

THE ROLE OF PARTNER COUNTRIES' PRIORITIES IN THE MOBILITY PARTNERSHIP IMPLEMENTATION:

The case of Moldova, Georgia, and Armenia

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List of Acronyms

ACF	Advocacy Coalition Framework
EaP	Eastern Partnership
EC	European Commission
EU	European Union
FRONTEX	European Border and Coast Guard Agency
GAM	Global Approach to Migration
GAMM	Global Approach to Migration and Mobility
HLM	High Level Meeting
ICMPD	International Centre for Migration Policy Development
IOM	International Organization for Migration
IRC	International Rescue Committee
LCP	Local Cooperation Platform
MP	Mobility Partnership
MS	Member States (EU)
SMIC	State Commission on Migration Issues (Georgia)

1. Introduction

For over a decade, the European Union (EU) emphasizes the importance of non-EU countries in the management of international migration. The idea was translated into policy documents establishing the Global Approach to Migration (GAM) that subsequently has evolved into the Global Approach to Migration and Mobility (GAMM). According to the European Commission (EC), the policy is a “shift from a primarily security-centred approach focused on reducing migratory pressures, to a more transparent and balanced approach (...)” (2008). Precisely, the GAMM has four (equally important) goals: “organising and facilitating legal migration and mobility; preventing and reducing irregular migration and trafficking in human beings; promoting international protection and enhancing the external dimension of asylum policy; maximizing the development impact of migration and mobility”. The main underlying idea is, therefore, to increase sustainable development opportunities for non-EU countries in exchange for intergovernmental cooperation in matters related to irregular migration.

Under the Global Approach to Migration and Mobility framework, Mobility Partnership (MP) is one of the main instrument of cooperation with third countries. The concept of MPs was proposed by the European Commission in 2007. In line with the GAMM, third countries are supposed to “work actively to better manage migration flows, and in particular to fight illegal migration, in partnership with the EU, in exchange for enhanced possibilities of mobility between their countries and the EU for their citizens” (EC, 2007, p.1). The quote draws attention to the transactional nature of the MP. Despite some common goals, the parties entering into the agreement had different priorities and interests. On the one hand, the EU aims to manage migration more effectively. The security-oriented measures were a driving force of MPs (Hampshire, 2015, p.578). Prior to the signature, the EU required from third countries consent to a number of non-negotiable engagements, including opening negotiations for the EU readmission agreement, fighting irregular migration, cooperating with Frontex, exchanging information with the Member States, and encouraging return and reintegration of their nationals (Brouillette, 2018, p.7). On the other hand, partner countries’ priorities focus not only on the mobility of their nationals but also on making use of the link between migration and development. Consequently, the EU has offered labour migration possibilities, facilitation of the Schengen visas procedures and, finally, supporting the influence of migration on development, such as counteracting brain drain and empowering migrants abroad.

This is the theory that the parties agreed upon prior to the signature of MP. If the implementation of the policy were ideally performed, both sides would consider the arrangement advantageous. The priorities of partner countries and the EU would be well represented and transnational cooperation would continue. However, poor implementation of well-intended policies is one of the biggest challenges in the public sector (Kanmiki et al., 2018). The outputs may deviate from initial declarations, especially that Mobility Partnerships rely on non-legally binding political declaration, a *quid pro quo* agreement. Full implementation of Mobility Partnerships cannot be guaranteed (Carrera and Hernández i Sagrera, 2011, p.110). Even when the Joint Declarations were being signed, a Mobility Partnership appeared as an ambiguous and unclear instrument to all participating actors (Brouillette, 2018, p.8). Translating the policy into action may reveal unforeseen side effects affecting the policy performance and, therefore, the representation of priorities.

Despite the EC's assurances of "balanced partnership" based on reciprocity, numerous authors question the EU's realization of promises. The topic whether the EU still create a "fortress Europe" is controversial (Martin, 2012; Alscher, 2017) and the "mobility" aspect of Mobility Partnerships is questioned (Reslow, 2015; Den Hertog & Tittel-Mosser, 2017). At the same time, the authors do not fully examine the reasons *why* development objectives are "diluted when compared to the control-oriented measures" (Brouillette, 2018, p. 17). Therefore, this thesis is going to analyse the inclusion of non-EU countries' agency in the implementation of seemingly balanced Mobility Partnerships by answering the following research question: *How are the priorities of partner countries represented in the Mobility Partnerships implementation and what factors explain the differences between countries?*

In order to answer the research question, the thesis will, firstly, try to assess the representation of priorities of partner countries by systematic analysis of Moldovan, Georgian and Armenian MP implementation. External migration governance in general, and Mobility Partnerships in particular, is an under-researched topic. To date, there are very few analyses of the MPs with Moldova and Georgia, and none of the MP with Armenia. This is why the thesis aims at uncovering the role that third countries' priorities play during the implementation phase. It is worthwhile to note that I will not try to assess the impact of the MPs. Since all my case studies use several different migration instruments next to the MPs, measuring direct impact seems to be an unavailing task. Instead, I will examine the outputs of the policy and take into consideration a *potential* impact an MP might have.

The sufficient representation of the partner countries priorities means implementation success. Since the founding political intention is the reciprocity of advantage and equal benefits of signatories, policy outcomes that favour the representation of interests of one of the partners can be considered unsuccessful. What factors could influence the imbalance of priorities in the MP implementation? In order to find key variables, the research will apply implementation studies and the external governance perspective.

Implementation studies were strongly influenced by the issue of how to separate implementation from policy formation, the question being part of a bigger problem, concerning identifying the features of a very complex process, involving multiple actors and occurring across time and space (Hill and Hupe, 2002, p.43). Generations of authors interested in implementation of public policy found numerous factors influencing the mechanism. An MP is a very complex process, maybe even more complex than a typical domestic policy, because it involves cooperation between highly independent actors, namely countries and institutions with their own priorities and interests. This is why implementation studies are the perfect lens to analyse MPs – the literature takes under consideration various factors that affect successful implementation, for instance political (e.g. the Advocacy Coalition Framework of Sabatier), financial (e.g. resources in the Van Meter and Van Horn's model), behavioural (e.g. street-level bureaucrats of Lipsky) and macro-factors (e.g. Goggin). The thesis, however, does not aim to analyse all possible variables affecting implementation since not all factors have significant explanatory power in the case of MPs. Instead, the literature points out to a number of factors that affect implementation of very complex policies. The variables will be presented in the subsequent chapter.

In this context, it is worthwhile to explain, perhaps controversial, use of elements of the Advocacy Coalition Framework. The ACF is not a typical implementation theory because it rejects the stagist model of policy cycle (Sabatier & Jenkins-Smith, 1993, p. 3-4). From this perspective, policy formation, implementation, evaluation, and other stages are closely related. Mobility Partnership, however, is not a typical policy. MPs are subject to constant change due to the possibility of adding new projects after the signature. They slowly evolve. The ACF gives, therefore, a unique perspective on the implementation of Mobility Partnerships by allowing to conduct the analysis of policy evolution. In Mobility Partnerships, there are two main sets of actors: those who focus on facilitation of mobility and development and those who

prefer a security-oriented approach. Interestingly from the research perspective, this division is backed by the policy. Nevertheless, the ambition of this thesis is not to analyse the behaviour and “core beliefs” of all actors involved. The ACF is used in order to present the political side of implementation since MPs involve the cooperation of independent actors with different agendas. After all, the policy itself is based on a political dialogue.

Furthermore, the research will apply the external migration governance literature focused on implementation. Firstly, the perspective facilitated the choice of key variables from implementation studies. Not all factors mentioned by the implementation literature would be suitable for an external policy analysis. Secondly, it enables a deeper understanding of why actors cooperate and continue the transnational cooperation. The question of actors’ engagement is an indissoluble part of the thesis investigation. As mentioned above, the MP implementing agencies are not integrated into a single structure of hierarchy but involve independent institutions. Moreover, the stakeholders are not legally obliged to act. In order to reach any of their objectives, the actors have to cooperate and have sufficient incentives to do so.

The theoretical relevance of the thesis is twofold. On the one hand, it contributes to the extremely limited literature on the external policy implementation (for exceptions see Wunderlich (2013, 2012); Reslow (2015, 2018)). The understanding of policy implementation is essential since a theory – or, political intentions - is rarely ideally reflected in practice. For instance, several studies argue that actors’ engagement with the EU policies changes over time (Bicchi, 2010; Wunderlich (2010, 2011)). Research on implementation contributes to the understanding of how and why policies fail, and what can be done to fix it. On the other hand, the thesis considers the agency of partner countries which is largely omitted among scholars studying the EU external migration policy (for exceptions see Reslow, 2012; Brouillette, 2018). The literature focuses mostly on ‘the expanding scope of EU rules beyond EU borders’ (Lavenex & Schimmelfennig, 2009, p. 791) where third countries are ‘fields of the externalization of European policies’ (Guiraudon & Lahav, 2000; Guild & Bigo, 2010). Therefore, the typical external governance approach assesses implementation outcome in a dichotomous way: EU rules adoption (implementation success) or violation (implementation failure). Conversely, considering the agency of partner countries allows understanding the attitudes of third countries towards transnational cooperation on migration and the reasons behind their actions.

Regarding societal relevance, several studies have found that enhancing legal migration opportunities decrease the incentive to migrate irregularly (e.g. Leerkes, 2016). Instruments such as Mobility Partnership might facilitate and improve migration management, a topic being at the centre of attention of policymakers, politicians and public opinion. Therefore, this research will contribute to the understanding of alternative, sustainable migration policies, contrasting with the typical security-oriented approaches.

The thesis is structured as follows. Firstly, it presents the theoretical framework, based on the implementation studies and the EU external governance literature. The next chapter describes the research design, along with ethical considerations and limitations of the thesis. The fourth chapter gives background information on a Mobility Partnership in order to orient the reader what actors are involved in the implementation and how the policy is constructed. Furthermore, it introduces the country profiles of Armenia, Moldova and Georgia. The information is crucial to understand local priorities and needs. The fifth chapter presents the findings yet some analytical elements are also introduced at this point. Each case study is presented separately, following the structure of variables derived from the theoretical framework. The sixth chapter is a comparative analysis of the case studies. The analysis includes testing of the theoretical expectations. The final chapter concludes the thesis by giving a short summary, explaining the significance of the research and presenting recommendations for the external governance policy.

2. Theoretical Framework

The first subchapter will give an overview of theoretical approaches used in implementation studies, followed by a subchapter focusing on the analytical perspectives on the external policy implementation.

2.1. Implementation studies

The subchapter builds on the public policy implementation literature. The thesis will draw on the definition proposed by O'Toole (1995). According to the author, implementation 'refers to the connection between the expression of governmental intention and actual results' (p. 43). In other words, implementation is the process happening after the end of policy formulation (in my case, marked by the MP signature) referring to the factors that explain policy realisation. It is worth highlighting here that, due to the possibility of adding new projects to MPs, the form of "expression of governmental intention" varies from country to country. Therefore, the MP implementation does not only involve the realisation of projects mentioned in official documents; it also includes all of the subsequent changes.

Application of the policy design

Scholars Jeffrey Pressman and Aaron Wildavsky are considered the founding fathers of implementation studies. The authors defined implementation as "to carry out, accomplish, fulfill, produce, complete" (1973, p.12). For the first time in policy process studies, their research took under consideration an important role of public officers and administrators (Hill & Hupe, 2002). Previously, implementation was viewed as a direct, unproblematic invocation of a political decision (Howlett, 2018, p.3).

There are two main approaches in academia to study policy implementation: top-down and bottom-up perspectives. Top-down approach theorists concentrate on the policy designers, who are assumed being central actors with the power to control policy implementation. This perspective prescribes formal, top-down steering on each step of the way: 'It begins at the top of the process, with as clear a statement as possible of the policy-maker's intent, and proceeds through a sequence of increasingly more specific steps to define what is expected of

implementers at each level.’ (Elmore, 1978). In other words, top-down theorists assumed that implementation is successful only if the implementing agencies reproduce the political will in their actions.

Pressman and Wildavsky represented the top-down perspective. In the preface to their first book, the authors wrote: “policies normally contain both goals and the means for achieving them” (1973). They argue that any ambiguity in policy design can cause confusion of implementers. Ambiguity and confusion result in not achieving the policy goals. From their perspective, “good” implementation means a literal application of policy text while “implementation deficit” is caused by transferring the responsibility for taking decisions to the implementers. Following the founding fathers of implementation, my first expectation is:

E1: Implementation independent of the policy design is less successful. Therefore, the priorities of the countries that derive from the text of the Joint Declaration will not be reflected as well as the countries that apply the text literally.

Implementing agency resources

Van Meter and Van Horn, also top-down theorists, draw attention to implementing agency characteristics (1975). They assume that even a perfectly constructed and thought-through policy will fail if the agencies that implement it do not have the required resources to carry out their tasks. Their model of policy implementation model considered resources as one of the most important factors, along with “Standards and Objectives” of a policy. After all, do other factors really matter if there is not enough personnel to execute the orders?

Likewise, the later empirical studies explored the issue of agency characteristics (see for example Durant, 1993) and compared similar agencies responses (ex. Harbin et al. 1992). They found that policies are better reflected if the implementing agencies are not constrained by factors on which the agencies do not have any influence. The scholars empathize the importance of the implementing agency budget, number and level of training of personnel (Hill & Hupe, 2002). Consequently, the second expectation is:

E2: The policy intentions are better reflected if the implementing agencies are not constraint by factors beyond their control. Therefore, the priorities are better reflected if the resources are adequate to the needs of implementers.

Political machinations of bureaucracy

The bottom-up perspective draws attention to the role of implementing agencies behaviour. It is assumed that street-level bureaucrats have a deeper understanding of what a client needs because of direct contact with his issues. Therefore, they alter their behaviour accordingly, regardless of the policy directions. Bottom-uppers consider implementation a decentralized process, where implementing officers and local context play an important role. The Advocacy Coalition Framework (ACF) takes under consideration “top-down” and “bottom-up” variables, namely the behaviour of civil servants and the steering of higher level, highlighting the significance of conflict within the policy process (Hill & Hupe, 2002, p. 65). As explained already in the introduction, the ACF is not a typical implementation theory because it rejects the stagist model of policy cycle (Sabatier & Jenkins-Smith, 1993, p. 3-4) and is used mostly to analyse policy change and learning. The ACF has four basic premises (Sabatier & Jenkins-Smith, 1993, p.16-17): (1) It requires a time perspective of at least a decade; (2) It focuses on the interactions between actors from different institutions (researchers, non-governmental organizations, journalists, different levels of government,) that belong to one policy subsystem; (3) The subsystems must include intergovernmental scope and involve a policy issue, actors who seek to influence the policy as well as a geographic domain or potential authority for policymaking (Jenkins-Smith et al., 2014); (4) Public policy can be conceptualized as a set of value priorities and assumption on how to realize them.

