepreneur operate.

In norm diffusion terminology the structure is defined by the concept of normative match or the normative fit. This means the norm that is being promoted by the entrepreneur tries to penetrate into an already institutionalized or “normalized” environment where it is likely to find already settled, clashing or complementary norms or practices of behaviour.

All political or social phenomena exist in a structure that has been constructed by its agents while it also re-shapes and re-defines these constitutive agents. Such an intersubjective relationship also exists between the norm entrepreneur and the structure or between the norm and the structure. Norm entrepreneurs are situated in a normative context in time and space and they are influenced by existing preferences and normative structures (Björkdahl 2002 p.59). While the entrepreneur tries to bring the new norm into agenda through its cognitive tools, it has to deal with already embedded alternative norms or practices. These alternative norms or practices, in turn, have been defining and prescribing certain types of behaviour to which actors have been appealing to seek appropriate practices or to promote their interests. New norms never enter a norm vacuum but instead engage in a highly contested normative space where they must compete with other norms and perceptions of interest (Finnemore and Sikkink 1998 p.897). The new norm can become settled or institutionalized when it takes its part in the norm structure at the expense of already existing patterns of behaviour, whether appropriate or not. This is what the norm literature calls a

The structure of course does not always have to be counterproductive. In cases of normative fit, the new norm finds support and comfort in the existence of an already constructed and settled norm. Even though this is not a sine qua non for norm diffusion, it is helpful for the success of the process that the social or the cultural characteristics of the norm adopter match with the new norm. It is then more preferable for the norm entrepreneur when a cultural understanding that social entities belong to a common social category constructs a tie between them (Meyer and Strang 1993 p.490). Manners labels that as a cultural filter (Manners 2002 p.245), which affects the influence of norms and the extent of political learning and adaptation in potential norm followers. Checkel argues (1999 p.87) that it is possible to see such a match by looking at the domestic discourse, legal structure and the way bureaucratic agencies conduct procedures of the norm-receiver.

The normative fit, even though it may exist by its own, needs to be either constructed or brought to the attention of the norm-receiver. This may happen when the norm entrepreneur picks up a complementary or supportive norm and then frames it in order to create a normative fit with its new norm. For example, an actor may try to frame the norm of prevention of human suffering in a way to resonate closely with the concept of humanitarian intervention in order to empower the latter with legitimacy and attractiveness. This is raising a normative fit to counterweight a potential normative clash such as humanitarian intervention VS the principle of sovereignty.

Now that I have covered structure-agent problem, it is more suitable to proceed with a closer examination of norm-diffusion stages. Defined as a life-cycle of a norm by Finnemore and Sikkink (1998 p.895), the stages of idea selection and norm initiation overlap with norm emergence stage. Then come the phases of diffusion as broad acceptance or norm cascade or socialization; and next internalization or institutionalization.

### 2.3.2 Idea Selection

Idea selection is the stage where the norm entrepreneur chooses an idea it feels inspirational and regards as appropriate. Naturally, the entrepreneur is surrounded by a dozens of those. However, there is a number of factors which motivates the norm-promoter to lean towards a particular idea.

Identity of course comes at the forefront. As long as this particular notion has the same value-based resonance and frequency with the entrepreneur’s own ideas, it is more likely to be chosen. Secondly, this idea should be a logically “operate-able” belief that may be turned into practice and thus make it spread. This is actually an extension of the necessity that the idea and its features should match the characteristics of the problem the entrepreneur wants to tackle (Björkdahl 2002 p.60). It will be more useful if the entrepreneur recognizes a
certain normative fit, time and space-wise, between this idea and the existing structure, but it is not obligatory. It might be the case that the entrepreneur is willing to revolutionize the structure, thus is ready to face firmest normative clashes.

### 2.3.3 Norm Initiation

Norm initiation is the phase where the entrepreneur takes the idea and creates it as an issue. This is the act of framing, which needs to be performed in a persuasive and credible way in order to confer meanings and normative attributes to this idea. It is the stage where the entrepreneur is crucial since they make the norm emerge by setting the agenda, associating it with certain attributes to make it persuasive, legitimate and attractive to be considered appropriate and desirable. Calling it as a soft power resource, Björkdahl defines (2002 p.61), taking after Michael Barnett, a frame as follows: a device used to help fix meanings, organize experience, alert others that their interests and possibly their identities are at stake, propose solutions to ongoing problems. Thus, it is through a frame that a norm entrepreneur empowers the idea with a prescription of appropriate behaviour.

Frames are created by the entrepreneur through their language and speech acts. In this way, it shapes the idea in a certain interpretive way backed up with a certain context to refer to certain meanings, symbols and other means of cognition. It is the framing act where the entrepreneur and the structure engage in an interaction because the former associates certain symbols and various attributes to its catchy idea in order to render it attractive and appropriate. In return, the structure is the environment in which the entrepreneur is offered with such complementary frames at its disposal. The structure, when the time comes, can also be altered by the new frames and cognitive units crafted by the entrepreneur.

When it comes to identify framing acts, Björkdahl (ibid. p.89-93) offers three types of framing acts:

1. Diagnostic framing: identification of the problem
2. Prognostic framing: suggestions for solutions or appropriate strategies and instruments for the problem
3. Motivational framing: framing the idea in order to motivate the audience by creating resonances with moral obligations, success stories, other desirable practices of existing normative structure or cost-benefit analysis.

In sum, norm initiation is a cumulative effect of framing activities, which stand for all cognitive tools used to project the idea of the norm entrepreneur into a normative context and thus expect norm-followers to rise and be persuaded, adopt the norm and thus crate a “norm cascade” (Finnemore and Sikkink 1998 p.902).

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2.3.4 Diffusion and Socialization Phase

For the diffusion process, the norm entrepreneur and the potential norm followers should be both evaluated because it is an interaction between two actors engaged in the same process of diffusion. Considering first the entrepreneur, it would be useful to elaborate on what strategies it could employ during the actual diffusion process. These strategies refer to the ways with which norm promoters make the potential followers adopt the new norm.

Concerning the norm followers, the process of socialization is vital since it defines how they come to accept the promoted norm (Björkdahl 2002 p.61). It is through socialization that norm followers adopt changes to their behaviour with the help of entrepreneur’s strategies.

Manners suggests (2002 pp.244-245), while talking about the EU, certain ways for norm diffusion:

1. **Contagion**: This is the model where there is almost no deliberate entrepreneur, but rather the norms are diffused unintentionally because other actors wish to imitate the norm representative. Contagion takes place by virtue of the follower’s intrinsic belief in the appropriateness and desirability of the norm. Of course, the entrepreneur is still on stage since it is thanks to the entrepreneur’s successful and virtuous representation and implementation of the norm that potential followers aspire to it. Manners puts forward Mercosur’s adoption of regional integration in that sense (*ibid*. p.244). David Coombes (1998 pp. 237-238) explains this by referring to how the EU leads by “virtuous example” in exporting its experiment in regional integration.

2. **Informational**: This type of diffusion comes to being with strategic communications, as it has been exemplified by EU’s declarations or policy initiatives.

3. **Procedural**: Diffusion is realized through institutionalized relationships. For example, inter-regional co-operation agreements, membership to an organization or simply EU’s enlargement lead to such diffusion.

4. **Transference**: This strategy refers to exchanging goods, trade, providing assistance or aid. Manners labels this as carrot and stick-ism or conditionality which facilitate diffusion.

5. **Overt diffusion**: Physical presence of the entrepreneur in norm-followers may result in diffusion, resulting from both symbolic and substantial normative power (Manners 2000 p.35).

