



Forum on the Problems of Peace and War & GARNET Jointly Executed Research Project 5.2.1

### THE EXTERNAL IMAGE OF THE EUROPEAN UNION

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The survey *The External Image of the European Union* has been conducted in the framework of the Jointly Executed Research Project 5.2.1. (*Normative Issues*) of the GARNET Network of Excellence *Global Governance, Regionalisation and Regulation: the Role of the EU* - (EU 6<sup>th</sup> Framework Programme 2005-2010; Call Identifier: FP6-2002-Citizens-3). The survey also received financial support from the Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs. 26 researchers, based in 16 countries were involved.

The results of the research project were presented at the EU Commission on April 19, 2007, at the presence of Janez Potočnik (Commissioner for Science and Research), several Commission Director Generals and members of the European Parliament. The research results have been further discussed in several academic venues (ECPR General Conference 2007; Warwick Garnet Annual Conference 2007; Annual Conference of the Società Italiana di Scienza Politica 2007, University of Trento 2007; Scuola Superiore Sant'Anna Pisa 2008; University of Bologna 2008; Lund University 2008; Johns Hopkins SAIS Centre in Bologna 2008;)

#### **Aims of research**

The research had four main aims:

- to evaluate the degree of academic information already available on how the EU is perceived outside its borders;
- analyse open sources (newspapers, websites, official documents, available opinion polls) so as to produce new research on the topic;
- to evaluate if these perceptions vary across geographic areas of the world, countries, and target groups within countries;
- assess the gap between the EU's self-representation and external views.

#### **Methodology and deliverables:**

1) **Country reports:** we selected a sample of countries from each continent: Australia, Brazil, Canada, China, Egypt, Japan, India, Iran, Israel, Lebanon, Mexico, Russia, Palestine, South Africa, United States and Venezuela.

**Target groups:** we selected four target groups within each country on which to focus attention: political elites, public opinion, the press and organised civic society.

**Sources:** we gathered information on the image of the EU within each target group by: (i) reviewing the very limited academic literature available and (ii) analysing the open sources available, with particular attention to press analysis. Each researcher chose a research strategy targeted at the needs of the country s/he was analysing.

2) **Transversal reports on** international and transnational actors: the UN General Assembly, the World Bank, Al Jazeera, the African Union, Heads of EU Commission delegations abroad; NGOs taking part in world gatherings. We also evaluated the the image of the EU among senior servants in the Commission Delegations.

**Sources:** direct interviews; questionnaires; open sources

## Main Results

- Low / to very low visibility in the media (e.g. Australia, Canada, China, India, South Africa).
- Limited knowledge of the EU (particularly among certain target groups, such as civil society and citizens at large).
- Degree of knowledge and appreciation correlated to degree of education and younger age
- Good degree of confidence in the EU but frequently lower with respect to other organizations/states.
- EU largely seen as an economic giant, but not widely perceived as a “world power”, nor as a future one.
- Frequent calls for “more EU” - frequently as a counterbalance to the US (e.g. civil society and press Egypt; Brazil; public opinion Canada; Iran).
- General perception of “Europe” (more than the EU), influenced by historical relationships with individual European countries (e.g. former colonial empires).
- Images of the EU are split:
  - *positive images*: the EU as “strategic opportunity” for the partner countries; a trade giant; a supporter of multilateralism (or at least multipolarism); a model of regional integration; and a possible counterbalance to US hegemony, a protector of the environment;
  - *negative images*: an actor whose policy is severely influenced by its own security or economic concerns; a neo-liberal actor in its external relations; and a protectionist power (CAP). → EU’s self-representation as a solidaristic actor is called into question. Moreover:
    - ✓ Little evidence of the EU being widely seen as a “normative power” exporting universal values of democracy and human rights.
    - ✓ No evidence of the EU being widely regarded as a social model to be imitated.
    - ✓ No public reward for EU’s development cooperation policy

On the basis of this research a number of **conclusions** can be drawn:

- There is a strong need for new, methodologically strong, research projects, and a direct role by the Commission in collecting information (e.g. through the Commission’s delegations; negotiating the inclusions of questions on the EU in Regional Barometers)
- There is a need to develop research strategies to also evaluate if and how external images influence the internal process of identity formation among the Europeans. What do the Europeans know of how others see them and their institutions? How do the European media assess the reputation of the EU? Those are neglected questions in the “EU identity” literature.
- This academic work, however, cannot substitute a more direct role by the EU institutions in reducing the rhetoric/expectations/performance gap (e.g. by working on (i) communication & public diplomacy; (ii) by improving EU’s coherence & credibility; (iii) by capitalizing on the existing cultural message of Europe).

## Output

- Lucarelli S. (a cura di) *Beyond Self Perception: The Others’View of the European Union*, Special issue of European Foreign Affairs Review, 3/2007
- Lucarelli S. (a cura di) *The External Image of the European Union*, Garnet Series e-book, 2007, [http://www.garnet-eu.org/fileadmin/documents/working\\_papers/1707.pdf](http://www.garnet-eu.org/fileadmin/documents/working_papers/1707.pdf)
- Fioramonti L., and Lucarelli, S. “Have you heard of the EU?”, *International Herald Tribune*, October 24, 2007
- Fioramonti, L. and Poletti, A., “Facing the Giant: Southern Perspectives on the European Union”, *Third World Quarterly*, Vol.28 (1) 2008.
- Fioramonti L., and Lucarelli, S. “How do the Others see us? European political identity and the external image of the EU”, in Cerutti, F., Lucarelli, S. (eds), Routledge, 2008.

- Sonia Lucarelli e Lorenzo Fioramonti, *Have you heard of the EU? An Analysis of global images of the European Union*, Garnet Policy Brief, n. 7, September 2008.
- Sonia Lucarelli and Lorenzo Fioramonti (eds), *External Perceptions of the European Union as a Global Actor* London, Routledge (forthcoming, Spring 2009).
- Sonia Lucarelli and Lorenzo Fioramonti (eds) *Research Report: The External Image of the European Union (Phase Two)*, Garnet Series e-book, 2008