Although the framework is usually applied to domestic policies, some of its assumptions might be useful in understanding external migration policy. First of all, it conceptualizes “advocacy coalitions” – a set of actors from a variety of positions who share a given belief system and are ready to collectively act upon (Sabatier & Jenkins-Smith, 1993, p.25). This strategy for actor aggregation is particularly useful in the analysis of complex policies due to the numerous actors involved in the policy subsystem. Secondly, the conceptualization of policy subsystem allows to understand actors’ strategies and resources from a different level of government, and non-governmental affiliations that are used to influence public policy (Jenkins-Smith and Sabatier, 1999). The ACF assumes that an advocacy coalition will use its resources (such as money, expertise, legal authority) to move public policy in the desired direction (Sabatier & Jenkins-Smith, 1993, p.29). Actors who engage various strategies and resources more frequently have a greater influence on public policy (Yackee, 2011). Whether and how the policy gets to be

implemented depends on political power and dominance of a given coalition. From the ACF perspective, policy implementation can be viewed as an ongoing contest between the competing groups over how to implement it, leaving the intended policy design divorced from the actual outcomes. Therefore, the third expectation is:

E3: The political machinations of bureaucracy affect the way a policy is implemented. Consequently, the MP actors will try to use their political resources to turn implementation into the desired direction.

The critical review of implementation studies allowed to identify three key variables, namely the application of policy design, the implementing agency resources and the political machinations of bureaucracy. The next subchapter will analyse the EU external migration policy literature from an implementation perspective in order to determine what scholars understand by transnational cooperation.

2.2. Implementation from the external governance perspective

Trying to explain why and how external policies are adopted, the literature on the EU external governance emerged first in the context of the Eastern enlargement (Lavenex & Wichmann, 2009). Scholars explained mutual cooperation between new member states and the EU by unilateral policy transfer and conditionality; subsequently, they found similar patterns while analysing EU cooperation with non-member states (Cremona & Hillion, 2006; Magen, 2006; Maier & Schimmelfennig, 2007). The effectiveness of implementation of external policies is influenced by institutional factors on the EU level (institutionalist explanation), local factors in partner countries (domestic structure explanation) or “power-based” interdependence of actors (power-based explanation) (Lavenex & Schimmelfennig, 2009; Wunderlich, 2012, p.1417). The first explanation focuses on the legitimacy of EU rules, the second on the compatibility of third country policies with international policies, while the third on the interdependence between actors and bargaining power of the EU.

Cooperation between foreign agencies

According to the literature, the EU policies goals and strategies are usually left deliberately vague in order to leave room for interpretation to member-states administrations (Matland, 1995; Morth, 2003). This leeway is a result of differences between national-level implementation structures and styles. Logically, the external policies directed at (or, created with) non-member states should leave even more room for interpretation, so that their implementation is possible in any given country (Wunderlich, 2012, p. 1416). Therefore, the way policy goals are accomplished might differ from country to country and, consequently, also the policy performance (Lavenex & Schimmelfennig, 2009, p. 802).

From this perspective, partner countries influence what is implemented and how it is done within the frames of international agreements. Mutual incentives for cooperation are judged important not only during the policymaking stage but also during implementation as the implementing agencies are not integrated into a signal hierarchical structure. New projects are being constantly added, removed or changed due to a constant bargaining process, based on rational cost-benefit calculations (see for instance a “three-level game” perspective of Reslow and Vink (2015) or “power-based” approach of Lavenex and Schimmelfennig (2009)). The objectives of both parties are represented if all actors continue the cooperation. Thus, the partner countries are considered rational actors, not simple decision takers, who have their own motivations.

The rational approach was used in several studies of EU external governance. For instance, Schimmelfennig and Sedelmeier (2004) focused on nonmaterial incentives that encourage third countries to cooperate, while Trauner (2009) on material ones. Based on the cost-benefit analysis, actors are more eager to cooperate if they receive something in return (Quah & Haldane, 2007). This process of analysis brings to the fore the next key variable: cooperation between agencies. Therefore, in the context of Mobility Partnership implementation, the final two expectations are:

E4: The more projects reflect the partner country priorities (in the number of projects and the content), the more the country is engaged in the cooperation with the EU.

E5: In case the balance between priorities is uneven, the countries continue the cooperation only if new (added) projects will try to rebalance the scales.

Security-driven policy implementation

Apart from the tangible incentives of actors, the literature on external governance raises the issue of cognitive motivations. Most assessments of the EU external migration policy argue that it is driven by a security-oriented rationale. (Castles, 2003, p. 217–222; Lavenex & Kunz, 2008; Weiner, 2011). Security bias has two main explanations (Wunderlich, 2013, p.407-408). The first one is securitization thesis, assuming that state actors discursively transform migration into a security issue (Huysmans, 1998). Securitization builds on fears of a society. By framing the fears in terms of insecurity, state officials try to reassure the public that the issue is identified and addressed. Subsequently, securitization tends to perpetuate itself in the hands of policymakers and bureaucrats (Buonfino, 2004, p. 48). The second explanation for the security bias in external migration policy is the venue-shopping thesis. Member State politicians try to bypass domestic policies by transferring complex migration issues to the EU institutions. (Joppke, 1998; Lavenex, 2010). As a result of electoral pressure and domestic concerns, the security-oriented rationale is translated into EU external migration policy (Boswell, 2003, p. 623). Thus, the external governance literature suggests that the EU and its Members employ the security-oriented rationale in their policies.

Emigration countries interests are believed to mostly oppose EU objectives (Brand, 2006; de Haas & Vezzoli, 2011, p. 13; Paoletti, 2011). This idea is based on legal mobility issues: emigration countries aim at having more migration opportunities, while immigration countries' objective is to limit them to a minimum. Scholars argue that security bias limits the potential of development-related actions, being the priority of non-member states (Chou & Gibert, 2012; Hernández i Sagrera, 2014). However, if the mutual advantages are judged sufficient, partners upkeep the transnational cooperation (Chou & Gibert, 2012).

Relation between implementation studies and external governance perspective

This section will present the relation between implementation studies and the notion of external governance. Firstly, the externalisation theory brings to the fore to the key variables that should be taken into account while researching external policy implementation. It assumes that successful implementation means adaptation and application of EU rules in a third country (Lavenex & Schimmelfennig, 2009). The assumption overlaps with the implementation theory of Pressman and Wildavsky who considered that precise application of policy design will result

in policy success. The next implementation variable, resources of implementing agencies, is related to the power-based explanation through the dependence of actors on the EU-provided resources and training. Similarly, the power-based explanation is the lens to examine the political machinations of bureaucracy. Actors use political power to achieve their objectives by trying to alter the existing structures of interdependence. Secondly, all variables can be influenced by security bias. For instance, the number of resources that are provided to implementing agencies may depend on the type of undertaken project (security- or development-oriented). In the same vein, since the cooperation between countries relies on having sufficient incentives, security bias could affect the type of incentives that are proposed. In this paper, implementation studies are therefore looked at from the external governance perspective.

3. Research design

This section will introduce the research design of the thesis. Firstly, it will present the variables and their operationalisation. The next subsection will describe the process of case selection. Furthermore, the research methods will be introduced, along with the data used for the analysis. The subsequent subsection will describe ethical consideration. Finally, limitations of the thesis will be presented.

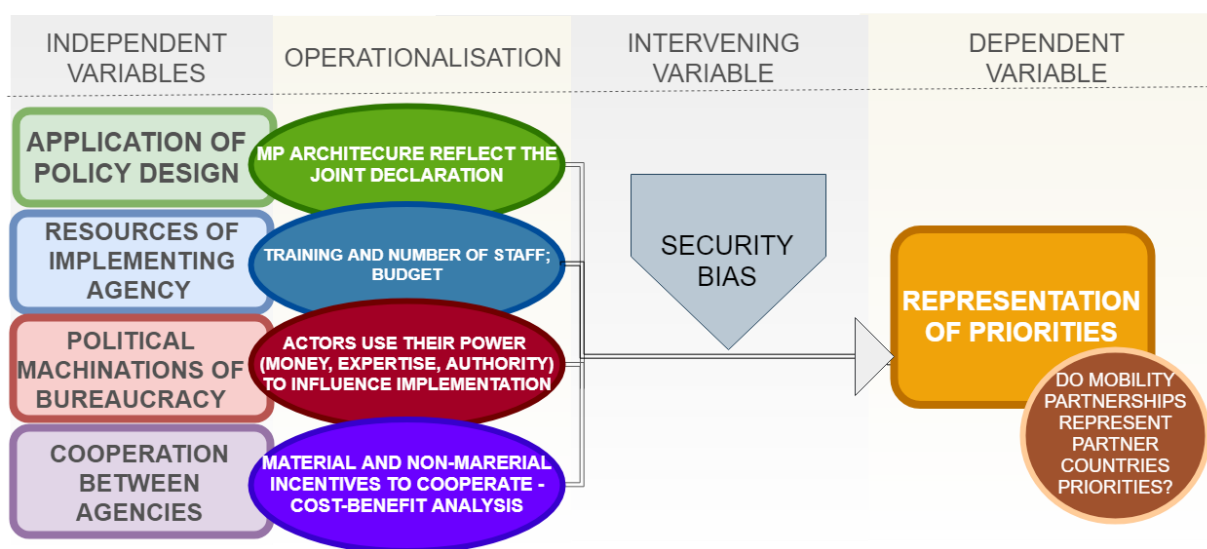
3.1. Variables and operationalisation

Based on the theoretical framework, the representation of local priorities in the MP implementation is studied through the external governance lens. The EU has ownership over the Mobility Partnership as a policy instrument. Therefore, its security-oriented rationale affects the representation of partner country priorities. However, partner countries can also act: their cooperation depends on having sufficient incentives; the quality of interactions is linked to the possibility and willingness to apply EU rules; they have a potential possibility to use its own political resources to influence the MP implementation.

Figure 1 presents the variable scheme that will be used and applied in the thesis. The research will take under consideration four independent variables: application of policy design, resources of implementing agencies, political machinations of bureaucracy and cooperation between agencies. The variables, affected by the EU security bias, will be tested in order to find main factors that influence the representation of local priorities. The definitions of all variables are introduced below.

Application of policy design means the resemblance between intended and actual structure of policy implementation. The variable was based on the work of Pressman and Wildavsky. In the context of Mobility Partnerships, intended policy implementation is described in each Joint Declaration. The variable will be operationalised by examining how well a given MP architecture reflects the text of the Declaration.

Figure 1. Variable scheme of the representation of local priorities in Mobility Partnership implementation.



Resources of implementing agency is a variable proposed by van Meter and van Horn. It is operationalized by examining institutional capacity – number of staff and level of training – and budget required for the implementation of MP projects. Consequently, resources of my three case studies will be investigated. However, it is important to note here that partner countries’ institutions are not the only implementing agencies; the Member States, the EU institutions and international organizations capacities will be also taken under consideration but in more generic terms and only when it affects partner countries’ priorities.

Political machinations of bureaucracy mean the politics of implementation; the extent to which the “political game” between actors affects the implementation of MPs. The variable is based on the work of Sabatier. It is operationalised by verifying if and how the political level influences the implementation of MPs. Consequently, I will examine what strategies actors incorporate in order to turn the policy implementation into the desired direction. As typical strategies, Sabatier listed use of money, legal authority and knowledge. However, actors can also use other strategies.

Cooperation between agencies is a variable based on the EU external governance literature. It means the extent to which foreign implementing agencies are eager to cooperate with each other. In order to operationalise it, the literature points out to measuring if the cooperation during the implementation phase is mutually beneficial for actors involved. Consequently, a

cost-benefit analysis will be conducted for each case study, taking under consideration material and non-material incentives. The example of material incentives is the number of projects that reflects the partner country priorities, while the example of non-material incentive is strengthening relationships between institutions.

The four variables influence the implementation and, therefore, the representation of priorities as Mobility Partnerships are based on reciprocity of advantage. Nevertheless, it is assumed that the link is not direct but affected by an intervening variable.

Security bias is the intervening variable. The variable was based on the assumption, widespread in the literature, that the EU's rationale is security-oriented. The assumption will not be tested in the thesis as it is impossible to quantify how much of the research results are due to the intervening variable.

Representation of priorities means the influence of the other variables on the agency of partner countries. The dependent variables express the extent to which partner countries' priorities are reflected in MP implementation. The variable will be measured by examining whether the MP actions are directly in line with the interests of partner countries.

3.2. Methods

Empirically, the thesis draws on two qualitative analytic techniques. As mentioned above, the instrument of Mobility Partnerships is an under-researched topic. Therefore, I started my analysis by conducting exploratory, in-depth interviews with public officers responsible for the (monitoring of) MPs implementation. Furthermore, the research is based on the systematic analysis of written sources.

Interviews

The semi-structured interview is split into two parts. The first part will be exploratory, with questions focusing on *how* MPs are implemented step-by-step, what are the main differences between countries, what is the exact role of the actors involved, what are the main obstacles within the MP implementation. This part will complement the data obtained from written

sources as not all information is displayed in policy documents. The second part of the interview serves as a triangulation of data obtained from the document analysis. This part, concentrating on *what* is implemented, will add depth to the expectations' testing. The interview questions are listed in Appendix 1. In total, I interviewed two employees of the European Commission and two employees of the International Centre for Migration Policy Development (ICMPD).

Document Analysis

The sources used for the analysis of the MP projects are three Mobility Partnership scoreboards and one policy evaluation. For every MP, the European Commission created a scoreboard, a document listing information about MP projects: actors involved, description, funding, and phase - concluded, ongoing or foreseen. An example of how a scoreboard looks like is presented below (Image 1).

Image 1. Example of a scoreboard.

Country	GAMM Pillar	Main areas	Origin of the initiative	Project code	Project description	Geographical scope	Implementing body	Source of funding	Budget	Start date	End date	Status
Armenia	Horizontal Activities	MIGRATION STRATEGY			Promote exchange of experience in the region in the implementation of Mobility Partnership in Georgia, Moldova and Armenia: Conference on "People's skills and the global approach to migration and mobility (GAMM)	Armenia	European Training Foundation (ETF)	ETF	27 600,00	2013		Concluded
Armenia	Horizontal Activities	STRENGTHENING CAPACITIES OF INSTITUTIONS DEALING WITH MIGRATION			Strengthening Armenia's labour migration management towards enhanced democracy and good governance. The development objective of the action is strengthening the capacities of the Armenian Government to better manage labour aspects of migration in support of enhanced democracy and good governance.	Armenia	IOM	Romanian ODA	70 000,00	2015	2016	Concluded
Armenia	Horizontal Activities	STRENGTHENING CAPACITIES OF INSTITUTIONS DEALING WITH MIGRATION			Targeted initiative for Armenia: "Strengthening Armenia's migration management capacities, with special focus on reintegration activities, in the framework of the EU-Armenia Mobility Partnership". Overall objective: to strengthen Armenia's migration management capacities with special focus on reintegration activities by increasing the capacities of competent authorities and civil society in Armenia to actively support dignified sustainable return and reintegration, to address the challenges posed by irregular migration, to facilitate opportunities for legal migration and to strengthen the positive impact of migration on Armenia's social development. Specific objectives: 1) Reinforcing capacities on return and reintegration of Armenian migrants 2) Support reintegration of Armenian nationals 3) Maximise the links between migration and development, including circular migration 4) Information campaigns for Armenian communities abroad Armenian general public on the possibilities of legal migration including labour and circular migration, and the risks of irregular migration.	Armenia	FR (OFII) and DE (GIZ)- coordination BE, BG, CZ, DE, NL, PL, RO, ARM partners	EU TP Migration & Asylum	3 000 000,000	2012	2016	Concluded
Armenia	Horizontal Activities	STRENGTHENING CAPACITIES OF INSTITUTIONS DEALING WITH MIGRATION			Support the State Migration Service for strengthening of migration management in Armenia - The project purpose is to improve migration management in Armenia through institutional strengthening of the SMS including (i) improved legal framework, (ii) more effective functioning of the migration management system and tighter coordination of actors involved, and (iii) implementation of a comprehensive asylum and migration data processing and communication system	Armenia	Swedish Migration Board (leader) with Poland's Migration Policy Department	European Neighbourhood and Partnership Instrument (ENPI)	1 000 000,000	2012	2014	Concluded

In total, 190 project documentation were analysed. All of the scoreboards used for this analysis were updated in the second half of 2018. Furthermore, the data was completed with information obtained from a policy evaluation. The most recent (and the biggest in scope) policy evaluation was conducted by Maastricht University in 2018. The analysis of the policy evaluation was also recommended by my interviewees. However, it covers only Moldova and Georgia. To date, no policy evaluation of the EU-Armenia MP was conducted.