These comprehensive strategies, in turn, comprise of various means of influence which vary along a spectrum of persuasion, argumentation, and manipulation to coercion. In that sense, they may be singled or bundled. Those characterized by persuasion or argumentation stand for interactive, more learning-oriented, interest or preference-changing strategies (Checkel 2001 p.562, Björkdahl 2002 p.101). They may also take shape of a reciprocal persuasion in which a two-way learning (entrepreneur-follower) is at stake. Towards the other
edge of the spectrum come more coercive strategies which range from manipulation to coercive norm diffusion. The latter consists of pressure, arm-twisting, penetration, sanctions and shaming (Björkdahl 2002 p.102). They are asocial processes and do not often culminate in legitimate diffusion. Thus, they may not be as successful as the communicative means are because if the followers are not persuaded for the appropriateness of the new norm by heart, they might not lead to the next stage of internalization where the norm becomes settled, i.e. the interests and preferences of the follower had changed (Payne 2001, p.41). If the selection of the strategies matters that much, then it is worthy to investigate what factors matter when an entrepreneur bundles its strategies.

Naturally, the selection of these strategies and the means they are materialized in the actual cases very much depend on the identity of the entrepreneur at stake (Björkdahl 2002 p.101). If the entrepreneur’s identity does not resonate with communicative behaviour, then one can not expect it to employ argumentative persuasion. In another way, the promoter may not be able to meet the potential followers in suitable fora, or simply the norm-receivers may not regard the entrepreneur as legitimate as enough to be advocating this particular norm. This is a logical extension of the prerequisite that the entrepreneur or a normative power actor needs to be considered legitimate in order to successfully represent and diffuse the norm. Potential followers will only conform to the norm if they see it as something appropriately framed, thus desirable. A precondition for that is to regard the entrepreneur as just and well-placed to be able to advocate the norm (ibid. p.61). One other criterion is capabilities for the strategy selection. Logically, one actor can not employ coercive methods if it is simply not able to do so materially because of lack of resources or the incapacity to capitalize resources into practices. This relates to the constraints imposed by the structure upon the entrepreneur. Some strategies or tools may not be available to the entrepreneur because either the nature of the problem does not allow them or the potential norm followers can not be reached through these tools.

Following the evaluation of the norm entrepreneurs in the diffusion process, one may wonder what incentives an entrepreneur possesses in order to initiate norm promotion. It is obvious that the process is long, costly and requires a lot of energy invested for the normative penetration to the place into the existing structure. In the literature four main points of motivation seem to be underlined: empathy, ideational commitment, altruism and self-interested behaviour (Finnemore and Sikkink 1998 p.898, Jacobsen, John Kurt 1995 “Much Ado About Ideas: Cognitive Factor in Economic Policy” pp.283-310 in World Politics vol.47 no.2, p.291, quoted in Björkdahl 2002 p.48).

Empathy can be observed when entrepreneurs show an interest in the welfare of others even if this has no effect in their own material well-being. (Finnemore and Sikkink 1998 p.898). Altruism, on the other hand, refers to promoting or advocating norms to benefit others even at the risk of harm to the entrepreneur (ibid. p.898). Ideational commitment consists of a high moral conviction on the part of the entrepreneur who firmly believes that the attributes of the promoted norm represent ethical righteousness. Lastly, norm entrepreneurs may engage in norm diffusion for the purpose of promoting self-interest. These
self-regarding interests may then well be collective goals. One note of caution is required concerning the matter of self-interest. Such a motivation is suggested under a constructivist framework in the sense that these interests are not given or fixed preferences. On the contrary, they are re-defined and influenced interests which have been shaped or altered by the promoted norm (ibid. p.898, Björkdahl 2002 p.48). These interests may also be collective ones which benefit both the entrepreneur and the potential norm followers. The issue of interest in motivating the entrepreneur to diffuse a norm is actually a crucial subject since the more a norm seems to promote the entrepreneur’s self-interest exclusively, the less likely it is diffused among the third parties.

Such a discussion is indeed central to the evaluation of the norm-follower and the process of socialization in the diffusion stage. The important question here is why some actors choose to conform and accept the new norm. This relates to the other side of the diffusion process: norm-followers.

There are many reasons why an actor prefers to conform to the new norm. Finnemore and Sikkink organize them in three headings (1998 p.903): legitimation, conformity and esteem. When one entrepreneur frames an idea and tries to sell it as a new norm, the targeted norm-receiver may choose to accept it in order to show that it has adapted to the social environment, to prove that it belongs to this normative structure (ibid. p.903). This process is called conformity and it stands for the norm-receiver’s desire to take part in the normative group it sees as desirable and attractive. Another reason is to increase domestic or international reputation. Norm-followers may reason that others will think better of them if they conform to this norm. It might as well be the case that the near environment of the norm-receiver adopted the new norm altogether and that there is a high peer pressure upon this particular norm-receiver. In order to get rid of this pressure, shame or guilt, the actor may simply opt for adoption of the new norm. This is what Finnemore and Sikkink (ibid. p.903) labels as esteem. Legitimation, in turn, overarches these two by referring to a combination of esteem and conformity in the sense that the domestic constituents of the norm follower will believe that their government is a legitimate one by conforming to a set of desirable behaviour. They will also be impressed by the esteem condition because they shall have a strong belief in the appropriateness of their governments by looking at what other actors think of their country (ibid. p.903).

Having dealt with the norm-senders and the norm-receivers’ roles in the diffusion stage, a portrait of interaction is needed in order to finalize the process. Such a portrait is useful because of identifying the necessary conditions required for the diffusion or the socialization or the norm cascade to take place. The extent of success depends on the means the entrepreneur employs, the frames it constructs, the degree of contextual match, the perception of the potential norm follower. A high level of success refers to a turning point generation of a momentum which empowers the new norm into a more widely accepted practice. Therefore, the requirements can be summarized as follows:

- The identity and the capacity of the entrepreneur need to be legitimate and appropriate with the nature and attributes of the norm in order to create a
righteous image of norm diffusion. Norms held by states that are viewed as successful and desirable models have a bigger chance to diffuse (ibid. p.906). This, in turn, depends on mostly the perception of norm-followers that the norm is promoted not just for the sake of the entrepreneur’s self-regarding interests, but also for the sake of appropriate behaviour. The norm-receiver also needs to notice an overlapping relationship between the entrepreneur and the norm that is being diffused.

- If normative clashes can be minimal, conformity is then facilitated. A normative fit with a positive cultural filter would be highly beneficial (ibid. p.908). A match between the problem that the entrepreneur and the followers wish to address is equally helpful. In that sense, transitional or insecure actors would be more receptive to new norms if they are desirably framed. Björkdahl also argues (2002 p.122) in favour of critical state adoption, meaning a norm cascade is more easily formed if key actors (regional powers, big powers, benevolently perceived actors) are convinced.

### 2.3.5 Internalization and Institutionalization

The internalization phase is the last stage in the life cycle of a norm. Internalization can be observed when the norm is vastly accepted. The level of conformity is so high that the norm adapters are no longer adopters, but they are normal actors who have internalized this new appropriate behaviour which is not so new anymore either. The norm achieves a taken-for-granted quality which makes conformance with the norm almost automatic (Finnemore and Sikkink 1998 p.904).

During this internalization phase organizational platforms and institutions matter gravely. The recent norm followers, who have now internalized the new norm, alongside the norm entrepreneurs, constitute the agents of institutionalization (ibid. p.902). From that moment onwards, once the norm takes part in the normative context, violations to it or denials need to be justified since the norm is now widely accepted. There should, accordingly, no longer be counter-claims against the validity of the recently established norm. The latter, in turn, deepens its roots as long as it induces practices. This is because the practice and the norm are mutually constitutive and mutually reinforcing (Björkdahl 2002 p.63).