The document analysis uses both deductive and inductive coding. Based on the theoretical chapter, I have found typical terminology that is used to describe projects in line with the security bias and sustainable development assumptions. Subsequently, several codes were added during the coding process as the results of deductive coding did not include all projects. Finally, the codes were grouped into three categories that had emerged: security-oriented measures (EU priorities), sustainable development-oriented measures (Partner priorities) and neutral.

The EU priorities were coded based on the security-bias assumption. The project descriptions containing words such as “security”, “surveillance”, “combat irregular migration”, “readmission”, “forced returnee” and similar were categorized as EU Priorities.

The partner countries priorities were coded in accordance with the theoretical assumption of the sustainable development objective. Therefore, the projects focusing on, among others, facilitating legal mobility, enabling migrants, supporting reintegration of migrants, encouraging local development were categorized as Partner Country Priorities. The codes used were, for instance: “local development”, “engagement”, “labour market”, “mobility”.

Some of the projects included the two groups of codes. In this case, I analysed the project description in detail in order to place it in one of the categories. If it was not possible, the projects that had both development- and security-oriented components were put in Neutral Category. The projects focused strictly on institutional capacity building and general migration policy development were also placed in the Neutral category as they are the foundation for implementation of both EU and Partner priorities projects. Furthermore, I placed projects related to international protection and asylum in the Neutral category as well since they contribute directly to neither security measures nor the development of partner countries.

It should be noted that my coding does not always correspond to the scoreboard categorisation. The fact that a project was placed in the “Labour Migration” category by the scoreboard creators does not mean that it will be situated in the partner countries priorities group automatically. What matters is the description. For instance, that was the case of a project categorized as “Reintegration” on the Georgian scoreboard. Even though reintegration corresponds typically to the local development category, the project concerned migrants forcibly returned and the “reintegration package” seemed like a bribe, offered with the purpose to keep the beneficiaries

in their home country and out of the EU. Consequently, since the project was ambiguous and involved both security- and development-oriented rationale, it was placed in the Neutral category.

Concrete examples of coding are listed in Table 2. The complete code book can be found in Appendix 2.

Table 2. Examples from the code book.

Category	Codes	Examples
Security-oriented measures	“security”, “surveillance”, “combat irregular migration”, “readmission”, “forced returnee” ...	“(….)to support the Georgian state structures in processing readmission ”, “(…) combating irregular immigration, and improve border surveillance and border management capacities.”
Sustainable local development measures	“local development”, “engagement”, “labour market”, “mobility”, “reintegration”, ...	“(….)To increase opportunities for economic reintegration for returning migrants”, “(…) enhance capacities of private employment agencies to match labour demand and offer”
Neutral	“exchange of experience”, “policy advice”, “asylum”, “training” ...	“Promote exchange of experience in the region in the implementation of Mobility Partnership”, “ (….) set up a durable mechanism which ensures self-sufficient and institutionalized training capacities ”

3.3. Case selection

The thesis uses a comparative case study design (George & Bennett, 2005) that will allow to analyse the role of third countries' priorities in the implementation of Mobility Partnerships. Furthermore, the comparison of Mobility Partnerships allows the assessment of policy changes in EU-third country relations in terms of the variance of the policy over time.

Until this date, nine Mobility Partnerships were signed. However, a timeframe of at least a few years is necessary to assess their implementation. For instance, the Advocacy Coalition Framework recommends a time perspective of at least a decade (Sabatier, 1988). Therefore, the research will take into consideration only the MPs that were signed by 2012. The time span of at least seven years allows the analysis of four MPs: with Cape Verde, Moldova, Georgia and Armenia. Furthermore, on the basis of the most similar method, Cape Verde will be excluded. The remaining countries are similar in cultural, economic and institutional terms that could potentially have an impact on migration and, consequently, migration policies implementation: GDP growth (around 4-5%), economic structure (services/remittances/agriculture dependent), population size (3 to 4 million nationals), post-soviet heritage (culture and administration) (World Bank, 2017). Therefore, this research will focus on MPs with Moldova, Georgia, and Armenia.

3.4. Ethical considerations

The documents analysed in this research were provided by the European Commission. According to Article 15 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union, every citizen and resident of the European Union have the right to access these documents. Consequently, the data does not have to be anonymized. The information provided by interviewees is not judged to be sensitive. However, their names and positions will be anonymized in line with the EU data protection requirements.

3.5. Limitations

The thesis entails several limitations. The first is theoretical, related to the handling of the policy formation/implementation relationship. Implementation studies are based on the assumption that the stages of policy process can be separated (Hill & Hupe, 2002, p. 147). However, Mobility Partnership is a very flexible policy that foresees negotiations and adding new projects. These negotiations can be seen as policy formation stage. Although the limitation is undeniable, I tried to get around this problem. Since the policy itself mentions the possibility of new initiatives under the MP umbrella, I assumed that the negotiations are part of the policy implementation. Therefore, the start of the implementation stage is marked by the signature of a given MP. Furthermore, the thesis systematically compares the general, unchangeable political intentions establishing MPs (such as reciprocity of advantage) with the actual policy outputs. The “big” goals are not being renegotiated when proposing new initiatives – what changes is the way of reaching them. Consequently, successful implementation means here how well, and if, the *founding* political intentions were met.

The next limitation is related to the data available. Some scoreboards do not contain all information; there are plenty of gaps. For instance, the information about funding or action indicators is not always given. Whenever possible, I tried to overcome this limitation by searching online for the missing pieces of information on the official websites of implementing agencies.

Still, the scoreboards do not contain information on how Mobility Partnerships are implemented. For this reason, I conducted additional interviews. However, due to the limited time frame for conducting the research, I was not able to gather data in the field, meaning in the partner countries concerned. I tried to get around the problem by analysing the policy evaluation, done by Maastricht University. The evaluation contains, among others, quotes and opinions of Georgian and Moldovan officials. However, no policy evaluation of the EU-Armenia MP was done to date.

4. Background information

Based on the relevant literature and official policy documents, this chapter gives background information on Mobility Partnerships. Firstly, it looks at an MP as a policy tool - why and how a Mobility Partnership was created and what was its intended architecture. Subsequently, it describes the type of actors involved in policy implementation. The roles of the actors involved will be crucial for a proper understanding of the subsequent chapters. Finally, the last subsection gives a brief description of my case studies.

4.1. Mobility Partnerships

Mobility Partnership as a policy instrument

As a result of the increased influx of immigrants to the Member States, the European Commission proposed the Global Approach to Migration and Mobility, a framework for international cooperation in matters of external migration and asylum policies, adopted in 2005 by the Council of the European Union. The GAMM is focused on cooperation with countries from which the largest share of immigrants originates (Council of the European Union, 2005). Mobility partnership is one of the main policy instruments developed within the frames of the GAMM. Nine MPs have been signed so far (see Table 2).

Table 2. States participating in Mobility Partnerships.

Year	Partner country	The EU member states
2008	Moldova	Bulgaria, Cyprus, Czech Republic, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Italy, Lithuania, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia, Sweden
2008	Cape Verde	Spain, France, Luxembourg, Portugal
2009	Georgia	Belgium, Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Denmark, Germany, Estonia, Greece, France, Italy, Lithuania, Latvia, the Netherlands, Poland, Romania, Sweden, Great Britain
2011	Armenia	Belgium, Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Germany, France, Italy, Netherlands, Poland, Romania, Sweden
2013	Morocco	Belgium, France, Germany, Italy, Netherlands, Portugal, Spain, Sweden, Great Britain
2013	Azerbaijan	Bulgaria, Czech Republic, France, Lithuania, Netherlands, Poland, Slovakia, Slovenia

2014	Jordan	Cyprus, Denmark, Germany, Greece, Spain, France, Italy, Hungary, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Sweden
2014	Tunisia	Belgium, Germany, Denmark, Spain, Italy, France, Poland, Portugal, Great Britain, Sweden
2015	Belarus	Bulgaria, Lithuania, Latvia, Finland, Poland, Romania, Hungary

Source: author's own compilation

Mobility Partnerships are complex and multi-layered instruments because their elements do not always fall within the competences of the European Union (Hampshire, 2015). On the one hand, they serve as a framework of bilateral cooperation between the EU as a whole and its partners. On this level, MPs include in practice the signature of visa facilitation and readmission agreements by third countries (Commission, 2011, p.11). The former means facilitated visa procedures for non-EU citizens; the latter entails improved cooperation of third countries in identifying and readmitting its nationals that are irregularly residing in the EU.

Although many areas of migration and asylum policies have been communitarized in accordance with the Treaty of Amsterdam, some components of partnerships still belong to the competences of Member States. For instance, the creation of legal migration opportunities remains a national competence. Consequently, on the other hand, Mobility Partnerships are umbrella mechanisms, providing official frames for cooperation between the EU member states and third countries. In this sense, multiple bilateral and multilateral mobility projects are developed between interested parties. Participation in these initiatives is not mandatory. Next to the projects proposed as a result of MP negotiations, new offers of commitments can be added at any moment after the signature. Therefore, an MP is viewed as a "living document" (Reslow, 2013, p.136).

The content and type of the commitments which partner countries undertake are subject to negotiation. MPs are "tailored to the specifics of each relevant third country, to the ambitions of the country concerned and of the EU, and to the level of commitments which the third country is ready to take on (...). Possible components of a mobility partnership will depend on the specific situation" (Commission, 2007, p.2). As already mentioned in the introduction, Mobility Partnerships aim to facilitate mobility, prevent irregular migration and human trafficking, maximize the development impact of mobility and promote international protection and external asylum policy. The last goal was added in 2011; the policy documents of the first four Mobility Partnerships (with Moldova, Cape Verde, Georgia, and Armenia) were based initially

on three goals. The initiatives do not have to be limited to issues related to migration and border protection. On the contrary, efficient Mobility Partnership should cover a number of other areas of cooperation, including employment, social policy, education or training (Morawska, 2017). Still, the promise of visa-free travel constitutes the strongest incentive to implement the EU standards of migration management (Hampshire, 2015, p. 581), such as monitoring of migration flows or improved border control and document security.

Actors and their competences

There are four types of actors involved in the implementation of Mobility Partnerships: the Member States, the EU institutions, third countries, and international organizations. Due to the lack of binding legal force of MPs, neither the European Parliament nor the European Court of Justice can influence the process of creating and adopting partnerships and their provisions (Morawska, 2017). As a result of the exclusion of the European Parliament, the policy instrument is criticized due to the marginalisation of democratic accountability (Carrera and Hernández i Sagrera, 2011, p.106).

In the EU, negotiations and implementation of MPs are coordinated by the Commission. The Commission also organizes meetings between parties. On the partner side, EU delegations along with third countries representatives and the Member States officials monitor implementation through local cooperation platforms (Commission, 2009, p. 5-6). International organizations, for instance, the International Organization for Migration (IOM), and other non-governmental organizations help in the realisation of certain projects.

In 2016, the distribution of responsibilities among actors has changed due to the creation of the Mobility Partnership Facility (MPF). The EU-funded initiative, managed by the International Centre for Migration Policy Development (ICMPD), contributes to the operationalisation of a Mobility Partnership and a Common Agenda on Migration and Mobility (ICMPD, n.d.). It takes charge of very targeted, as-needed based actions by means of encouraging bilateral dialogue between partners, establishing cooperation networks, managing projects and enhancing the coherence of EU instruments. The Member States can apply for funding through its Call For Proposal. Therefore, ICMPD partially took over the operational duties of EC. However, EC still evaluates and accepts projects submitted through MPF.

4.2. Case study profiles

Moldova

Situated in Eastern Europe, Moldova borders with Romania and Ukraine. In 2016, the country population was 3.5 million. (The World Bank, 2018). Moldova declared its independence in 1991. The fall of the Soviet Union was accompanied by economic instability and rising unemployment, which resulted in mass emigration. According to the official statistics, emigrants accounts for 24% of the total population (The World Bank, 2016), while their remittances represent remarkable 21.7% of national GDP (The World Bank, 2018). However, since many Moldovans migrate irregularly, the numbers can be even higher in reality. The top destination countries include Russia, Italy, Ukraine, Romania and the United States of America (UNDESA, 2015).

The EU-Moldova MP was signed in 2008. The Moldovans saw the MP as an opportunity to open an exclusive dialogue with the EU and limit irregular emigration that hinders local development (Brouillette, 2018). Their will strongly corresponded with the interests of the Member States as Moldova is a popular transit route to the EU (Makaryan & Chobanyan, 2014). However, recent polls indicate that the Moldovan citizens are divided: 40 percent of Moldovans are in favour of a closer relationship with the EU, while 44 percent supports Eurasian integration (Hrant, 2016). The divide is reflected in the distribution of seats in the Moldovan parliament. A major event that affected EU-Moldova relations is a large-scale fraud involving Moldovan banks in 2014. Due to the corruption scandal, when the equivalent of 1 billion USD was stolen (roughly one-eighth of GDP), the EU suspended almost all macro-financial assistance to Moldova.

Georgia

Georgia is located in the Caucasus region, at the crossroads of Asia and Europe. It shares borders with Russia, Turkey, Armenia and Azerbaijan. The post-soviet country gained independence in 1991. Georgian population is 3.7 million (SCMI, 2017) of which 16.6 percent are emigrants (The World Bank, 2016). Remittances account for 10.8% of GDP (The World Bank, 2018). Georgian nationals emigrate mostly to Russia, Greece, Ukraine, Azerbaijan and Armenia (UNDESA, 2015).