Lastly, in order to see whether institutionalization has taken place or not, organizational and procedural changes, new or adopted policies and programs can be traced (ibid. p.136).
3) Regional Co-operation in Norm Diffusion: EU and the SEE

3.1 Identifying Actors in Idea Selection

In order to have a grasp of EU’s norm diffusion in terms of regional co-operation, first there is a need to put the variables into their places. A primary endeavor should be to prove that regional co-operation and the EU match in the sense that the EU is a just actor that is able to claim legitimacy in putting forward regional co-operation as a solution for SEE’s problems. To repeat it, the norm entrepreneur needs to incorporate the idea in its own affair so that potential norm followers do not doubt the decency of the entrepreneur.

While defining core and minor norms of the EU, Manners (2002 pp.242-243) does not mention regional co-operation. Actually, it is not included in any of the norm literature concerning the Union. However, Smith (2005 p.2) labels regional co-operation and regional integration as constitutive parts of the foreign policy objectives of the Union, I accept that objectives are not necessarily norms, yet by looking at the way regional co-operation is understood by the EU and the way it is framed, it is plausible to regard it as a norm.

It is necessary to show the mutual relationship regional co-operation and the EU have together. Additionally, I should also point out the prescriptive quality of regional co-operation in the sense of its appropriateness.

That being said, the mutually constitutive relationship between the EU and the idea of regional co-operation has been addressed by many authors in the literature (Anastakis and Bojicic-Dzelilovic 2002, Bretherton and Vogler 1999, Edwards 2005, Petiteville 2003, Ralchev 2004, Smith 2005, van Meurs 2001). Since the end of the Second World War, starting with the European Steel and Coal Community, the integration project has more than anything signified regional reconciliation and co-operation in key sectors. It was through the regional integration that Europe managed to eliminate violent conflicts among the Member States. Thus, the Union’s support for regional co-operation stems from the belief, born of its own experience, that it provides the basis for peace, economic development and prosperity (Smith 2005 p.71). Regional co-operation in Europe, starting in coal and steel and atomic energy issues, has generated an island of peace by representing a model of reconciliation (Bretherton and Vogler 1999 p.198, Ginsberg 2001, p.6). Promotion of regional co-operation is clearly one issue where the EU stands out internationally and there should be no problem of
sincerity in the EU trying to frame regional co-operation. The policy is unique because of the actor behind it (Smith 2005, p.45). EU’s experience proves that regionalism originated in economic interests can help overcome larger and deep-rooted problems.

In sum, regional co-operation is one of the main factors which moulded the current shape of the EU. Its characterization by peace, stability and ever-closer relations among Member States is to a large extent established by regional co-operation. On the other side of the coin, the EU also contributed to the core value of regional co-operation by projecting it in international fora and thus proving the potential of success it bears. The simple fact that today EU appeals to Latin America, Africa, SEE or to ASEAN is a self-standing point that EU has largely contributed to the added-value of regional co-operation. This, actually, is what the norm diffusion process is all about: taking an idea and transforming it into something that most actors aspire to achieve and deem it as desirable and something that should be attained. In that way, regional co-operation is an indispensable part of EU’s identity, especially in its external relations. While regional co-operation constitutes a part of the Union’s identity, the latter also reinforces the positive image of it by attributing a normative quality to it. The fact that EU’s model of regional integration is being imitated proves a feeling of appropriateness that actors perceive when looking at EU’s own experience. This, in turn, reminds of the social or constitutive quality of a norm (see p.3).

Therefore, while trying to problematize EU as a legitimate representative of regional co-operation, I have also demonstrated the idea selection phase of the norm diffusion process. Since the entrepreneur’s identity and familiar attributes of the idea to it are crucial in idea selection, there should be no problem of sincerity in EU’s efforts to frame regional co-operation. Additionally, there was a structural fit since there was a widespread regionalist movement in post Cold War period (Smith 2005, p.69), which also furthers the entrepreneur-norm match.

In idea selection, the faith in the operateability of the idea is also important on the part of the entrepreneur. A match between the problem the norm entrepreneur wishes to address and the selected idea should exist. This criterion actually refers to how the EU perceives regional co-operation and how it offers this notion to potential norm followers. The relevant question is how the EU frames regional co-operation in the specific context of the SEE. For answering such a question, the process of norm initiation and framing acts need to be explored because they will reveal how the EU regards, defines and discerns regional co-operation, what kind of a contextual relationship (norm-problem match) it sees in the SEE and how it presents the norm to the region.
3.2 Norm Initiation: Framing Regional Co-operation to SEE

Norm initiation, as it has been argued in the theoretical part above, can be traced in the language, speech acts, policies, and thus framing activities of the entrepreneur.

In a communication the Commission defines regional economic co-operation as all efforts on the part of the neighbouring countries to address issues of common interest (COM (95) 219 p.3). Even though the Commission envisaged this definition for regional economic co-operation, the general character of the definition allows for widening it to the overall regional co-operation notion. The definition is self-evidently broad, which can be interpreted that the EU does not wish to define regional co-operation in a strict manner, but rather it prefers to include every kind of cooperative behaviour between neighbouring countries in the definition. It does not lay down specific criteria for an activity to be labeled as regional co-operation practice. Thus a flexibility clause is initially placed upon the initiation of regional co-operation as a norm.

Seeing how the Union defines regional co-operation, the next logical step should be to investigate how it frames it and with which symbols, narratives or attributes it associates with regional co-operation. In the CARDS (Community Assistance for Reconstruction, Development and Stabilization of the Western Balkans) assistance program the Commission links regional co-operation to some higher goals by stating that underlying regional co-operation is the EU’s own philosophy that deeper co-operation with neighbouring countries is a route to national as well as regional stability and growth by serving their mutual interests (Smith 2005 p.84). Moreover, in another Communication, the Commission argues that regional co-operation can form part of a general strategy for encouraging sustained economic growth (COM (95) 219 p.1). The Council, in turn, links regional co-operation to contribute to integrating developing countries into the world economy and establishing sustainable growth (Development Council, Resolution of 1 June 1995). In addition, the Union also supported regional initiatives stemming from the region itself by regarding them as useful frameworks to foster good neighbourly relations, encourage political stability, strengthen human rights and democracy as well as to boost economic and trade co-operation (COM (96) 601 p.3 regarding Central European Initiative). Therefore, generally, the EU anticipates to generate attention for regional co-operation by attaching it to other desirable notions and thus to construct a largely positive image for its idea.

If taken to the scene of the SEE, framing acts are not different than the aforementioned ones. According to the theoretical part concerning norm initiation, frames first identify and interpret a situation or a problem, which refers to the diagnostic framing. The following sub-section will explore these diagnostic frames the EU has built for regional co-operation in the Western Balkans.
3.2.1 Identifying the problem: Diagnostic Frames

Diagnostic frames are tools of problem perception constructed to show what the entrepreneur desires to tackle through the new norm. Accordingly, in our case, to identify diagnostic frames of the EU there is a need to have a closer understanding of the Union’s policies towards the region in order to see what EU tries to address.

The Union, in the previous version of its website, declared that in SEE it aims to create a situation in which military conflict will become unthinkable and thereby to extend to SEE the area of peace, stability, prosperity and freedom which the Member States have created in the last fifty years (http://europa.eu.int/comm/external_relations/see/index.htm). EU’s objective is to pursue stability, security, prosperity in the Western Balkans through region’s progressive integration into the European mainstream … without the risk of renewed instability in a directly adjacent region (COM (2006) 27 p.2). Beyond these general definitions, the problem has many faces.

The states that emerged after the break-up of Yugoslavia have searched for new norms to replace the old ones discredited by the collapse of communism and violent conflicts following it (Björkdahl 2005 p.257). The attempts of the international community but especially those of the EU have been regarded as filling this normative vacuum. The region, having been constructed as the “other” with negative characteristics against which a positive and self-congratulating image of Europe and the West was forged (Mazower 2001 passim, Todorova 1997 passim, Vucetic 2001 p.111); suffered from a “war-zone” reputation because of the dissolution wars of Yugoslavia. The term Balkanization, meaning a petty-minded political fragmentation (Vucetic 2001 p.111), has become an international motto describing complicated situations and clashes reaching anarchy dimensions, as Redhouse puts it: to divide into different small states, hostile towards each other (Koloğlu 2003 p.235). It also represents lack of trust on the part of the regional states towards each other by virtue of this fragmentation and hostility. While initiating the Stability Pact, the Special Coordinator Bodo Hombach argued that there was a need to move away from the cliché of the Balkans as a place of conflict and instability towards a picture of the SEE that is rid of the ghosts of the Balkans, towards a vision of the future boom town of Europe (Hombach 2000 p.7).

Thus, the main priority for the EU is to replace Balkanization with Europeanization, which came to refer to de-Balkanize the SEE and in this regard eliminate heterogeneity, backwardness, instability and violence from the region (Vucetic 2001 p.111). This was actually the main reason why the EU opted for a name change to wrap up the region with new connotations: SEE or the Western Balkans. These two new labels aimed to neutralize negative features of the “Balkans” (Judy Batt 2004 p.12, Papandreu 2001 p.43) and testifying that the region belongs to Europe as a periphery of the Continent (Vucetic 2001 p.112). Since the EU’s policy tries to achieve a non-violent, economically prosperous and stable zone in Western Balkans, regional co-operation has to target the same goals
because the Union advocates it as a cornerstone of its policy towards the region (COM (2003) 139 p.12)

Apart from those transition problems, there are security, economic and political sub-problems which all originate in the transition that the region is going through. The most pressing problems or threats stemming from the region are soft security threats: trafficking in drugs, human beings, flourishing of Balkan-based organized crime and corruption (Moustakis 2004 p.144), constant flow of immigrants (International Commission on the Balkans 2005 p.160), lack of social capital exemplified in the low level of trust among the SEECs to each other (Aksu 2003 p.58, Welfens 2001 p.15), poor regional infrastructure linked to disappointing records of energy interdependence, unsatisfactory respect to minority rights and inadequate attention to integrating multiculturalism (Anastakis and Bojicic-Dzelilovic 2002 p.19, Moustakis 2004 p.144), return of displaced persons, economic problems relate to formal and informal barriers to regional trade, black-grey market-based economy, high rates of unemployment (Moustakis 2004 pp.148-149). All these problems have been identified by the EU in the annual reports of the SAP. It is obvious that these challenges are by their nature multilateral and regional in character. The overarching challenge is that all of them are mutually reinforcing. The presence of those problems is usually the cause of another and is further exacerbated by the existence of an additional number of these factors (Turković 2002 p.305). For example, the poor economic situation and the existence of dominant black or grey sectors culminate in a high rate of unemployment, which leaves a great deal of human resource to the disposal of organized crime activities or illegal migration to the West. Fears also exist that organized crime networks engage in co-operation with international terrorist groupings. Fighting against organized crime is in turn a very demanding task because it requires involvement of every SEEC.

The implications of these challenges for the EU are acute, given that the Balkans are the main gateway for illegal drugs, goods, immigrants into Western Europe (Hills 2004 p.12). The Commission stated that 2/3 of the heroine seized in the EU comes via the Balkans (COM (2002) 163 p.12). It is thus crucial for the EU to prevent the region from becoming a springboard for soft security threats to disperse into Fortress Europe. According to Eurobarometer, the top two issues which European citizens fear the most are international terrorism and organized crime, to which Hill (2004 p.18) adds uncontrolled migration. EU is aware that the region faces many common challenges that require decisive action, yet argues that the SAP can not solve these problems for the concerned countries, but it might just help (COM (2002) 163 p.9).

Consequently, EU identifies de-Balkanization, lack of regional trust and regional soft security problems as diagnostic frames. The next step is to offer regional co-operation as the solution to these problems via prognostic frames.
3.2.2 Prognostic Frames: Suggesting Regional Co-operation as the solution

The prognostic frames have been constructed in a way to spotlight regional co-operation as the appropriate way to overcome region’s problems and help it cope with transition problems of Balkanization. The Union argues that:

“…regional co-operation in Western Balkans is needed as a crucial ingredient of stability, a catalyst for reconstruction, good neighbourliness and good political relations, (is) about helping overcome nationalism and intolerance and promoting mutual understanding and political dialogue in the region” (Western Balkans and Regional Co-operation 2006 p.4).

In that way, EU suggests regional co-operation to the SEE in a belief that regional settlements are the suitable grounds for overcoming historical antagonisms and ethnic clashes while the economic side of co-operation underpins economic growth and development both of which, in turn, lead to peace and security. The Union recognizes the fragmented economic space of the region and thus projects regional co-operation as the only realistic way forward (ibid. p.6). EU believes that regional co-operation is a key factor for the establishment of security, political stability and also economic prosperity and development of the Western Balkans countries. It is argued that different set of reasons for which regional co-operation in the Western Balkans is crucial, are closely interrelated: for instance regional stability and security are needed for economic development, which in turn favours stability and security in the region (ibid. p.3)

In order to overcome lack of trust and the low degree of social capital in the SEE, the Union offers regional co-operation to develop relationships based on trust and confidence that will enable the region to reduce the internal and external threats to stability (COM (2002) 163 p.11). A high level of trust among the leaders of the region is necessary for enhancing bilateral relations in key sectors: energy, transportation, border management, commercial ties.

Concerning these regional soft security threats, the Union argues that concerted action is indispensable and that addressing these threats will be successful only if Western Balkans countries and the EU work together (ibid. p.8). A central conviction in the Stability Pact or the CARDS financial framework is that the issues and problems in the SEE can not be solved on a national basis or through bilateral policy alone (Anastakis and Bojicic-Dzelilovic 2002 p.19). These problems are regional in nature and they thus require regional action. In this regard, the Union advocates regional co-operation as the solution to these challenges. For example, in the first annual report on the SAP, the Commission argues that:

“Regional co-operation is essential to tackling organized crime. The web of organized crime feeds nationalism and extremism in the countries of the region and exports its illicit products to the EU” (COM (2002) 163 p.12).

Moreover, in the same report, it is stated that regional co-operation is:

- the only answer to the issue of refugees and displaced persons,
• a necessary accompaniment to market opening,
• a way to enhance regional transportation, energy networks, telecommunication, scientific and technologic co-operation (ibid. p.12).

3.2.3 Motivational Frames

As incentives to impose further attraction to regional co-operation, EU appeals to certain narratives or success, some cost and benefit analyses and big carrots. The Commission argues that the EU is built on a deeply rooted foundation of regional co-operation and based on its own experience of the benefits of this notion, that political understanding, economic and social prosperity all depend on it, it believes the countries of Western Balkans would benefit significantly from closer co-operation (COM (2003) 139 pp.12-13).

In a similar way, the EU claims it is itself a model for overcoming conflict and promoting reconciliation through close co-operation to achieve common goals (COM (1999) 235). Thus, the Union has put its weight behind the benefits of regional co-operation and integration (Cremona 2004 p.561).