Georgians are mostly pro-European. The relationship with Russia is tense due to the ongoing conflict over Abkhazia and South Ossetia regions. In 2008 the conflict escalated, leading Russia to the recognition of the regions' independence. Since then, the Russian Federation maintains a strong military presence in Abkhazia and South Ossetia. In this context, the Georgian government signed the MP and became an Eastern Partnership member, sending a strong pro-European signal. A collaborative relationship with the EU has been developed, covering many areas.

Armenia

Armenia is bordered by Georgia, Azerbaijan, Turkey and Iran. Being the poorest country of the Caucasus region, 25.7 percent of people live below the national poverty line (Asian Development Bank, 2019). The country declared independence from the Soviet Union in 1991. The population of Armenia is 3 million. Emigrants constitute 25.7 % of the total population, sending remittances accounting for 17.9 % of national GDP (The World Bank, 2016).

Due to the strong economic ties with Russia, Armenia is its close ally. However, the 2018 Velvet Revolution resulted in developments that favour stronger EU-Armenia relationship. Corruption and lack of governmental accountability combined with fragile socio-economic situation caused a series of protests against the government. The peaceful revolution achieved removing from power the previous elite. It resulted in a disruption of administrative continuity of the country. The Velvet Revolution is expected to bring positive, democratic changes. Although the new government does not declare reorientation towards Europe, the revolution coincides with the entry into force of the Comprehensive Enhanced Partnership Agreement (CEPA). The agreement opens new opportunities for strengthening the EU-Armenia relations.

5. Findings

The chapter presents the findings of the research. Each case study is presented separately. For every country, first, the representation of priorities is assessed. The representation of priorities section is subdivided into three subsections: partner country priorities (mobility possibilities and local development aspect), EU priorities and neutral. The next subchapters investigate the implementation of every MP, following the structure of variables derived from the theoretical framework. Theoretical concepts are brought forward at this point in order to facilitate a smooth transition to the later comparative analysis chapter.

5.1. Moldova

5.1.1. Representation of priorities

The Moldovan scoreboard lists 113 projects. The scoreboard suggests that Moldovan priorities are well represented in the MP. According to the coding methodology, 34 of the projects concentrate on the EU's priorities, 56 on the Moldovan ones, and 23 is neutral. Table 3 presents the category and current phase of all projects. Each category will be discussed in the below subsections, with particular emphasis on projects that seem to influence the representation of priorities to the greatest extent.

Table 3. Overview of the EU-Moldova MP projects by priority and by phase.

	EU PRIORITIES	MOLDOVAN PRIORITIES	NEUTRAL	Total
ALL PROJECTS	34	56	23	113
% OF TOTAL	30%	50%	20%	100%
COMPLETED	20	37	19	76
ONGOING	9	16	2	27
FORESEEN	5	3	2	10

Moldovan priorities

The projects focusing on the development and mobility constitute 50% of all projects. They are divided into nine categories: Labour Migration, Diaspora, Social Security, Local/Regional Support, Qualifications, Transfer of Remittances, Education, and Visa. Table 4 presents what these thematic categories entail.

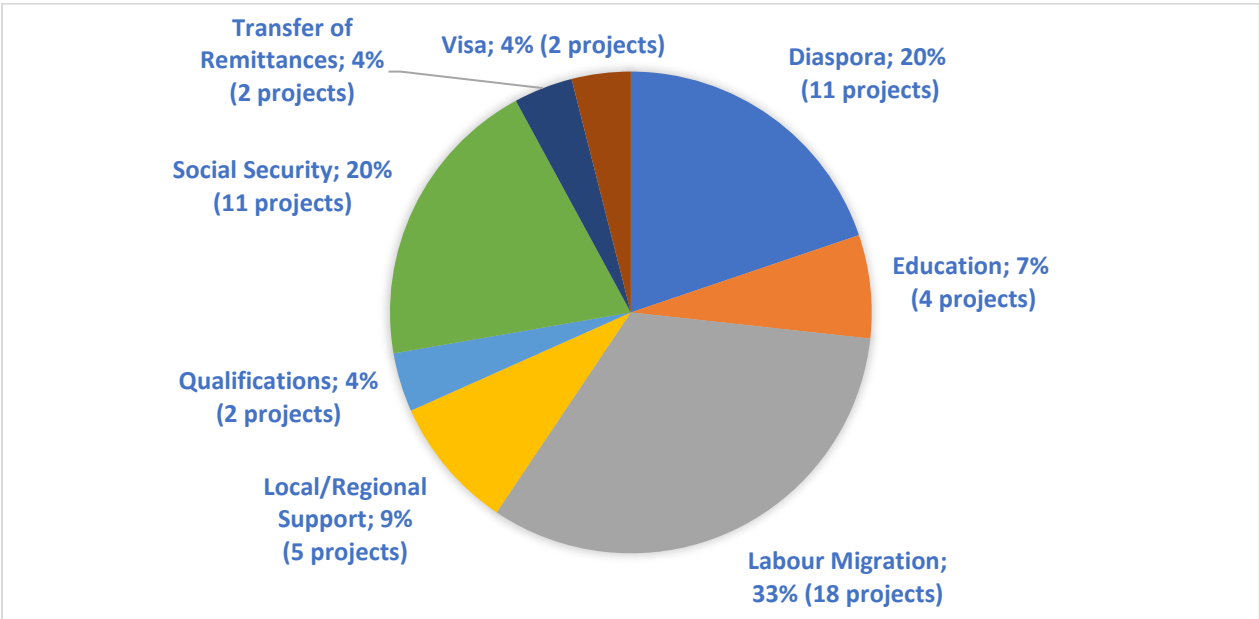
Table 4. Examples of projects by thematic area.

AREAS	EXAMPLES
LABOUR MIGRATION	Develop employment opportunities in the country and abroad, information sessions about labour migration opportunities, support the development of business initiatives by vulnerable people
CIRCULAR MIGRATION	Promoting temporary return of qualified workers to the country of origin, signature of protocols on temporary migration, support temporary return of qualified nationals in the private sector
SOCIAL SECURITY	Transfer of social security benefits, bilateral agreements in the field of social security,
QUALIFICATIONS	Bilateral recognition of skills and qualifications
EDUCATION	Partnerships between universities, promotion of student exchanges, award of grants, seminars and study visits
VISA	Facilitation agreement on short stay visas, common visa application center, negotiation of visa facilitation agreement for certain categories of persons
DIASPORA	Improve integration of migrants in their host societies, support diaspora organisations
REINTEGRATION	Support for economic and social reintegration of migrants returning to their country of origin, support for local development projects and young people's initiatives, support reintegration of vulnerable groups of people
TRANSFER OF REMITTANCES	Programmes to reduce the cost of money transfers, financial instruments to encourage migrants to invest remittances in local communities
LOCAL/REGIONAL SUPPORT	Support for local development projects and to business initiatives by women or young people, provide incentives regarding local job opportunities, support private and small enterprises, in particular to create labour opportunities in rural regions

Source: Scoreboard Moldova.

As Chart 1 shows, Labour Migration, Diaspora and Social Security projects constitute the largest share of the projects focusing on Moldovan priorities.

Chart 1. Projects focusing on Moldovan priorities by thematic area.



Mobility

Labour Migration projects are mostly bilateral agreements between a Member State and Moldova, with the exception of one projects, initiated by the European Commission. Most of the files do not include information about funding. Only 6 out of 18 projects offer better access to the EU labour market. These are the projects with Italy, Poland, Cyprus (3), Czech Republic. Still, only one project, initiated by Poland, translates into actual labour migration possibilities. According to the “Preliminary data for 2009” indicator, 1537 of Moldovan citizens were admitted to Poland between February and July 2009. The remaining Labour Migration projects are focused on the exchange of experience, strengthening the governance of labour market, and training. If any of the projects resulted in actual migration of Moldovan citizens, such information is not given. This finding is in line with the policy evaluation of the MP with Moldova: “Respondents unanimously agreed that the MP has had a very limited impact on the mobility of target groups” (Alberola & Langley, 2018). In the same vein, one of my responded stated:

“The black ship of migration projects is always labour migration. The Member States do not want to engage in that” (Respondent 3)

Development

Social Security-themed projects are the second largest group within the projects focusing on the partner country priorities. Similarly to Labour Migration projects, they are mostly bilateral agreements. Belgium, Austria, Estonia, Romania, Luxembourg, Portugal, and Bulgaria signed social security benefit transfer agreements with Moldova, for the purpose of “Enabling MD citizens to transfer social security benefits from MD to a country of destination, or back from a host country to Moldova”.

Another major group are Diaspora-related projects. The projects focus on maximizing the positive impact of migration, strengthening the link between the Moldovan communities abroad and the home country, and promoting engagement among emigrants. Looking at the scoreboard, what stands out immediately is the relatively high budget provided and the involvement of international organizations in implementation. Furthermore, the actions are well elaborated. While the scoreboard is in general patchy, especially in terms of budget, most of the information about Diaspora projects is provided. In total, 11 projects fall under the theme. The budget of 7 projects amounts to 11,149,183€ (in case of remaining 4 projects, the budget is not given). Most of the projects are still ongoing. Their long lifespan could be a sign of successful implementation or positive feedback from the beneficiaries. The focus on Moldovan citizens abroad is not surprising. Emigrants account for almost one-fourth of the population. This situation results in a strong interest of the Moldovan government to fight emigration, encourage return and engagement of its nationals (Alberola & Langley, 2018).

Among the remaining thematic areas, one project from Local/Regional Support category draws attention due to its considerable scope. Initiated by Sweden, it aims to improve economic conditions for returning migrants with special focus on women’s rights. The project has a considerable budget of 2,14 million euro.

Neutral projects

The projects coded as neutral are either in line with both the EU and Moldovan priorities, or they do not fall under any of the categories. The latter is related to international protection. The former group consists mostly of capacity building projects. They are crucial from the EU as well as the Moldovan perspective as they enable implementation of other projects that require trained staff and adequate institutional capacities. On the scoreboard, there are 12 projects

focusing on strengthening capacities of institutions dealing with migration, 7 of them were conducted in the initial phase of the instrument.

EU priorities

Security-oriented measures of the EU translate into Border Management, Readmission, Document Security, Fight against Illegal Migration and Trafficking/Smuggling projects. Table 5 gives an overview of what the thematic areas entail.

Table 5. Examples of projects by thematic area.

AREAS	EXAMPLES
READMISSION	Conclusion of readmission agreements, support in the implementation of readmission agreements, promote best practices on management of readmission
BORDER MANAGEMENT	Operational arrangements with Frontex, information exchange and risk analysis, training in the area of border control and investigation techniques, improvement of technical equipment and technology at the borders, systems for recording information on entries/exits, introduction of biometric in travel documents
DOCUMENT SECURITY	Training on the falsification of documents, technical assistance in the area of document security and fraud
SMUGGLING / TRAFFICKING OF HUMAN BEINGS	Protocols on smuggling of migrants and trafficking in persons, cooperation with Europol in terms of exchange of information on smuggling and trafficking
FIGHT AGAINST ILLEGAL MIGRATION	Awareness raising for the prevention of illegal migration, information exchange in the fight against illegal immigration and prevention of organised crime

Source: Scoreboard Moldova.

Although fewer in number than the projects focusing on development and mobility, they are in general more concrete, with clear objectives and indicators. Border management projects are framed as an exchange of experience between the institutions. Such actions were initiated by Slovakia, Germany, Latvia and Romania. The next major category is Fight against Illegal Migration. Similarly to the Border Management projects, they also consist on the exchange of experience between countries, with strong involvement of Frontex (European Border and Coast Guard Agency).

Moldova cooperates enthusiastically with the EU on security issues. There are two main reasons behind it. On the one hand, technological advancement in terms of border management and

documents security (biometric passports) was required to sign the visa liberalisation agreement. On the other hand, Moldova has been suffering from large scale emigration, mostly irregular, that hinder the local development (Alberola & Langley, 2018). Consequently, the security-oriented rationale of the EU does not stand against Moldovan goals.

5.1.2. Factors affecting implementation

Application of policy design

The first variable derived from implementation studies was the application of policy design. The operationalization involves the analysis of the Moldovan Mobility Partnership architecture and its resemblance to the Joint Declaration intentions.

The MP with Moldova was signed in the pilot stage of the instrument. From the beginning, Moldova was very proactive and keen on cooperation with the Member States and the EU. It has created a clear organizational structure. The respondents highlighted repeatedly that Moldova was one of the few MP countries that directly translated the Joint Declaration into operational steps. The MP meetings are organized regularly at the appropriate level, both local cooperation platform (LCP) and high-level meetings (HLM).

“The joint declaration calls for an annual [high level] meeting and a local corporation platform (...) every year, end of the year, we meet in Chisinau for the high-level meetings; every year mid-term, let’s say, we have to meet in Chisinau for the local cooperation platform. This has been a reality for more than 10 years.” (Respondent 1).

At the same time, the recent policy evaluation pointed out some misconceptions regarding the purpose of MP meetings. Firstly, among Moldovan officials, there is confusion concerning the strategic values of the HLM versus the LCP (Alberola & Langley, 2018). According to the European Commission, a local cooperation platform should focus on a strictly operational level (updates on projects, solving implementation problems, designing new project ideas), while the politics should be discussed during high-level meetings (priorities and the direction of the MP). As the policy evaluation highlights, the lines between the two are blurry from the Moldovan perspective (Alberola & Langley, 2018), especially that some of the MP issues are discussed under different platforms of cooperation, such as Association Agreement. This last point will

be further explored in the Comparison section, as this aspect of MP architecture is questioned in all of my case studies.

Apart from clearly translating the Joint Declaration into operational steps, Moldova has demonstrated proactiveness in further highlighting the inclusiveness and visibility of the instrument. Moldova has added some operational steps to internally facilitate the MP implementation. For instance, migration issues are mainstreamed. Moldovan government established an internal committee, officially named the National Monitoring Committee for the Implementation of the MP. Upon its creation, each relevant ministry was asked to designate a focal point contributing to the work of the committee (Alberola & Langley, 2018). The committee, being also an internal space for cooperation in-between the official MP meetings, is responsible for monitoring of the MP implementation, updating the Moldovan scoreboard and following up on current migration issues (Alberola & Langley, 2018). One respondent stated:

“Migration is not done by a specific ministry but there is a state commission that coordinates the work of each ministry. (...). In our opinion, it is a good model because it centralizes the analysis.” (Respondent 1)

Moldova is the only MP country which scoreboard is available online. Thanks to that, all actors involved can follow up on the current state of affairs. Furthermore, Moldova very actively absorbs recommendations from other countries and create its own migration policies, following EU standards. The project that was mentioned in particular was between Romania and Moldova, related to border management.

“ The action was framed as an exercise to provide the recommendations on how to set up the new border management strategies. And they [Moldova] took a more than 85 percent of those recommendations.” (Respondent 1)

In sum, despite some confusion over the content of MP meetings, the architecture of Moldovan MP reflects the Joint Declaration and even further improve its operationalisation. The EU-Moldova MP usually serves as an example of good governance for other partner countries.