EU also makes use of certain cost benefit analyses. It argues, for example, it is not a rational use of resources that each country in the region tackles organized crime on its own (COM (2002) 163 p.12).

The biggest motivational frame, however, is the linkage the Union created between regional co-operation and deeper relations with itself, even to the extent of giving full membership prospect to potential norm followers. The first annual report on the SAP explicitly states that regional co-operation is an integral part of preparation for integration into European structures (ibid. p.6). Such a framing act is remarkably related to the strategies used in the Union’s norm diffusion because linking regional co-operation to EU’s power of attraction, i.e membership, has been the biggest tool that it employed during the diffusion process. This conditional behaviour is the issue of inquiry for the upcoming section where EU’s approach towards the region will be shown in an attempt to prove its encouragement for regional co-operation.

3.3 Diffusion and Socialization: Regional Co-operation in the SEE

Since the framing context has been already explored, this section will address entrepreneur’s strategies, its image, the influence of the structure in terms of contextual/normative match and thus how the socialization looks like as a cumulative effect of these variables’ interaction.
3.3.1 EU’s Diffusion Strategies

In order to see what strategies the Union employs in diffusing regional co-operation, first there is a need to develop the framework whereby EU is dealing with the SEE because EU decided to offer motivational frames in its policy towards the region for the sake of norm diffusion. This framework in turn refers to the policies, procedures and institutions the entrepreneur constructs for the region. They are worthy of research because it will be proved that in every level of interaction with the region, the Union puts forward regional co-operation as a prerequisite for the commencement and advancement of relations.

3.3.2 Overviewing EU’s Approach towards the SEE

The Union started to deal with the region systematically after the signing of the Dayton Agreement in 1995. Since then, EU’s strategies evolved through two different pillars: first the Regional Approach, then the Stability and Association Process which was complemented by the Stability Pact. As it will be displayed, every process was cemented by regional co-operation conditionality in the sense that it was a policy priority for the Union (Western Balkans and Regional Co-operation 2006) to develop deeper relations with the countries of the region. Conditionality refers to the use of fulfillment of stipulated political obligations as a prerequisite for obtaining economic aid, debt relief, most-favoured nation treatment, access to subsidized credit or membership in regional or global organization (Ralchev 2004 p.3). Therefore, it is a linking by state or the international organization, of perceived benefits to another state to the fulfillment of economic and political conditions (Charillion 2004 p.258).

Concerning first the Regional Approach, which was initiated in 1996, accompanied by the Royaumont Process for Stability and Good Neighbourliness in the SEE, it offered financial assistance, unilateral trade preferences and contractual relations in the form of bilateral co-operation agreements (Pippan 2004 p.222). As it is evident in the naming of Royaumont Process, the Regional Approach was offered on the condition that there was willingness on the part of the Southeast European countries (SEECs) to engage in economic co-operation with each other. Conditionality was introduced in areas of good neighbourly relations and a willingness to work together to consolidate peace (Council Conclusions and Declaration on Former Yugoslavia, Bull. EU 1/2-1996), which were features of regional co-operation.

In April 1997 the Council adopted Conclusions on the Principle of Conditionality Governing the Development of the European Union’s Relations with certain countries of Southeast Europe. With it came a graduated approach Gradualism, in turn, stood for an incremental process based on the degree of compliance with conditionality. The lowest degree of conditionality pertains to the granting of autonomous trade preferences, which was followed by financial and technical support under Community’s assistance programs (ibid. p.224). The final point was contractual relations which could be initiated only if the criteria
for the previous stages and additional conditions have been met. In sum, positive and negative conditionality pervaded the guidelines of April 1997. The Council Conclusions stated that assessment of these countries’ compliance with the conditions of the Regional Approach, i.e readiness of the beneficiary country to engage in cross-border co-operation… will take place at all stages of the development of relations (Bull.EU 4-1997 2.2.1). A satisfactory degree of compliance would be rewarded with deepened bilateral co-operation even to the extent of contractual relations, while no or poor compliance points to negative conditionality in the sense of suspension or cancellation of aids or agreements.

It was after the serious Kosovo crisis in 1999 that the EU underwent a major change of policy in the SEE. The first pillar of change was the establishment of the Stability Pact, which was initiated by the EU within its Common Foreign and Security Policy even though it is not an EU instrument (Pippan 2004 p.227). The Pact aimed to bring together all actors with an interest in the stability, peace and reconstruction in the Balkans, as it includes the other G-8 countries, all SEECs, a number of observer and facilitating countries, international financial institutions as World Bank, IMF, European Investment Bank, European Bank for Reconstruction and Development, many regional initiatives SECI, Central European Initiative, SEECP, as well as the EU (Saccomanni 2000 p.65). It is a comprehensive regional platform covering a broad spectrum of issues: democratization and human rights under Working Table I, economic reconstruction, co-operation and development under Working Table II, security issues under Working Table III. The SP is an all-encompassing program in which cross-border regional co-operation and neighbourly behaviour were to be encouraged and rewarded in an attempt to modify the nature of activities in the region (Erler 2004 p.12). The importance of the Pact comes from the recognition that regional problems require regional solutions, as it has been confirmed by Finnish Presidency in the Report on EU action in… South-Eastern Europe (Smith 2005 p.83). Its profile is totally regional in the sense that the activities in each working table are multilateral and regional in character, making the SEECs seek collective responses to their common transnational problems.

All in all, it serves as an institutional platform in which EU can localize and stretch regional co-operation by making SEECs work together for solving collective problems.

The change of policy was institutionalized in May 1999 with the expansion of the Regional Approach to become the Stabilization and Association Process (COM (99) 235). As the name implies, the SAP aims first to stabilize the region and then associate it even to the extent of accession to the EU. The process entails a distinctively more ambitious vision for the region’s rapprochement with the EU by replacing traditional co-operation agreements with Stabilization and Association Agreements (SAA) (ibid. p.219). In consecutive European summits \(^2\) SEECs were given membership prospect if they met co-operation criteria and other specific conditions brought about by the SAP, as well as those carried over

from 1997 Conclusions. This means the priority to engage in regional co-operation was left intact and was placed on the heart on the new process too.

The SAP, by virtue of being the most comprehensive and sophisticated approach of the EU towards the SEE, did not represent an ultimate innovation, but it rather dwelled upon the previous mechanisms by enlarging the carrots while also thickening the sticks. The same principle of conditionality was still fundamental to the SAP, both politically and economically in the sense that if requirements were not met, neither contractual relations were established, nor financial or technical assistance was provided. Therefore, EU’s co-operation with the regional countries still depended on partially the cooperative relations the SEECS conducted with the neighbouring countries (Kramer 2000 p.28), as the previous philosophy of conditionality foresaw.

What did the EU have to offer in return? Particularly through SAAs close ties between SEECS and the EU were promised while at the same time regional co-operation between these countries themselves and between them and their neighbours was also conditionalized. Each SAA entails a binding commitment for the signatory country to engage in regional co-operation (Pippan 2004 p.229). The program is still characterized by a graduated approach consisting of: (Rachev 2004 p.2).

1. Trade liberalization enabling improved access to the internal market of the EU. Only economic reforms and enhanced regional co-operation are needed for a country’s entitlement to preferential trade agreements (Pippan 2004 p.231).
2. The second step refers to financial assistance with a new modified program called Community Assistance for Reconstruction, Development and Stabilization – CARDS to replace previous OBNOVA and PHARE.. For a SEE to receive financial assistance, it needs to comply with respect for democracy and human rights in addition to 1997 Conclusions where regional co-operation is still highly prioritized.
3. The final stage, most significantly, is the SAA which is an instrument for long-term integration of the countries of the Western Balkans into EU structures (Kramer 2000 p.30). They are primarily intended to create formal association with the Union over a transitional period during which the country concerned gradually adopts Union’s laws to the core standards and rules of the Single Market (Pippan 2004 p.233). To start negotiations for a SAA, it is necessary to meet relevant conditions laid down in 1997 Conclusions, thus regional co-operation conditionality. However, the conclusion of it necessitates the highest conditionality, almost close to the Copenhagen criteria.

Both the Commission and the Council exercise review mechanisms on a regular basis in order to see the level of compliance with the SAP criteria. In cases of non-compliance, negative conditionality may be adopted by the Council in the form of postponement of new co-operation initiatives, suspension or withdrawal of all existing co-operation under the SAP (ibid. p.239).
In sum, EU’s approach towards the region has been a blend of bilateralism and regionalism, the latter being a precondition among the others for the endorsement of the former. The Union tries to achieve its goals by offering massive carrots, such as accession, remarkable technical or financial assistance on the basis of both positive and negative conditionality.

3.3.3 EU’s Approach Applied to Diffusion Strategies

Given this approach, there are overlapping strategies with Manners’s conception of diffusion tools. It is obvious that strategic communication and institutionalized relationships of the EU are crucial for the diffusion of regional co-operation since the Regional Approach, the SP and the SAP were and are new policy initiatives targeted especially for the SEE. More importantly, regional co-operation was and is the prerequisite for every each of them.

Therefore, through SAP, both informational and procedural diffusion take place. The Commission and the Council issue annual reports, declarations, communications or conclusions about the level of conditionality, including regional co-operation, that the SEE has displayed throughout the year. This is done in an attempt to monitor whether the countries concerned comply with the initial condition to engage in regional co-operation and good neighbourly relations. For procedural diffusion, again the SAP and, in addition to it the SP, they offer institutionalized relationships whereby the EU can promote regional co-operation. As it has been mentioned, the SP is the most comprehensive regional framework where regional issues are tackled multilaterally. In SAP, the countries reaching the level of concluding a SAA are not expected to go back from this upper level. Thus they are always expected to promote and engage in regional co-operation in their relations with neighbouring countries since it is a precondition for a SEEC to actively participate in regional co-operation in order to be eligible for SAA conclusion. SAAs here offer the institutionalized relationships that procedural diffusion requires.

Both the SAP is and its precedent Regional Approach was inclined to generate transference diffusion because they envisaged generous assistance programs to the region while strict conditionality was applied to the release of aids, technical assistance or trade liberalization. Those who did not contribute or take part in regional co-operation were not allowed to enjoy EU’s benefits. Lastly, the SAP is again highly important because it has the power and potential to culminate in overt diffusion by virtue of institutionalizing relations with the regional countries. The Commission today is represented in each SEEC. Its representative delegations interact with the officials of SEECS on a regular basis. Many EU programs are being offered to the region, thus providing a current presence of the Union in the region. The Stability Pact has a similar effect since it organizes many conventions, conferences or gatherings where officials from EU and SEECS meet and interact. These officials, especially those of the Commission, promote EU’s norms in their personal contacts as well as in their professional occupations.
The table below summarizes what type of relationship brought about what kind of diffusion:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Informational</th>
<th>Procedural</th>
<th>Transference</th>
<th>Overt Diffusion</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Regional Approach</strong></td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>SP</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>SAP</strong></td>
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Therefore it seems that the EU’s promotion of regional co-operation in the SEE has been an active and coercive one (Smith 2005 p.82) since at every stage regional co-operation is being “conditionalized” for further deepening of relations between SEECS and the Union. This means the EU does not employ social models in the region, but rather it aims to coerce diffusion. However, it does not mean that conditionality is always bad and anti-diffusion. It would have been so if the Union had used only negative or punitive conditionality, which refers to “sticking” the non-complier. The conditionality that EU brings into the SEE is a blend of positive and negative conditionality based on meritocratic performance of each country. It offers delicious carrots to those who adapt to the norm and thus socialize among themselves, but it also punishes those who do not conform by excluding them from deepened bilateral relations. However, this does not go too far to actually introduce sanctions, threat to or actual use of force, or similar overt coercion methods. EU’s negative conditionality is just not offering its carrots or withdrawing them. Coercion is present in the promotion regional co-operation when EU’s security interests are paramount (ibid. pp.95-96). Based on its identity and the practice it has evolved since its conception, the Union prefers to rely on legal frameworks, diplomacy, economic assistance, political or economic dialogue for the promotion of regional co-operation, to which norm followers voluntarily enter.

Then the important question would be why the EU opts for conditionality and soft coercion instead of persuasive or argumentative behaviour. The answer can not be in the identity-related factors of the EU since its power in argumentative behaviour and consensual politics in its domestic affairs have been already recognized in the literature. One can argue that the Union does not possess the capabilities to persuade the region into regional co-operation. However, this can not be true because it has been demonstrated above that EU is seen as a legitimate and well-placed actor in advocating regional co-operation. Under normal circumstances the EU is empowered to use its own genuine regional co-operation model so that the region would be impressed and persuaded, yet it is not the case given the level of coercion the Union employs in the SEE. Persuasion is of course not totally absent. In the prognostic and motivational frames, the EU puts forward its own regional co-operation success story in an effort to argue in favour of the wellness of the notion itself. However, compared to conditionality and the carrots and the sticks offered in return, coercion prevails vis à vis argumentation.
A plausible explanation for such a bundling of diffusion strategies may be found in the interaction between EU’s entrepreneurship and the structure it wishes to address. The normative structure in this sense has actually been a facilitator for the EU since the region was in a transition period whereby it sought for new (especially Western) norms to create itself a new fresh identity free from the chains of the old Balkans image (Björkdahl 2005 p.270). Thus, the region was receptive enough to the new norms, open to the conformity way of socialization. This situation could offer the EU a window of opportunity to enter the Balkans context and convince potential norm-followers through argumentation.

However, the cultural filter and the structure of the Balkans would impede such a social learning process. It is true that the region was very receptive and open to new norms and that regional co-operation was an appropriate idea to be introduced into the SEE because of the nature of the problems and the success story drawn from EU’s own experience. Nevertheless, the region had just come out of the devastating collapse of Yugoslavia and that ethnic strives had reached their climax. There was a great lack of trust among SEECs toward each other. That was actually why contagion diffusion almost did not happen at all, except for the SEECP, which is still trying to evolve into an influential organization. The problems, on the other hand, were urging soft-security threats as economic backwardness, poor transportation facilities, spread of organized crime and illegal immigration, drug trafficking, human smuggling which were harmful to both the region and Fortress Europe. As the Commission has states the aim of the Union considering SEE was to create an adjacent area where conflicts would no longer exist (supra note p.16). The conditions for the emergence of fruitful regional co-operation were not there. The Union argued that for the success of regional economic integration, there need to exist some factors: genuine common interests, compatible historical, cultural and political patterns, political commitment, peace and security, rule of law democracy, good governance and economic stability (COM (95) 219).

Looking at the context of the Balkans, it was clear that many of these factors were missing and in fact, the Union aimed to lead to the establishment of security and economic stability by raising an awareness of common interests within the framework of regional co-operation. Moreover, Anastakis and Bojicic-Dzelilovic conducted a research among the local elite of the SEE in 2002 to see whether there was a notion of regionness in the SEE, which they expressed as the sense of belonging to a particular community and the way the region is defined by the local actors (Anastakis and Bojicic-Dzelilovic 2002 p.36). At a first glance, 93% of the respondents confirmed they belonged to the SEE, yet the way they defined the term SEE varied greatly. They tended to distance themselves from unstable zones to be perceived more advanced and secure (ibid. p.37). Consequently, the notion of regionness varied from country to country and was considered to be imposed by outside forces as given (ibid. p.40).