Resources

Due to numerous projects on capacity building implemented in the early stages of the MP, Moldova is well prepared in terms of institutional capacity and trained staff. Respondents confirm that the cooperation at a technical level is very smooth. One respondent highlighted that cooperation is particularly good in the field of border management, explaining it as following:

“I was positively surprised by the engagement of everyone working together for days. I was discussing informally with colleagues and border guards and they said: Well you know, we are two countries but, in the end, the border is one.” (Respondent 1)

Conversely, two respondents noted that the structural obstacles are sometimes visible in MS institutions. One of them said:

“The main problem is that we are in a situation that the member states are facing... We don't have the same growth as we used to have, so what is happening is that many Member States are reducing staff, reducing costs. When it gets to the external dimension... 20 years ago you would have had on average a certain funding that was engaged into staffing on the external dimension. Today those Member States have a quarter of the staff that they used to have. And it is not really an issue that we have explored.” (Respondent 4)

As the question concerns all of my case studies, it will be further explored in the comparison section (Chapter 6) in order to avoid repetitions. For the same reason, the issue of funding will be also discussed in that section.

Political machinations of bureaucracy

Based on the Advocacy Coalition Framework, it is expected that MP actors will try to alter implementation and use its resources to move their interests forward. It is worth highlighting that in the context of MPs, the political relationships strongly influence implementation, especially that the advocacy coalitions present in the policy subsystem have very different interests. In the case of Moldova, it is manifested in increased proactiveness. Due to a huge

corruption scandal in 2014, the EU suspended all macro-financial assistance to Moldova, except Mobility Partnerships-related funds. As one interviewee explains:

“Moldova is a bit on standby in general but not regarding the MPs. We continue MPs because this is not a high level. Moldova is really, really interested in having meetings on MPs because the rest is suspended. We are getting a lot of pressure from them.” (Respondent 3)

Since the MP is the only remaining link to the EU, Moldova has been trying to hold onto that for several years now. MP projects are mostly funded from the EU and the Member States budgets. Moldova, therefore, is not able to use the money to turn the implementation into the desired direction. Instead, they apply psychological pressure on the EU. Quoting one of its interviewees, the policy evaluation stated:

“Both Georgia and Moldova secured their borders, secured their systems, created biometric passports. They put in place very advanced document security systems, procedures, so on and so forth. So, at the end of that after so many years of support in these areas, indeed both Moldova and Georgia are very demanding when it comes to more support to exploit the connection between migration and development.” (Alberola & Langley, 2018)

According to my respondents, Moldova considers limited participation of Member States as one of the weakest elements of the MP implementation. Partner countries are not able to create new projects themselves, meaning without the involvement of Member States. Member States participate actively in neither HLM nor LCP since they are not interested in labour migration and development and migration themed projects. According to the EU officers, Moldovan officials complain that Member States are usually represented by Embassy staff who does not have enough knowledge about the MP (Alberola & Langley, 2018). As a result, crucial decisions drag on. Consequently, from the ACF perspective, Member States use their legal authority (i.e. legal mobility and development-oriented actions is their competence) to refrain from development projects, being the priority of partner countries. The Mobility Partnership Facility tries to counteract the weak participation of the Member States by organizing coordination meetings with all relevant actors present. However, since it is a relatively new framework of cooperation focused on small-scale needs, its impact seems to be currently limited.

Cooperation between agencies

In order to explain transnational cooperation of countries, the external governance literature points out to rational incentives of actors. Priorities are better represented if a partner country is engaged in implementation. In order to be engaged, the partner country has to have sufficient incentives. In that case, what would be the result of Moldovan cost-benefit analysis? As the previous subchapter (5.1) suggests, it would be positive. Despite limited labour migration opportunities, local development-themed actions have a major impact on Moldova. Furthermore, border management actions, primarily EU priority, are not against Moldovan interests due to mass irregular emigration that has a negative impact on local development.

Consequently, Moldova is very active in MP implementation. Despite achieving visa-free travel, which was seen as the ultimate goal of the MP, the country wants to continue the cooperation with the EU under the same framework. My respondents from the EC and the ICMPD agree that this achievement has simply changed the Moldovan approach to the MP implementation. After the visa-free travel was reached, the priorities had to be adjusted accordingly. One respondent said:

“ They still see possibilities and they have a clear agenda on what they’d like to do after the visa-free regime was achieved, still using the MP. We always call Moldova “a good student” because they use the governance instrument regularly.” (Respondent 1).

However, the instrument suffers in terms of coherence in all countries except for Moldova. Confusion over the architecture, lack of participation of the Member States and need for reflection are the main reasons. Consequently, all MPs are currently in a standstill. From the Moldovan perspective, the situation is unacceptable. As one of the respondents explains:

“ Right now, they are a bit... even upset. Because since the meetings are not being organized regularly... They want more, they want to continue under the same framework. Of course, Moldova was a special case, they had 10 years of MP, they were very active. For them, it was also an example of a good relationship with the EU. So that’s why now they are missing this part a lot.” (Respondent 3)

The respondent’s perspective shows that Moldova is very keen to cooperate with the EU and its Members. However, the cooperation is temporarily blocked on the EU/Member States side. The Moldovans try to adjust to the situation and keep “pushing” for new initiatives.

To conclude this section in light of my research question and conceptual model, the priorities of Moldova are rather well represented in the MP implementation. The variables that seem to influence it to the greatest extent are enthusiastic cooperation between partners and strong involvement of Moldova in the implementation of MP operational steps.

5.2. Georgia

5.2.1. Representation of priorities

The Georgian scoreboard lists 53 projects. According to the coding methodology, 17 of the projects concentrate on the EU’s priorities, 25 on the Georgian ones, and 11 is neutral. Each category will be discussed in the below subsections, with a particular focus on projects that influence the representation of priorities to the greatest extent. Table 6 gives an overview of the categorization along with the current phase of projects. At first glance, Georgian priorities seem to be well-represented. However, as the below analysis of the MP content shows, development- and mobility-oriented projects are very small in scope, compared to the security-driven actions.

Table 6. Overview of the EU-Georgia MP projects by priority and by phase.

	EU priorities	Georgian priorities	Neutral	Total
NUMBER OF PROJECTS	17	26	10	53
% OF TOTAL	32%	49%	19%	100%
COMPLETED	12	11	8	31
ONGOING	3	6	2	11
FORSEEN	2	9	0	11

Georgian priorities

The projects focusing on development and mobility account for 49% of all projects. They are divided into six categories: Labour Migration, Diaspora, Circular Migration,

Monitor/Management of Flows, Reintegration, and Education. Table 7 presents what these thematic areas cover.

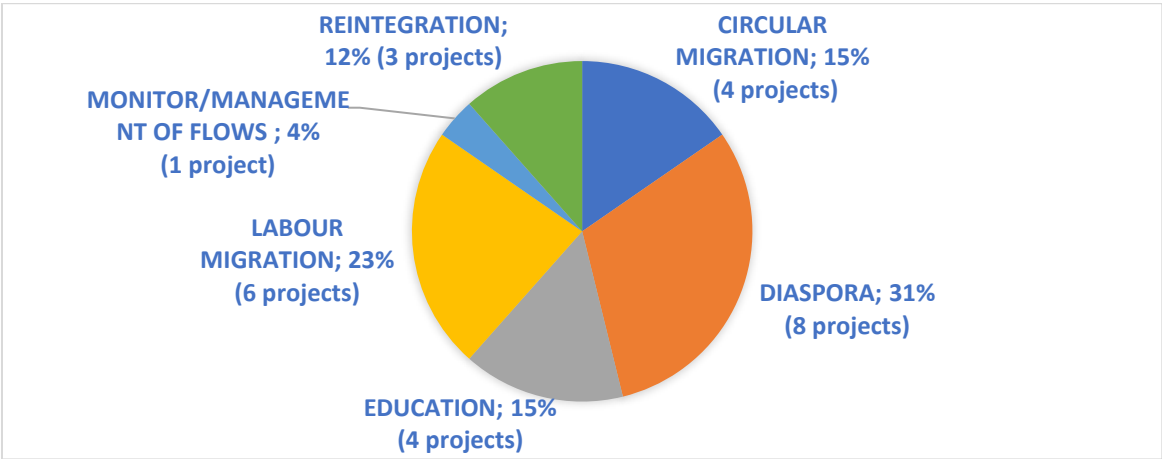
Table 7. Examples of projects by thematic area.

AREAS	EXAMPLES
LABOUR MIGRATION	Develop employment opportunities in the country and abroad, information sessions about labour migration opportunities, support the development of business initiatives by vulnerable people
CIRCULAR MIGRATION	Promoting temporary return of qualified workers to the country of origin, signature of protocols on temporary migration, support temporary return of qualified nationals in the private sector
EDUCATION	Partnerships between universities, promotion of student exchanges, award of grants, seminars and study visits
DIASPORA	Improve integration of migrants in their host societies, support diaspora organisations
REINTEGRATION	Support for economic and social reintegration of migrants returning to their country of origin, support for local development projects and young people's initiatives, support reintegration of vulnerable groups of people
MONITOR/MANAGEMENT OF FLOWS	Observatory of migration flows, creation of detailed migration profiles, management of labour migration abroad, bilateral agreements on concerted management of migratory flows

Source: Scoreboard Georgia.

As Chart 2 shows, Labour Migration, Circular Migration, Diaspora and Education projects constitute the largest share of projects focusing on Georgian priorities. Those will be discussed with special attention as they constitute the core of the MP.

CHART 2. Projects focusing on Georgian priorities by thematic category.



Mobility

Visa-free travel, one of the main goals of the Georgian government, was achieved in 2017. The agreement allows traveling for touristic, family and professional reasons for a maximum period of 90 days.

Labour Migration projects focus mostly on promoting legal migration possibilities and providing policy advice to the Georgian government. Only one foreseen project, initiated by France, translates into actual labour migration possibilities. Its objective is to facilitate access to the French labour market for 500 Georgians per year in accordance with the current labour market needs. Another foreseen project initiated by France was categorized as an Education-related action. However, contrary to the terminology, it seems to open up labour migration possibilities to junior professionals holding a Master degree. Nevertheless, both of the projects has not been implemented yet. Possibly one more action, initiated by Poland, offers access to the EU labour market. Information on the project is very scarce, both on the scoreboard and online. It is therefore impossible to judge whether the action facilitates mobility in practice

Three of the Circular Migration projects focus on the temporal return of Georgian to their home country. One of the projects was proposed by Germany, with the purpose to facilitate outward mobility for Georgian citizens with legal status. Another two actions were initiated by the Netherlands. Their purpose was a temporary return of qualified nationals in order to transfer knowledge and skills, and contribute to the development of Georgia as a result. The second phase of the project aimed at improving national development strategies. The project assumed the return of at least 25 migrants for 3 months minimum. One remaining Circular Migration project focused on capacity building of Georgian policy makers and testing a pilot scheme on circular migration.

The scoreboard proves a relative failure of the MP with regard to mobility. Even though visa-free travel was achieved, the policy evaluation respondents were sceptical about the tangible impacts for average Georgians who do not have enough resources for travel. “Due to this and a lack of legal migration focused projects, respondents unanimously stated that the goal of legal/circular migration to the EU was explicitly unmet by the MP” (Alberola & Langley, 2018).

Development

Diaspora and Education themed projects constitute the biggest share of development-related projects, together accounting for 50% of all projects focused on Georgian priorities.

Most of Diaspora projects is relatively new (starting in 2016 or later) and funded by the EU. They are all implemented by international organizations: IOM, ICMPD, IRC, Danish Refugee Council. Two projects on enhancing the capacity of institutions dealing with diaspora have been completed by now. The rest of the projects is either ongoing (3 projects) or foreseen (3 projects). The information provided on the scoreboard is very limited. One of the ongoing projects is called “Giving practical meaning to the concept of migration and development in the Georgian context”. Its objective is to roll out practical activities which will encourage migrants to participate in development activities. The foreseen projects include Brain Exchange, Financial Literacy and Youth Leadership programs.

The next big group among development-related projects is Education. All of the projects focus on cultural and educational cooperation between national institutions, except for the above-mentioned project facilitating mobility of freshly graduated students. Judging on the basis of the scoreboard, the development goals of the Georgian government were not met. Nonetheless, the policy evaluation includes some (limited in scope) achievements in the field of development and migration. It mentions the establishment of two mobility centres that supported the reintegration of returning migrants. At the same time, the number of beneficiaries was judged to be very limited (Alberola & Langley, 2018).

Neutral projects

The projects coded as neutral are either in line with both the EU and Georgian priorities, or they do not fall under any of the categories. The latter is related to international protection (1 project). The former group consists mostly of capacity building and policy formation projects. They are crucial from both the EU and the Georgian perspective as they enable implementation of other projects, requiring having trained staff and improved institutional capacities. In the neutral category, project ENIGMMA stands out on the scoreboard due to its major budget (4,8 million €) and scope. It has four components: development of policy recommendations, joint response measures, targeted capacity building as well as exchange and cooperation between Georgian and EU experts.

Eu priorities

Security-oriented measures of the EU include Border Management, Readmission, Fight against Illegal Migration categories. Table 8 gives an overview of what these thematic categories cover.

Table 8. Examples of projects by thematic area.

AREAS	EXAMPLES
READMISSION	Conclusion of readmission agreements, support in the implementation of readmission agreements, promote best practices on management of readmission
BORDER MANAGEMENT	Operational arrangements with Frontex, information exchange and risk analysis, training in the area of border control and investigation techniques, improvement of technical equipment and technology at the borders, systems for recording information on entries/exits, introduction of biometric in travel documents
FIGHT AGAINST ILLEGAL MIGRATION	Awareness raising for the prevention of illegal migration, information exchange in the fight against illegal immigration and prevention of organised crime

Source: Scoreboard Georgia.

The security-oriented projects are characterized by substantial EU funding. Similarly to the other case studies, their scope is relatively wide, judging on the basis of action indicators. A number of them involve also development component. For instance, “More-for-more” was funded for 4,8 million €. However, besides being focused solely on “Reinforcing the Capabilities of the Government of Georgia in Border and Migration Management”, the project entails the development of a website facilitating communication and cooperation with the diaspora. The implementing agency took charge of the operations of the above-mentioned mobility centres (Alberola & Langley, 2018). Similarly, Targeted Initiative for Georgia (TIG), funded for EUR 3 million, supports not only the implementation of the readmission agreement but also social and economic reintegration of migrants. Furthermore, a project focused on the implementation of the Readmission agreement through enhancing the institutional capacities and assisting with document-security issues, was supported by another one, concentrating on return in a human manner. These initiatives, therefore, take into consideration sustainable aspects of introducing the security-oriented measures.

The policy evaluation highlights that “ (...)the EU-Georgia MP has been much more focused on border management activities than other areas to date”. Similarly to Moldova, Georgia strongly cooperated in implementation of these measures in order to meet EU standards and, consequently, has achieved the Visa Liberalisation.