It would have been very difficult to convince the local actors into a premature argumentation process when especially there was no agreed notion of regionness in the absence of lack of trust among SEECs towards each other. Thus, the EU, as a result of the difficulties, inherent in the Balkanized context, had to
rely on more positively coercive mechanisms to introduce regional co-operation as a mode of appropriate behaviour into the region. This is by no means to prioritize structuralism over constructivist ontology. Given the mutually constitutiveness of the structure and the agent, it is normal that the structure the EU wishes to transform also affects the latter’s choices in strategies to be employed for the sake of structural alteration.

Moreover, the fact that EU tries to diffuse regional co-operation through conditionality principle by offering big carrots is its own uniqueness since it is only the Union which can offer such a remarkable reward like accession. Coupled with the structural effects, coercive tools do not seem so contradicting after all.

Lastly, it can be argued that the security threats in the backyard of the EU were so pressing and dire that it necessitated quick and decisive action. That was actually realized better after the situation in Kosovo in 1999. A quick response was needed thus the EU could not wait for first the establishment of conducive factors for the regional co-operation and then the long-lasting persuasion process to come into being. Conditionality, by emphasizing positive conditionality would result in quicker outcomes.

### 3.3.4 Exploring EU’s motivations

While trying to materialize the incentives that motivated and motivates the EU towards an uneasy process of norm diffusion, frames that the Union employs in the initiation phase are of great use. They are helpful because they reflect the elements which are perceived as problems by the entrepreneur and how to tackle them. Accordingly, one can argue that the EU is clearly motivated by an ideational commitment, significant self-interest promotion and a slight degree of empathy. Altruism, on the other hand, as I argue, can not be clearly seen since there is no explicit risk of harm to the entrepreneur’s well-being.

An ideational commitment, meaning a high moral conviction on the part of the entrepreneur in the appropriateness of the norm, is evident in the way the EU frames its own experience with regional co-operation as a motivational frame to project its success story. This relates to the moral quality of norms (see p.3). The Union firmly holds that regional co-operation is a referent to political understanding and economic and social prosperity (COM (2003) 139 pp.12-13). As Bretherton and Vogler argue (1999 p. 249) EU’s support for regional co-operation could be viewed as a form of narcissism, a propensity to reproduce itself. Also all Member States have, at one time or another, pushed for EU to support regional co-operation (Smith 2005 p.85).

More importantly and more obviously, self-interest is a major and crucial motivation for the EU to engage in diffusion process. Backed up by its ideational commitment, the Union, in its framing acts, often suggests that its endeavour is targeted to rule out instability from this adjacent region. In a paper where it discusses the prioritization of regional co-operation for Western Balkans, the Commission states that since the enlargement of May 2004, the EU and the Western Balkans have become even closer neighbours and that the situation in the
SEECs are of immediate concern for the EU itself (Regional co-operation in the Western Balkans 2006, p.3). In the diagnostic framing, I have demonstrated how the Union recognizes the need for a regional solution to regional soft-security threats and Balkanization challenges. The reason for the EU to promote regional co-operation in this region is its wish to eliminate these challenges, which are very hard to confine to only Balkans given the region’s geographical proximity to the EU zone and the permeatibility of the borders. The Union also argued that the common problems require collective regional action and that it could not solve these problems for the countries concerned (COM (2002) 163 p.9). It envisages regional co-operation as the ultimate way forward on the way to eventual accession since the SEECs first need to solve the problems impeding the proper functioning of nation-states with which the EU enters into contractual relations. This is why a strict conditionality of regional co-operation has been at the forefront of EU’s approach towards the region. Once a fertile ground for closer ties has been created and maintained through regional co-operation process, then the EU can also enter into strong economic relations with the region (Smith 2005 p.85). Lastly, the EU will reinforce its model and its domestic legitimacy if it could succeed in diffuse the norm and make the region a more neighbourly and stable area (Björkdahl 2005 p.260).

Therefore, promotion of its self-interest is a central motive for the EU in the diffusion process, recalling of the utilitarian feature of norms (see p.3). However, this does not mean that the potential norm-followers see diffusion as enhancing EU interests exclusively. Had this been the case, norm diffusion would have been unthinkable. The norm receivers must perceive and firmly believe that the norm will benefit them and that it represents an appropriate mode of behaviour. The minimum acceptable condition would be a case where collective interests exceeding the entrepreneur’s self-interests are at stake. This is the actual case in the SEE because, again to referring to the interviews conducted by Anastakis and Bojicic-Dzelilovic (2002 p.45), the regional elite believe that the most important factor in the promulgation of regional co-operation is the regional nature of common problems. 28% of the respondents hold this belief, whereas 24% of them think common geographical space requires co-operation. The economies of scale argument, meaning the smallness of individual markets and the potential of expansion through co-operation with other countries follow as the third factor with 17.3%. External pressure, on the other hand, ranks as the 4th important factor which implies that almost 70% of the local elite believe in the wellness of regional co-operation itself and that it will enhance their interests as a tool to respond to regional problems.

Moreover, 46% of the respondents hold that co-operation is a route to national and regional stability and that 62% of them support the regional co-operation conditionality (ibid. p.56). The EU, as a promoter in that sense, is highly popular as well since public support for European integration in 2004 was between 75-85% regionally (Batt 2004 p.112). In sum, EU’s promotion of regional co-operation is not perceived to be exclusively enhancing its own position, but rather the SEECs conclude that co-operation benefit them as well. Before SAP, there were doubts that engagement in regional co-operation was a
decoy of the EU to avoid Western Balkans’ accession into the Union, yet these doubts have been relieved by the strong commitments given to SEECs in many European summits (see p.23).

Given this density of self-interest on both sides, empathy on the Union’s part needs not be stressed since the diffusion clearly enhances EU’s own well-being. This also holds for altruism because of the remarkable presence of self-regarding and collective interests.

3.3.5 Looking at the Socialization Process: the Norm-takers

This sub-section is intended to explore why and how potential norm-followers come to accept the new norm, i.e the process of socialization.

Concerning the why question, first it is obvious that conformity pays an important role: SEECs wish to be a member of the EU’s normative structure since they want to be regarded as part of this social environment. Belonging to the European normative structure is vital to those countries in order for them to alleviate the identity vacuum they fell after the dissolution of Yugoslavia. Esteem is also present in making the regional countries conform to regional co-operation because there is a great peer-pressure on them. Seeing that other states move ahead of themselves, certain countries can not risk lagging behind since it would resent the public who wish EU accession as fast as possible. Legitimation, in that sense is a determinant factor because by engaging in regional co-operation, SEECs will be fulfilling the first essential criterion to develop closer relations with the EU. Thus the governments who co-operate regionally and are then appreciated by the Union will be also legitimized in the eyes of their constituents simply because they construct closer ties with the EU. Hence the remarkable link between membership into the EU and regional co-operation and that according to Anastakis and Bojicic-Dzelilovic’s research (2002 p.56), 86% of the interviewees believe that regional co-operation is fostering their countries’ prospects of joining the EU. Alongside this, as it has been mentioned above, almost 70% of the local elite regard regional co-operation as necessary for regional problems, thus underlining the role of self-interest in the norm acceptance.

Regarding the how question, SEECs socialize into regional co-operation through participation into regional initiatives and platforms. All SEECs have taken part in the most crucial and most effective regional co-operation initiatives: Royaumont Process, SEECP, SECI and the SP. Among them SEECP and the SP are today very active and that they provide useful grounds for the regional countries to meet on a regular basis and interact. A recent report from a Review Group (2006 p.6) on the SP states that a number of effective networks for exchange of experience and capacity building between SEE countries have been established in the framework of different thematic task forces and initiatives of the SP. SEECs are currently involve in many of those initiatives: Regional Arms Control Verification, Implementation, Assistance Centre (RACVIAC), South East European Transport Observatory (SEETO), Transborder Crime Fighting Centre, Regional Forum of the Migration, Asylum, Refugee, Regional Initiative (MARRI)
under the political leadership of the SEECP, Infrastructure Steering Group, Business Advisory Group, SEE Brigade and South East Europe Defense Ministerial Process (SEDM), Environment Compliance and Enforcement Network for Accession (ECENA), negotiations for integrating bilateral free trade agreements into a single regional FTA to be concluded by mid-2006 (COM (2006) 27 pp.6-7), are just some among the many. These frameworks provide the milieu where SEECS socialize into regional co-operation. The large extent of participants perceive regional co-operation as benefiting them, as well as EU. A norm cascade, i.e. norm community, is thus formed. The participation of Serbia-Montenegro, as a critical state, also prompted the establishment of a norm cascade, given the centrality of that country for the regional problems.

3.4 Internalization and Institutionalization

In the SEE case, internalization takes place if the SEECS employ networks of regional co-operation in the lack of external pressure, meaning they appreciate the added-value of it. Whether they operationalize regional co-operation by their own where there is a need is the main criterion. Another indicator would be the deepening of the norm into the civil society, which is not so much developed in the SEE. Internalization also occurs if the activities in the socialization stage have generated positive outcomes in the sense that they reinforced the normative quality of the norm.

In order to see whether SEECS internalized regional co-operation or not, it is useful to investigate the level of regional or local ownership of regional initiatives that these countries have forged. The picture is not very shiny. Most of the programs under the SP are framed internationally and are carried out by foreign officers although there has started a very recent process of staffing these programs with local officials (Report of Senior Review Group, 2006 p.7). Regional ownership of the co-operation process is regarded as the main priority by the SP, thus indirectly by the Union as well. There is a belief that a dedicated framework for cooperation activities is needed to ensure sustainability of them (ibid. p.6, Keane 2005). The most suitable and most feasible ground for that has been declared as the SEECP, the only initiative that stemmed from the region. However, the level of effectiveness of the SEECP in taking over ownership is at best an ambiguous and weakly developing one. It has begun to assume leadership in certain areas, like MARRI, yet, local initiatives have not still reached a level where they would replace foreign-driven regional co-operation. The Senior Review Group presented lack of staff, poor administrative capacity, absence of leadership and insufficiency of own finances as the problems on the way towards local ownership, i.e internalization (Report of Senior Review Group, 2005 p.7).

Similarly, it is hard to find examples where SEECS initiated co-operation networks on their own. It is clear from the Third Annual Report on the SAP, issued by the Commission that all the regional co-operation programs took off either by the Union or by the SP (see COM (2004) 202). Moreover, civil society is rarely made aware of the political objectives behind co-operation and aid
programs, meaning the general knowledge about the benefits of regional co-operation does not penetrate into the grass-root level (Anastakis and Bojicic-Dzelilovic 2002 p.47). According to one survey, SEECP was the least known co-operation initiative among the local elite of the SEE, even though it is the only framework which is claimed to be the biggest partner in local ownership (ibid. p.56). They also appreciated notion of regional co-operation specifically in the context of European integration (ibid. p.47).

In sum, internalization and institutionalization process are at best undergoing projects since conditionality still overvalues the genuine essence of regional co-operation. The latter is not taken down to the civil society and is evaluated as a springboard towards EU accession.

However, norm diffusion is a long-lasting process, so is the internalization stage. The fact that practices and ideas are mutually constitutive and reinforcing is an optimistic element for the prospects of a real diffusion in the SEE. This is so because constructive and satisfactory outcomes have been achieved in energy, transportation, environment, free trade, science and technology, and organized crime issues (COM (2004) 202 pp.19-24). Regular regional meetings, constant presence of the EU on the ground and its institutionalized dialogue with the regional countries (Björk Dahl 2005 p.275), and implementation of the norm resulting in problem-solving outcomes for regional problems are promising factors that could in time lead to a sincere diffusion process. The latter is a long and costly demand and the current phase is still incomplete as it has not even been ten years that effective implementation of regional co-operation was initiated.
4) Conclusion

This study aimed to investigate why and how the EU is diffusing regional co-operation as a norm in the SEE and that depending on its level of success, whether it is a normative power in the region or not. By looking at the empirical findings and their relations to the norm diffusion theory, some conclusions are suggested.

First, the EU is a legitimate, just and well-placed entrepreneur given the centrality regional co-operation plays in the Union’s past experiences and its identity.

Second, the EU frames regional co-operation as the ultimate solution for the regional problems of the SEE. It also backs it up by associating the norm with some higher goals as peace, stability, sustainable development. While offering its own legacy as a success story, the biggest motivational frame the Union offers to the SEE is the projection of regional co-operation as a precondition and prerequisite for the development and deepening of every level of relations between SEECs and the EU. In doing so, the Union benefits from several institutional frameworks, all initiated by itself.

Third, the Union’s bundle of strategies for diffusion is more asocial and pro-coercive by prioritizing conditionality. The latter is constructed in a more positive way rather than a negative manner. Rewards are promising while sticks are confined to be excluded from the carrots. The choice of more coercive and non-communicative methods originates in the necessity to find urgent solutions to pressing regional problems and to stabilize the region permanently through regional reconciliation based on co-operative and good neighbourly behaviours. The structure that the EU wishes to revolutionize limits its spectrum of diffusion strategies and the length of time it could afford to spend. The normative clash may be minimal since the SEECs are in a relative normative vacuum. Yet structural clash – Balkanization, impedes diffusion’s speed and internalization’s effectiveness. The norm can not as such penetrate into the societal level.

Fourth, the SEE perceives promotion of regional co-operation as a win-win situation, meaning diffusion is elevated beyond the mere self-interest of the entrepreneur. SEECs regard regional co-operation as a panacea for collective problems, yet the practice of strict conditionality has caused them to associate the norm closely to provide a springboard for EU accession. Regional co-operation is evaluated instrumentally rather than being appreciated in its own value. Internalization as such currently seems weak and underdeveloped, yet as long as the norm result in desirable outcomes solving transborder problems, it will be more and more internalized since practices reinforce the decency of the ideas they stem from. Institutionalization will come to being if regional ownership of co-
operation initiatives could be realized within the framework of the SEECP, which suffers from material deficiency and absence of resources.

Although its diffusion is not completed yet, the presence of collective goals and the well-placed image of the Union suggest that the latter is a normative power in the region because it impacts through its ideational power and intends to do cosmopolitan good that will benefit both the region and itself. However, the fact that the Union primarily relies on coercive methods rather than persuasion undermines the level of normative powerness. A more social and argumentative communication strategy is thus needed for a more internalized diffusion process if regional co-operation is to be regarded as value in itself. The diffusion process is an undergoing project, which needs to be more communicative and less conditionalized if the EU wants it to deeply penetrate into the publics and thus transform the SEE through its normative power. The presence of the Union on the ground and constant dialogue between SEECs and the EU, result in partial diffusion, which needs to be furthered in a way to reach not SEECs, but SEE publics.


Council Conclusions on the principle of conditionality governing the development of the European Union’s relations with certain countries f south-east Europe, Bull.EU 4-1997 2.2.1.

Development Council, ‘Resolution of 1 June 1995 on regional economic integration efforts, 1 June 1995