5.2.2. Factors affecting implementation

Application of policy design

Georgia has never fully operationalized the implementation plan included in the Joint Declaration. Firstly, only three high level meetings (HLMs) were organized since the MP signature in 2009. As a reason, the policy evaluation points out to the government restructuration that caused fragmentation of responsibilities. My respondents mentioned also descriptive nature of the meetings. According to the text of the Declaration and the interviewees, HLMs should focus on the systematic discussion about the future of the EU-Georgian MP, not on the presentations about ongoing and completed actions under the MP umbrella. As one of the respondents explains:

“ Why do I have this impression? Because the moment I went to one of those meetings and I didn't see a real discussion on the priorities, on where are we heading towards, what is the objective of our partnership. It was just a presentation of things that are ongoing. (...)Are we going to look at visa only because we funded a project that may have 5 million [budget]? Is this project changing the policy? We are dreaming here... You cannot address a policy in any country unless you get to a systemic discussion with that country.” (Respondent 4)

Furthermore, the policy evaluation noted that Georgian stakeholders had many meetings with EU counterparts under other frameworks of cooperation. This is why some respondents felt that HLMs would be repetitive in nature. In regard to local cooperation platform (LCP), my respondents doubt that any meeting was organized since the signature of the MP. In their view, HLMs took over the operational role of LCP, so perhaps the stakeholders did not deem necessary to organize it. The confusion over the content and frequency of HLMs and LCPs is disappointing for all stakeholders.

Nevertheless, like in Moldova, migration issues are mainstreamed in Georgia. The State Commission on Migration Issues (SCMI) work in close cooperation with other ministries and includes NGOs and IGOs in its processes (Alberola & Langley, 2018). This approach, giving a comprehensive view on migration-related questions, allows examining complex issues such as migration and development link. Recently, the parties agreed on merging LCPs with biannual

SCMI meetings in order to avoid repetitiveness - a high number of migration initiatives takes place outside of the MP framework.

Regarding the last key element of MP implementation mentioned in the Joint Declaration, the Georgian scoreboard is patchy and not regularly updated. As numerous actors are involved in MP implementation, regular scoreboard updates are crucial in order to keep track of ongoing actions and avoid project duplications. In contrast to my other case studies, the scoreboard was never the annex of the Joint Declaration. Due to project overlap with other EU instruments, stakeholders were not sure what actions should be included in the scoreboard (Alberola & Langley, 2018). It seems that the lack of meetings at the appropriate level and the scoreboard deficiency is a result of general confusion over the MP as an instrument, from the moment it was signed.

Resources

According to the implementation theory, non-adequate resources impede implementation and, therefore, hinder the representation of priorities. Due to numerous projects on capacity building, Georgia is well prepared for the implementation of any common projects in the field of migration. In general, once a project is agreed on, Georgian institutions are considered a good partner for cooperation. One respondent stated:

“Knowing the level of preparation from the Georgian side, I would say they are very good colleagues to cooperate with - very prepared and very engaged.”(Respondent 1)

Since the MP signature, the country significantly increased the disposition of its institutions and staff. Regarding the level of funding, it was judged adequate. The further issues related to capacity and funding will be discussed in Chapter 6 as they concern all of the case studies.

Political machinations

The research did not find any political machinations on the Georgian side, as the ACF would suggest. In fact, Georgian officials are considered to be very complacent, not taking the lead and “simply responding to whatever came from Brussels or MS as a way of setting the strategic direction of the MP” (Alberola & Langley, 2018).

The machinations of the other coalition, namely the Member States, had indeed impact on the representation of Georgian priorities. Similar to the EU-Moldova MP, the participation of Member States was limited. Although they were strongly involved during the security-oriented processes focused on introducing the EU standards, their participation in areas covering other aspects of migration was limited. For instance, the MP meetings were characterised by a mismatch of staff (Alberola & Langley, 2018). While high-level representatives were attending on the Georgian side, the Member States were represented by lower level staff. As a result, the possibility of having a meaningful discussion was limited.

Cooperation between countries

The paragraph investigates whether the Georgian authorities have enough incentives to be engaged in the MP implementation. Closer transnational cooperation might result in better representation of local priorities. As presented in Subchapter 5.2.1, the representation of the partner country priorities seems limited compared to the EU priorities. Visa-free travel is the biggest success of the MP. Even though the projects focused on Georgian priorities constitute 49% of all MP projects, their scope is rather small. Despite this relative failure, what Georgians consider a major advantage is the strengthening of relationships with the EU and its Members. My respondents highlighted repeatedly that Georgians "feel European" and want to be a part of the European family. They treat the MP as a bridge to Europe. Therefore, Georgian cost-benefit analysis would be slightly positive.

However, the above-mentioned successes within the MP were not big enough to assure Georgian engagement. Currently, Georgia goes through "reflection phase". As one of the interviewees explains:

“When it comes to the case of Georgia, their hesitation at the moment is not much about the identification of ideas. I think they have a clear plan and clear ideas on what is needed. It’s more about the reason why are we framing those actions under an instrument which has suffered in terms of coherent approach, in terms of regular use. I think Georgia, in this phase, is entering a reflection moment, where they want to understand what’s coming next. They achieved a visa-free regime which is being perceived by many as the ultimate goal of the

partnership.. and also there is a proliferation of other agreements: Association agreements, for instance.” (Respondent 1)

In other words, due to numerous platforms of cooperation in the field of migration and asylum which overlap with the MP, the Georgian authorities, being still motivated to cooperate with the EU, want to reconsider the choice of the right instrument, allowing to achieve their priorities.

To conclude this section in light of my research question and conceptual model, the Georgians are not fully satisfied with the realisation of their goals. They appreciate closer relations with the EU but the development and mobility aspects of the MP are missing. The variable that seems to influence the situation is incoherence of the MP structure and, therefore, lack of application of the policy design.

5.3. Armenia

5.3.1. Representation of priorities

The Armenian scoreboard lists 24 projects. According to the coding methodology, 10 of the projects focus on EU priorities, 10 on the Armenian ones, and 4 is neutral. Each category will be discussed in the below subsections, with a particular focus on projects that influence the representation of priorities to the greatest extent. Table 9 gives an overview of the categorization along with the current phase of projects. Despite the possibly considerable impact of some of the development-related project, security-oriented measures dominate the EU-Armenia MP in terms of scope, funding, and tangibility. It is worthwhile to note that all projects focusing on Armenian priorities have already been completed in contrast to EU priorities projects that are still ongoing or foreseen.

Table 9. Overview of the EU-Armenia MP projects by priority and by phase.

	EU PRIORITIES	ARMENIAN PRIORITIES	NEUTRAL	TOTAL
NUMBER OF ALL PROJECTS	10	10	4	24
% OF ALL PROJECTS	42%	42%	17%	100%
COMPLETED	7	10	4	21
ONGOING	2	0	0	2
FORSEEN	1	0	0	1

Armenian priorities

The projects focusing on development and mobility account for 42% of all projects. They are divided into seven categories: Labour Migration, Local/Regional Support, Circular Migration, Qualifications, Strengthening Capacities of Institutions Dealing with Migration, Reintegration, and Education. Table 10 presents what these thematic categories might entail.

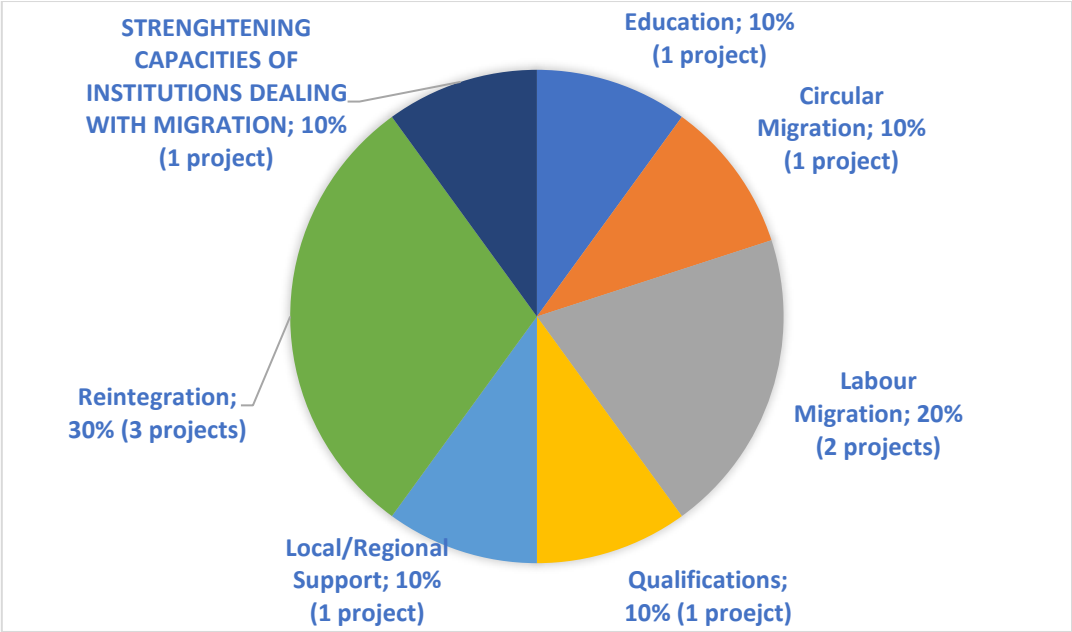
Table 10. Examples of projects by thematic area.

AREAS	EXAMPLES
LABOUR MIGRATION	Develop employment opportunities in the country and abroad, information sessions about labour migration opportunities, support the development of business initiatives by vulnerable people
CIRCULAR MIGRATION	Promoting temporary return of qualified workers to the country of origin, signature of protocols on temporary migration, support temporary return of qualified nationals in the private sector
QUALIFICATIONS	Bilateral recognition of skills and qualifications
EDUCATION	Partnerships between universities, promotion of student exchanges, award of grants, seminars and study visits
REINTEGRATION	Support for economic and social reintegration of migrants returning to their country of origin, support for local development projects and young people's initiatives, support reintegration of vulnerable groups of people
LOCAL/REGIONAL SUPPORT	Support for local development projects and to business initiatives by women or young people, provide incentives regarding local job opportunities, support private and small enterprises, in particular to create labour opportunities in rural regions
STRENGTHENING CAPACITIES OF INSTITUTIONS DEALING WITH MIGRATION	Strengthening capacity of consular personnel, horizontal support for capacity building in migration,

Source: Scoreboard Armenia.

As Chart 3 presents, Reintegration projects constitute the largest share of projects focusing on Armenian priorities. The emphasis on return and reintegration of Armenian nationals is not surprising. Due to an ongoing economic blockade imposed by neighbouring Turkey and Azerbaijan and high unemployment, immigration of foreign workers is unlikely (Makaryan & Chobanyan, 2014). Consequently, the Armenian government counts on repatriation of the diaspora.

Chart 3. Projects focusing on Armenian priorities by thematic category.



Mobility

Armenia has not achieved visa-free travel yet. Most of the MP actions are built around this objective, as the EU requires to meet its standards in a number of areas, including border management, asylum, and document security. There are two labour migration projects. The objective of the first one is providing policy recommendations and facilitating the exchange of experience between agencies. The next project focuses on improving management of the labour migration flows to the EU by enhancing capacities of employment agencies and providing policy advice to the Armenian institutions. Despite the considerable budget, amounting to 2,45 million, the action is judged to have limited impact on actual labour migration possibilities. By the time of its finalization, Armenia had very few bilateral labour agreements with the EU countries. Consequently, the initiative has a weak application since the mechanisms and solutions developed by the project could not be translated into real-life situations. In like manner, the project from Circular Migration area was focused on providing information and training. It did not open circular migration possibilities but strengthen capacity building of governmental and non-governmental agencies.

Development

In this category, there are three projects focusing on reintegration and one in each of the remaining thematic areas. Consequently, Reintegration themed actions constitute the biggest share of development-related projects, accounting for 30% of all projects focused on Armenian priorities.

Two projects from Reintegration area focused on reintegration of migration who returned voluntarily to their home country. One action, initiated by Germany is called “Returning Experts Programme”. The project promotes recognition of skills acquired abroad by Armenian nationals. The next project, created from the initiative of France and Germany, has a similar component. Additionally, it promotes migrant entrepreneurship. The last action from Reintegration category is concentrated on capacity building of local authorities with particular focus on IT support. In general, these projects have a rather small scope.

A project from Strengthening Capacities of Institutions Dealing with Migration category seems to be strongly development-oriented. It is the Targeted Initiative for Armenia (TIA), a complex project that includes many components. The project was funded for EUR 3 million. In contrast to the Targeted Initiative for Georgia that concentrated on readmissions, the project’s special focus is reintegration activities. By means of strengthening capacities of institutions and civil society, it addresses local challenges posed by emigration and supports sustainable return and reintegration.

The project from Qualification area promotes mutual recognition of academic and professional qualifications. The Education-themed action was initiated by Romania. Its assumes cooperation in the field of culture, education and science between the two governments. The last project, with a major budget of over EUR 1,1 million, focuses on the mitigation of social consequences of labour migration and enhance involvement of migrants’ families in local development. The amount of funding assigned to the project is not surprising due to mass emigration from Armenia.

Neutral projects

The projects coded as neutral are either in line with both the EU and Armenian priorities or do not fall under any of the categories. The latter is related to international protection (1 project). The former group includes projects focused on capacity building, migration management and exchange of experience. They are pivotal from both the EU and the Armenian perspectives as the actions enable and facilitate the implementation of other projects.

EU priorities

The projects from the EU priorities group belong to similar thematic areas as in the cases of Georgia and Moldova (Border Management, Fight Against Illegal Migration, Smuggling / Trafficking Of Human Beings, Readmission). In contrast to my other case studies, the number of projects focusing on security-oriented measures is as big as the number of development and mobility projects. Furthermore, the actions have also considerably bigger budgets. Two projects from Border Management focus on specific border crossing points, on the border with Georgia: one on Bavra-Ninotsminda, the other on Bagratashen-Sadakhlo. Their budgets are EUR 2,575 million and EUR 4,3 million respectively. Both projects aim to develop concrete and effective mechanisms to improve border surveillance and combat irregular migration. The next project, funded for almost EUR 4 million, is built around the possible visa liberalisation dialogue. Its general objective is to approximate Armenian migration and border management standards (including asylum management) to the European requirements. The remaining projects from the EU priorities category are alike; focused on concrete actions increasing surveillance and improving coordination between agencies.

5.3.2. Factors affecting implementation

Application of policy design

Armenia, similarly to Georgia, has never fully operationalized the implementation plan included in the Joint Declaration. Firstly, only two HLM were organized since the MP signature in 2011. According to my respondents, LCPs did happen but they were not able to give a

concrete number. The reason behind the low number of meetings and the weak involvement in the MP implementation will be discussed in later subsections.

Regarding the Armenian scoreboard, it seems to be less patchy than these of my other two case studies. Most of the information is updated; the project information usually includes also funding. This element is often missing on the other two scoreboards. Furthermore, in comparison, project descriptions are usually very detailed.

Resources

The next factor affecting implementation that the theoretical framework suggests is the adequate level of resources. As in my other case studies, the level of funding was considered sufficient. However, Armenia still has a relatively limited institutional capacity in some areas. As one of my respondents explains:

“They have a new government, and they are having problems of capacity. (...) We understand that sometimes, we have objectives on migration policy and they cannot implement because they are not trained for that. There are many, many projects on capacity building, or even on, what we call, migration profiling. Meaning that we had them to set up their own migration policies. For sure, migration policy can be quite complicated, very technical, border management for example, or document security. You need to know many, many things about it. (...) We had it very recently with Moldova and Armenia. So they are very interested in how to get training or capacity building.” (Respondent 3)

The limited institutional capacity might influence other areas of the MP implementation. If staff is not sufficiently trained, or not enough employees are involved, the cooperation between agencies is weaker and less frequent.

Political machinations

The Advocacy Coalition Framework assumes that policy actors will use their political resources to put forward their interests. How does the "political game" affect Armenian priorities?

As Sections 5.3.1 shows, there are currently very little actions conducted under the MP umbrella. The Armenian institutions are not considered to be active actors. They definitely do

not take the lead in the MP implementation. Their lack of involvement could be explained by the 2018 Armenian Revolution. One respondent stated:

“You always have to keep in mind the political framework. Armenia had their revolution, they have a whole new establishment in the government. So it is very difficult, not only on MPs but on other things too, to follow up with them. “ (Respondent 3)

However, Armenia was not very active also before the revolution. According to my respondents, it might be related to the "pro-Russian" orientation of the previous government. In this context, it is worthwhile to mention that Armenia runs a visa-free regime with Russia since 2014. In contrast, the country has not achieved visa liberalisation with Europe yet. From the ACF perspective, the political power (or interest) of Armenia over the MP implementation seems to be limited.

Nevertheless, Armenia could have found an unexpected ally in the ICMPD. My respondents claim that the organization is currently building their own political agenda, representing the interests of its constituencies. According to the ACF, the actors that have potential power over policy-making (in this thesis understood also as project negotiations) can form advocacy coalitions reflecting their interests. Whatever is the "core belief" of the coalition, it seems to serve the interests of Armenia. Since the creation of the MPF, that ICMPD is in charge of, two major development-oriented projects with a significant budget were conducted in Armenia. The question of the ICMPD involvement will be further discussed in the comparative analysis section (Chapter 6).

Cooperation between countries

Armenia does not seem to have many incentives to cooperate with the EU. Compared to the other case studies, its priorities are represented to a lesser extent. As the table in the previous subchapter presents, there are only 24 projects under the MP umbrella. The number of actions of the EU priorities equals Armenian priorities; the scope of both is rather big. However, reaching the goal of visa-free travel is fairly distant. This factors could explain the weak cooperation of Armenia. One respondent noted:

“ They see the objective as a far, I mean, this is subjective... They're gonna go that way, I think, at some point... ” (Respondent 1)

Even though many actions are built around this objective, the respondent feels that visa-free travel is not a tangible goal at present. The situation, along with the political context and incoherent architecture of the MP result in lack of engagement from the Armenian side.

To conclude this section in light of my research question and conceptual model, the representation of Armenian priorities is low. The factors that seem to influence the situation are weak cooperation between agencies, insufficient institutional capacity and lack of application of the policy design.

6. Comparative analysis

The chapter analyses the case studies altogether, following the structure of key variables. It includes expectation testing and further discusses the application of theoretical concepts.

6.1. Application of policy design

The first expectation, based on the work of Pressman and Wildavsky (1973), was: *Implementation independent of the policy design is less successful. Therefore, the priorities of the countries that derive from the text of the Joint Declaration will not be reflected as well as the countries that apply the text literally.* As presented in the previous chapter, the MP architecture varies strongly in every country. Table 11 compares the implementation of operational steps outlined by Joint Declarations.

Table 11. Mobility Partnership operational structure by partner country.

	Regular HLM	Regular LCP	Attendance of all relevant stakeholders	Regular scoreboard updates
Moldova	YES	YES	NO	RATHER YES
Georgia	NO	NO	NO	RATHER NO
Armenia	NO	NO	NO	RATHER YES

Firstly, Moldova holds regular high level meetings (HLMs) and local cooperation platforms (LCPs). They are organized annually at the appropriate level. The confusion over what is supposed to be discussed during the meetings seems to be the only concern on the Moldovan side. Furthermore, the country has an internal committee supervising and monitoring the implementation of the MP and updating the scoreboard. For this reason, the scoreboard is rather up to date. Regular updates limit not only the project overlap but also the uncertainty of administration about the content of projects that are being implemented. Subsequently, Georgia and Armenia do not have regular HLMs and LCPs do not occur (almost) at all. Quoting one of my respondents:

“ So for the local cooperation, apart from Moldova, for the rest you have nothing. Almost zero or nothing.” (Respondent 4)

In the case of Georgia, this issue was addressed. On the one hand, the stakeholders agreed on merging their LCP with the State Commission on Migration Issues meetings. On the other hand, HLMs are to be organized regularly. However, the scoreboard update and content continues to be the most dubious part of the EU-Georgia MP structure. Finally, Armenia is withdrawn from the implementation of the MP architecture. Still, the scoreboard is fairly updated, probably due to the limited number of MP projects.

My respondents highlighted several problems of the MP architecture that has serious consequences for implementation. Firstly, HLM is taking over the role of LCP in Georgia and Armenia. If during HLMs technicalities are discussed, instead of future directions, MPs cannot evolve as planned. Consequently, the changing interests of stakeholders are not taken under consideration.

Furthermore, the coherence of EU external migration instruments poses a problem. Due to thematic overlap, some of the MP issues are discussed under the umbrella of different platforms. First of all, MPs are discussed during Eastern Partnership meetings. Secondly, in the cases of Moldova and Georgia, the MP issues are also addressed under the umbrella of respective Association Agreements. In the case of Armenia, Comprehensive and Enhanced Partnership Agreement (CEPA) plays the same role. In consequence, stakeholders are not sure what (and when) was agreed on and how to proceed. At the same time, they have the impression that “proper” HLMs (i.e. involving discussing future directions) would be repetitive in nature.

The next issue common for all of my case studies is the weak participation of the Member States in MP meetings. From the partner countries perspective, their participation is crucial since the EU alone cannot offer mobility possibilities apart for visa facilitation/liberalisation. One of the respondents stated:

“Of course, Member States are not interested in volunteering in the MPs, this is the difficulty that we have. For some, the first interest is... Well, we had the migration crisis, and Eastern Partnership countries are not the main source of THE migration. Member States are interested in implementing common projects with these countries [the source of significant migration] to improve the situation.” (Respondent 3)

The Joint Declarations requires the attendance of all “relevant partner and actors” during MP meetings. Since the Member States do not participate, putting forward the priorities of partner countries cannot be assured - labour migration remains the Member states’ competence.

In sum, the first expectation proves right. The implementation theory suggested that policy implementation is not successful if the policy design is not applied. Likewise, if MP meetings do not regularly occur, the partner countries do not have the possibility to discuss their priorities, articulate their needs and, consequently, add new projects that more are in line with local priorities. Even when they do occur, as in the case of Moldova, but do not follow the structure outlined by the Joint Declaration (i.e. all relevant actors do not participate), the implementation success is smaller. Therefore, the local priorities are represented to a lesser extent.

6.2. Resources of implementing agencies

The second expectation was: *The policy intentions are better reflected if the implementing agencies are not constraint by factors beyond their control. Therefore, the priorities are better reflected if the resources are adequate to the needs do not limit the implementers.* The expectation is based on the work of Van Meter and Van Horn. As one of the first scholars, the authors noted that if implementers were constraint by resources (such as money, trained personnel), they could not put policies into practice. In the case of MPs, the issues of budget and training are very complex since all actions require transnational multi-actor cooperation. Therefore, following implementation studies, all concerned actors have to have an adequate level of funding and sufficient capacity.

The MP projects are funded through EU funding, Member States budget, international organization funds, or combination of those. According to my interviewees, money never goes directly to the partner countries' authorities. Using the example of Moldova, one respondent said:

“ I give you [intermediary] the money because I am not giving the money to the Moldovan government because I don't trust it. That's the principle.” (Respondent 4)

This way, the EC ensure the money is spent according to the budget planning. At several points in the MP implementation, the partner countries have to use their own resources, as Moldova, Georgia and Armenia do not receive any form of budget support. One interviewee said:

“Moldovans need to put the series of people to work basically free of charge.” (Respondent 4)

Globally, once a project is agreed on, the level of funding is considered adequate in all three case studies. However, the partner countries complain about the choice of projects that are funded. For them, the only way for a project to be funded under the MP framework is to find a Member State interested in pursuing it (Alberola & Langley, 2018). Here reappear the issue of weak involvement of Member States. Moldovan officials highlight that since the Member States are mostly interested in security-oriented and not in development- and mobility-related projects, they have limited ability to act. Due to the nature of MP, the projects focusing on their priorities are, therefore, very hard to fund and implement.

The issue, brought to the fore by the policy evaluation, cannot be strongly confirmed by the analysis of the Moldovan scoreboard. 25 out of 34 EU-focused projects (73%) are bilateral or multilateral actions between the Member States and Moldova, while 39 out of 56 projects focusing on Moldovan priorities (~70%) are of this kind. When looking at the Georgian scoreboard, 13 out of 17 security-oriented projects (~76%) are Member States-Georgia actions. The ratio for Georgia-focused projects is 15 to 26 (~58%). In the case of Armenia, the numbers are identical for EU- and Armenia-focused projects - 2 out of 10 (20%). The data is presented in the table below (Table 12).

Table 12. Projects involving the participation of Member State(s) by Mobility Partnership.

Projects involving the participation of Member State (s)	Armenia		Georgia		Moldova	
	Number	Percent of a given priority-group	Number	Percent of a given priority-group	Number	Percent of a given priority-group
EU priorities	2	20%	13	73%	25	73%
Partner country priorities	2	20%	15	58%	39	70%

Therefore, as the table shows, there is only a slight prevalence of participation of Member States in the projects focused on security issues while comparing percentages. Still, as it was shown in Chapter 5, the impact of development-oriented projects is relatively weak compared to security-oriented projects in most cases. Consequently, the weak involvement of Member States affects the representation of partner countries' priorities in terms of funding.

In terms of qualified staff, all partner countries received the necessary training to implement MP projects. The previous analysis of the scoreboard confirms that capacity building is a strong suit of all the MPs (see Chapter 5, "Neutral projects" of every case study). Only Armenia is relatively suffering in terms of capacity due to its recent revolution. The capacity issue appears on the EU side. All of the interviewees stated that due to the last economic crisis, administrations of Member States have structural limitations. One of the respondents said:

"The main concern it's capacity in the staff...old public administrations since economic crisis. They cut some people, some staff. Both large Western countries and Eastern countries. We have less staff to respond to a topic which is more politically sensitive" (Respondent 1)

The issue of a number of staff is linked also to finances:

"It depends also on the individuals and the capacity - they have to take on an additional project or the energy that they can invest in developing a project idea because, of course, at the beginning, it usually takes some time. That is not yet covered by funding from the MPF. To engage an idea there has to be an openness, especially on the Member States side to want to do that and you know it depends on the department, on the workload, on all sorts of things" (Respondent 2)

To conclude this subchapter, the second expectation turns out to be right only partially. On the one hand, once a project is agreed on, the level of funding is considered sufficient for all of the case studies. Concerning Georgia and Moldova, the level of training of staff is adequate, while Armenia's capacity is smaller. The finding correlates with the level of representation of local priorities: the priorities of Georgia and Moldova are relatively better represented than the priorities of Armenia. Likewise, the percentage of projects initiated by the Member States (illustrating the readiness of Member States to fund or co-fund development-related projects,

see Table X) also correlates with the representation of partner country priorities. On the other hand, even though the Member States have limited capacity, their security-oriented priorities are also well reflected in terms of the scope of this kind of projects. Thus, the adequate level of resources is important for representation of priorities but not conclusive.

6.3. Political machinations of bureaucracy

The third expectation, based on Sabatier's Advocacy Coalition Framework, was: *The political machinations of bureaucracy affect the way a policy is implemented. Consequently, MP actors will try to use their political resources to move the implementation into the desired direction.* In Mobility Partnerships, there are two main advocacy coalitions: actors who focus on facilitation of mobility and development those prefer security-oriented approach. In line with the ACF basic premises, both groups as the potential for policy-making and two different ideas on how to implement the policy. The partner countries and Member States try to push their interest forward, using resources such as money, legal authority, and expertise. Do they succeed and how do they do it?

A Mobility Partnership is a flexible instrument, what is appreciated by all stakeholders (Alberola & Langley, 2018). New projects, covering all aspects of migration, can be added at any moment. In the context of implementation studies, the attempts of bureaucrats to implement vague legislation can be regarded as policy making (Kingdon, 1984 in Sabatier & Jenkins-Smith, 1993). Due to the flexibility, MPs slowly evolve and change. One respondent noted that since the architecture does not support sufficiently the coordination of implementing agencies, the political level influence what type of projects is implemented:

“You don't have to take the MP as a rigid instrument, it's so vague, it can be as flexible as you like, but the governance should support this flexibility in order to have those regular exchanging, in order to address this flexibility. Without the regularity of meetings you tend to see the friction that we feel when it comes to the political level.” (Respondent 1)

This flexibility of the instrument, therefore, hinder the involvement of certain actors. Since the EC cannot force Member States to implement the MP in the way desired by the policy, their participation is limited due to, perhaps, political sensitiveness of migration. Immigration to the

Member States is the most politicized aspect of MP - widely discussed by media and criticised by right-wing parties. One of my interviewees raised the issue:

“ So the fact that the member states engagement is limited, what does this correspond to? Does it correspond to the processes or is it more of a political approach? ” (Respondent 4)

In the same vein, another respondent noted:

“ I don't see the reason for which people should not use this instrument. But I see that it is not being used. Probably there is discord related to mostly the political sensitiveness of the topic, how it's framed by certain countries, by governments. ” (Respondent 1)

Consequently, from the ACF perspective, Member States use their legal authority (i.e. legal mobility is their competence) to refrain from mobility projects, being the priority of partner countries. The analysis of the scoreboard confirms the issue. As presented in Chapter 5, Moldova has only one project that translates into actual migration possibilities. Georgia has one foreseen project. Armenia does not have them at all. It is worthwhile to note that most of the projects labelled Labour or Circular Migration on all three scoreboards were concluded by 2015. Possibly, the situation can be related to the European migration crisis that has started in 2015 - on the one hand, the Member States have shifted attention towards the South but, on the other hand, mobility projects might be badly received by the public opinion.

Surprisingly, the further political machination affecting the representation of priorities of partner countries is the involvement of ICMPD. The international organization, established by Central and Eastern European countries, is in charge of the Mobility Partnership Facility. The Facility was created in 2016, primarily to improve implementation and monitoring of small, very targeted projects. According to one respondent, the MPF started over time to take on more politically sensitive issues. Some of my respondents claim that ICMPD builds their own agenda, being the representation of interests of its constituencies, explaining it as following:

“The constituencies of ICMPD are mostly the countries that have joined the EU more than 10 years ago, under the lead of Austria that has some historical reasons for taking that lead. And therefore, it is a political positioning. Then they use the issue that you give me, the money because they need to have the money, to go and to do the political negotiations. In order to give you some background.. by doing that we have an organization that would like to take a role that doesn't belong to them. Because it represents, how to say, the minority of, and certain specific interests that are not necessarily the collective interests. ” (Respondent 4)

However, the thesis does not have the ambition to confirm or deny the political positioning of ICMPD. Instead, the research will analyse its possible impact on the partner countries' priorities. From the perspective of partner countries, the strong involvement of ICMPD could be advantageous. The MPF serves as a coordinator, a liaison between the Member States and the partner countries, facilitating migration dialogue and incubation of new ideas. Furthermore, the Facility makes sure that new actions are sustainable and well thought-through. The role of a “broker”, as the respondents call it, could serve the interest of partner countries in view of the weak participation of the Member States by encouraging them to develop an unbiased language of migration. Still, the scoreboard does not confirm this possible development. Since its creation, the Facility participated in the implementation of 10 projects involving my case studies. The involvement of the MPF was definitely advantageous for Armenia, advantageous for Moldovan priorities, and had no effect on Georgian development. The data for each country is compared in the table below (Table 13).

Table 13. Projects developed with the participation of the MPF.

Project title	Budget	Partner country	Priority code
"Reintegration policy for returning Armenian migrants"	€ 492,736	Armenia	Partner
“Strengthening current and future employment and self-employment programmes through sustainable value chain management systems under the Migration Resource Centres and Local Centres of the State Employment Agency"	€ 554,000	Armenia	Partner
“Further implementation of the Moldovan Integrated Border Management (IBM) concept in line with the upgrading of the European IBM concept”	€ 173,340	Moldova	EU
“Development of Moldovan Diaspora Entrepreneurship (D.O.M.D.E)”	€ 421,464	Moldova	Partner
“Enhancing Moldovan Capacities in Fighting Against Trafficking in Human Beings”	€ 189,302	Moldova	EU
“Support for the Moldovan Call Centre for Migrants”	€ 180,293	Moldova	Partner
“HIGH FIDELITY - Exercising for asylum procedures”	€ 69,211	Georgia	Neutral

“Capacity building of K-9 units”	€247,236 (total budget of the actions)	Georgia, Moldova	EU
“Capacity building of Border Police in the field of dog handling”		Georgia, Moldova	EU
"Fostering capacities and cooperation on IBM among EaP training institutions"	€ 154,894	Georgia, Moldova, Armenia,	EU

Source: ICMPD, n.d.

The third expectation has turned out to be right; MP actors use its political resources to move implementation into the desired direction. On the one hand, the Member states use its legal authority to avoid implementation of politically sensitive projects. On the other hand, the respondents claim that ICMPD has also its own political agenda, fuelled by EU funds. To date, the impact of the MFP on mobility and development is relatively limited. The research did not discover any political machinations of bureaucracy on the partner country side in the strict ACF definition: Moldova apply psychological pressure on its European counterparts but Georgia and Armenia seem to be rather complacent.

6.4. Cooperation between agencies

The two final expectations were based on the EU external governance literature. This relatively new field of literature tries to answer the question of why third countries decide to cooperate (and continue the cooperation) with the EU. Transnational policy engagement is explained by having rational motivations to cooperate. Consequently, this subsection uncovers material and nonmaterial incentives that partner countries have. Priorities are better reflected if the engagement of actors is bigger. The fourth expectation was: *The more projects reflect partner country priorities (in both number of projects and their content), the more the country is engaged in the cooperation with the EU.*

Table 14. Mobility Partnership projects by priority code.

	EU Priorities	Partner Country Priorities
Moldova	30%	50%
Georgia	32%	49%
Armenia	42%	42%

Table 14 illustrates the proportion between EU and Partner country priorities for every case study. Moldova is definitely the country that benefits the most from the Mobility Partnership (see Chapter 5.1.1). Even though labour and circular migration possibilities are missing, the visa-free travel was achieved and Moldova has other numerous development-related projects. The actions concentrating on diaspora seem particularly successful. At the same time, among my case studies, Moldova is the most engaged country in the MP implementation. All of my respondents highlighted its proactiveness. In the case of Georgia, the proportion between EU and Partner country priorities is smaller. Despite achieving visa-free regime, the local development goals seem not to be met (see Chapter 5.2.1). Consequently, Georgia is currently hesitant to continue the cooperation under the same framework. Regarding Armenia, percentage of EU priorities equals the one of Armenian priorities. Armenia has not achieved visa-free travel yet. Development-oriented projects seem to be impactful (see Chapter 5.3.1) but are limited in terms of quantity. Consequently, Armenia does not cooperate actively with the EU. The political development on the Armenian side could be the explanatory factor but Armenia was not taking the lead even before that. In sum, the case study comparison shows a correlation between the realisation of partner country priorities and engagement.

Nonetheless, the correlation could be questioned when considering the phase of MP. In the initial stage of each MP, partner countries usually build all actions around fulfilling the EU requirements for introducing visa liberalisation. Armenia signed the MP three years after Moldova and two years after Georgia. Compared to Armenia, did Georgia and Moldova have a similar ratio between EU and Local priorities 7 years after the signature? Table 15 compares the results.

Table 15. Mobility Partnership projects per priority code 7 years after the signature of MP.

	EU Priorities	Partner Country Priorities
Moldova (2015)	27%	53%
Georgia (2016)	36%	38%
Armenia(2018)	42%	42%

In the case of Georgia, the proportion of partner country priorities was indeed smaller 7 years after the signature. Conversely, Moldova had its priorities even better represented. The duration of MP is not linked to the representation of local priorities. Consequently, the correlation between engagement and representation of priorities remains strong. In sum, the fourth expectation can be verified for all my case studies.

The fifth expectation is *In case the balance is uneven, the countries continue the cooperation only if new (added) projects will try to rebalance the scales.* It assumes that if the balance of priorities is unequal between actors, new projects will address this disproportion in order to assure the continuity of engagement.

Despite that most of the completed projects in Moldova are in line with the country priorities, the new projects continue to be focused on the partner country direct interests. As presented in Chapter 5.1.2, the country is very interested in further cooperation with the EU. Regarding Georgia, a big majority of the new projects are focused on Georgian priorities. The country, however, is currently not very active under the MP framework (see Chapter 5.2.2). In the case of Armenia, there are currently no projects focused on local priorities. The only ongoing or foreseen projects focus on EU priorities. According to Chapter 5.3.2, Armenia is not very engaged in cooperation with the EU. The results of the analysis are presented in Table 16 below.

Table 16. The phase of projects by Mobility Partnership.

	Stage of project	EU priorities	Partner priorities
Moldova	Completed	17%	31%
	Ongoing or foreseen	12%	16%
Georgia	Completed	21%	20%
	Ongoing or foreseen	9%	27%
Armenia	Completed	29%	42%
	Ongoing or foreseen	12%	0%

Consequently, the fifth expectation cannot be confirmed. The analysis did not find any correlation between the continuity of engagement and adding projects focusing on partner country priorities.

7. Conclusion and recommendations

The research question was: *How are the priorities of partner countries represented in the Mobility Partnerships implementation and which factors explain the differences between countries?* The thesis investigated it by applying implementation studies and the external governance perspective on implementation. The paper found that the representation of local priorities varies from country to country. Among the case studies, the Moldovan MP is considered the most successful and bringing the biggest advantage to national development. In the case of Georgia, the local priorities are represented to a lesser extent, while the initiatives within the Armenian MP, despite some successes, are scarce. In all three cases, the “mobility” aspect is missing. The main factor that seems to influence the representation of local priorities is the relationship between actors, on many levels. Firstly, the lack of participation of key stakeholders hinders the incubation of new initiatives. Secondly, due to the lack of engagement, the policy design becomes redundant. Finally, the MP dialogue is affected by the political developments on each side.

This finding put a new perspective on implementation studies. Traditional approaches to implementation are top-down and bottom-up perspectives, where the former focus on high-level steering and the latter on the influence of lower level public officials. In the external policy context, the analysis of implementation of Mobility Partnerships brings to the fore more complex processes, namely the interactions between independent actors from *all* levels. In particular, it highlights the importance of how stakeholders influence each other’s behaviour and, consequently, policy implementation. The MP case shows that other policy mechanisms (such as policy design, resources of implementing agencies) have a secondary explanatory value compared to the significance of the multi-actor setting. While examining the implementation of complex policies, further research should focus on uncovering the processes behind the creation and functioning of implementation networks. Without a doubt, this idea adds complexity to (already complex) implementation studies. While the recognition of policy actors’ influence was a common approach in implementation research, what should be intriguing to comprehend and worthwhile to control is the impact of one actor’s decisions on another actors’ behaviour. This is the main direction that the thesis’ findings point out to.

Furthermore, as a result of taking into consideration the role of partner countries, the findings contribute to the theoretical development of the external governance perspective. The externalization approach assumes that successful adoption and application of EU rules automatically translates into successful implementation (Lavenex & Schimmelfennig, 2009). As described in the theoretical framework section, Lavenex and Schimmelfennig present three hypotheses of external governance effectiveness: institutional, power-based and domestic structure. However, the research results show that at least two factors should be additionally taken into account. Firstly, the possible overlap of EU rules. Currently, the external governance perspective examines how enforceable and precise EU rules but look at them individually. The perspective does not take into account the mutual influence of different policies. As the comparative analysis presents, all partner countries face the issue of discussing MP questions outside of the intended cooperation platforms, what hinders implementation. Consequently, because of the incoherence of external governance policies, partner countries are not *able* to apply and adopt EU rules. Secondly, the lack of adoption of EU rules by the Member States should be considered when studying the effectiveness of external policies. By default, the external perspective takes into account the legalization and legitimacy of EU rules within non-member states. However, the low level of cooperation of the EU actors also impedes implementation processes. Since the implementation of a given policy belongs to the competence of Member States, EU external policies (that involve their engagement) are automatically challenged. These two factors add depth to the external governance perspective by partially moving the perceived responsibility for lack of policy effectiveness from the third countries subordination level to the internal EU proceedings.

Moreover, the paper merged the two above-mentioned theoretical approaches and demonstrated an innovative approach to study external migration policy. By combining implementation studies, that are usually applied to domestic policies, with the external governance perspectives on transnational engagement, the thesis created a model that can be reapplied by other researchers. However, the chosen approach has also several limitations. Firstly, I did not consider all variables that could potentially influence implementation. For instance, the limited engagement of stakeholders (both partner countries and the Member States) could be explained by factors that were not tested in the thesis. Furthermore, since MP issues are usually discussed under different frameworks, MP meeting minutes turned out to be useless as a primary source. Although they had the potential to enhance my understanding of relations between stakeholders, the minutes did not bring any value for the topic of this research. Consequently, I discarded

them completely. Finally, the assumption that EU priorities are primarily security-oriented and partner country priorities are development-oriented does not always reflect the reality of MPs. For instance, improved border management and surveillance was one of the Georgian objectives due to the ongoing conflict with Russia. This shortcoming affects the quality of my findings to the greatest extent.

Regarding societal relevance, the paper adds to very limited research on the implementation of external migration policies. Deep understanding of implementation processes is crucial to create successful policies. Finding sustainable migration solutions is particularly important in view of the recent migration crisis in Europe. Similar crises can be prevented from happening by improving the situation of migrants and potential migrants. The MP analysis shows that mutually beneficial solutions can be found only if the transnational cooperation continues. Furthermore, the willingness to cooperate coincides with the representation of local priorities. Consequently, encouraging transnational and international dialogue on migration could have a positive impact on all stakeholders in a long term perspective.

Recommendations for policymakers

The research results confirm that the thought of Hargrove who considered implementation a “missing link” in the study of public policy (1975). Policy success or failure depends on the way it is implemented. In the case of the Mobility Partnership, implementation seems to be the Achilles’ heel of this policy. The MP emerges as an ambiguous instrument, unsteadily hold in hands of the implementers: MP actions are discussed under different frameworks, stakeholders are not sufficiently encouraged to act, labour migration opportunities are almost non-existent. The instrument seems partially like a missed opportunity for all actors. At the same time, the policy is not doomed to fail. Therefore, on the basis of the analysed case studies, I enlist below my recommendations for improving the MP, in order to assure reciprocity of advantage.

Firstly, the MP architecture should be adjusted. The confusion over the role of high-level meetings and local cooperation platform resulted in lack or not sufficient discussion about the local priorities. Based on the examples of Moldova and Georgia, MPs should be better integrated with partner country policy tools. Furthermore, the overlap with other EU instruments and platforms should be limited to a minimum.

Secondly, partner countries should be more vocal about their needs. As Moldovan example shows, taking the lead and “pushing” for new initiatives can result in bigger engagement of all stakeholders.

Finally, the partners should maintain ongoing dialogue on migration. This approach might result in de-politicisation of migration-related questions by means of a deeper understanding of mutual needs. The dialogue could result in finding collectively beneficial, sustainable solutions, such as addressing labour market mismatch.

Appendix 1 – Interview questions

(questions vary depending on organization)

EU COMMISSION (country specific)

Introduction; informed consent, installing recording devices.

I will start by asking general questions about the implementation of Mobility Partnerships. In the second part of the interview, my questions will be country- specific.

- What is your current position?
- Since when do you work on MPs?
- Please describe, step-by-step, the implementation process of Mobility Partnership. What happens after an MP is signed?

- What type of actors is involved in the implementation? What are their roles?
- What are the mechanisms for cooperation between stakeholders?
- How are new projects added and negotiated?
- What type of projects NGOs help implement? Why? Examples?
- In your opinion, how does the Mobility Partnership Facility influence the implementation of MPs?
- The annexes to Joint declarations on Mobility Partnerships specify concrete projects. In your opinion, how their intended and actual realisation compares?
- Could you give examples of projects that are the hardest to implement?
- The easiest?
- What are considered the main obstacles for the implementation in Xcountry?
- In your experience, is the number of staff assigned sufficient?
- What about the level of funding?
- Since MPs are not legally binding, how do you ensure cooperation?
- According to the policy evaluation done by the University of Maastricht, Member states are not particularly interested in legal migration and development-related projects. Under what circumstances and why they decide to undertake them?
- How do you find the cooperation with Xcountry?

Appendix 2 – Code book

Category	Codes	Examples
Security-oriented measures	“security”, “surveillance”, “combat/prevention of irregular migration”, “readmission”, “forced returnee”, “return management”, “border management”, “control”,	“(…)to support the Georgian state structures in processing readmission ”, “(…) combating irregular immigration, and improve border surveillance and border management capacities.”
Sustainable local development measures	“local development”, “engagement”, “labour market”, “mobility”, “circular migration”, “reintegration”, “Georgian/Moldovan/Armenian development”, “development-oriented”, “benefits of migration”,	“(…)To increase opportunities for economic reintegration for returning migrants”, “(…) enhance capacities of private employment agencies to match labour demand and offer”
Neutral	“capacity building”, “policy advice”, “asylum”, “capacity” “Promote exchange”, “strengthening of migration management”, “recommendations”, “support”,	“Promote exchange of experience in the region in the implementation of Mobility Partnership”, “ (..) set up a durable mechanism which ensures self-sufficient and institutionalized training capacities ”

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