

# International Role of the European Union in the Western Balkans? Measuring Consistency and Coherence of Value Expression in the EU's External Relations

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*The aim of this paper is to examine the international role of the European Union in regard to the Western Balkans based on constructivist ground and drawing on an analysis of discursive practices. Focusing on questions of consistency and coherence in role concept by analyzing expressions of values and norms in foreign policy documents, conclusions are drawn regarding the EU's international role towards the region. The EU's foreign policy is found to be very consistent throughout the implementation of the Lisbon Treaty. Nevertheless, it is clearly lacking cross-institutional coherence. The emphasis on rational objectives over normative issues further undermines the Union's impact to induce domestically driven reforms.*

**Key words:** European Union, role conception, consistency, values, Qualitative Content Analysis

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## 1. Introduction

The European Union has long been seeking to define its role in the world, and especially toward its close neighborhood. Creating a stronger and distinct international profile has been a major issue in all recent reforms. The Treaty of Lisbon, the lat-

est amendment to the founding documents of the Union, is seen as an important step towards further strengthening of the EU's international role. The importance given to principles and values in defining the Union's foreign policy is evident throughout Title V of the Lisbon Treaty: General Provisions on the Union's External Action and Specific Provisions on the Common Foreign and Security Policy. Values, norms and principles are said to guide, motivate, and regulate EU's international

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actions and those of the member states. The following Article (Treaty of Lisbon, 2007, Treaty on the EU, Title V, Chapter 1, Article 21) underscores this:

“The Union’s action on the international scene shall be guided by the principles which have inspired its own creation, development and enlargement, and which it seeks to advance in the wider world: democracy, the rule of law, the universality and indivisibility of human rights and fundamental freedoms, respect for human dignity, the principles of equality and solidarity, and respect for the principles of the United Nations Charter and international law.”

In continuation, safeguarding and promoting EU values, fundamental interests, security, independence, and integrity are cited as aims that define the Union’s external actions. Consistency and coherence also feature prominently in EU documents as an important policy goal:

“the Union shall ensure consistency between the different areas of its external action and between these and its other policies. The Council and the Commission, assisted by the High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, shall ensure that consistency and shall cooperate to that effect” (Treaty of Lisbon, 2007, Treaty on the EU, Title V, Chapter 1, Article 21).

An inconsistent and incoherent European Union is likely to be perceived as a cacophony of different institutional and national interests, be it Council, Parliament, French, German, Greek or other, where the loudest and most potent voice wins the day. This would severely undermine the concept of the EU as a vital international actor. The Union thus has a particular interest in profiling itself internationally in a consistent and coherent manner through a recognizable European international role or foreign policy identity. The Western Balkans presents itself as an ideal case for assessing the Union’s foreign policy. The European Union is very active in all countries throughout the region, and is a major international player that could assert considerable domestic influence. All Western Balkan countries are also thoroughly integrated in various EU programs receiving large amounts of funding through pre-accession instruments. Most important, all the countries have a clear European

perspective, meaning that they are invited (and encouraged) to eventually become members of the EU, even though they are at different stages on the road to accession. All this lets us conclude that the Union has a particular interest in profiling itself towards the region in a consistent and coherent manner through a distinct international role of the European Union.

This paper shall adopt an ontologically constructivist approach, emphasizing the importance of role in international relations, as well as normative principles and values that guide foreign policy. Role or actorness is not viewed as a fundamental quality of an international entity, one that is pre-determined by material factors and capabilities, but one that is constructed through action, discourse and communication. Elgström mentioned that the field of research on morality, norms and foreign policy is “currently receiving quite a lot of scholarly attention,” in particular “the role that normative ideas may have for foreign policy behavior” (2007, p. 467). I intend to continue in line with this academic trend and look at European foreign policy as a “cognitive regime [...] an approach in which the interests, values, ideas and beliefs of actors are themselves the central analytical focus” (Tonra 2003, p. 738). Constructing entities actorness and illustrating identity implies some sort of expression of attributes and this happens foremost through language. In a world where meanings are produced and reproduced frequently, language has a central role in conveying thought and social meaning. Therefore, this paper shall apply a discursive analytical approach, focusing on language and discursive practices. Sedelmeier (2003, p. 15) highlights the centrality of the EU communicative processes and the importance of “actual policy practice, including discursive practices, such as European Council declarations or Commission documents” arguing that they identify and exemplify important aspects of the EU’s international role by “giving norm-based justifications for common actions.” Wæver states that an “overall foreign policy line has to be able to articulate the state’s ‘vision of itself’”, official texts used for analysis cannot be dismissed as being ‘purely rhetoric’ (1998, p. 107). For this reason, it is necessary not to dismiss words, language and communicative action as unimportant or of secondary value; we need to take them seriously (Risse 2004).

The additional value of this paper is in analyzing the "relatively stable collection of communicative practices and rules defining appropriate behavior" (Risse 2002, p. 604) that define international institutions. It is interesting to see how stable communicative processes of the EU towards the Western Balkans are, particularly role conception through norms and values. Contesting values and norms are always present in EU policies, thus it is important to stress those that show up over and over again, eventually being endorsed through legal and political practices and becoming part of the EU international role (Lucarelli 2006). Through asserting consistency (stability within a short timeframe) and coherence (stability throughout EU-institutions) of the EU's value expression in foreign policy, it is possible to draw conclusions on its position towards the region it ultimately seeks to integrate. The research question guiding this paper is whether the European Union expresses a consistent and coherent foreign policy identity towards the Western Balkan states. The focus shall thereby rest on language as a primary form of expressing social meaning and any pre-linguistic or 'hidden' meanings shall be disregarded (Larsen 2002). Official articulation shall serve as the sole source of analysis, where non-formal, off-the-record and personal exchanges are not taken into account. This will help to draw attention to the self-depiction the EU wants to put forward and omit unclear and subjective views, personal opinions, and attitudes. Cases shall be official EU documents as put forward by the three major decision-making institutions of the Union: the Council of the European Union, the European Commission, and the European Parliament. The paper rests on some basic ontological assumptions. First, the European Union is viewed as a single-unit of analysis and its constitutive elements (nation-states, advocacy groups, bureaucracy...) are sidelined. The interests of all constitutive elements are seen to be represented in statements made by the three main governing institutional bodies of the Union, the Council, Commission and Parliament. This way the EU is unified vertically, although retaining its horizontal (institutional) differences. The second assumption is that the European Union matters in the world and especially in the Western Balkans, thereby occupying a certain position in international relations and rejecting realist (non-)interpretations of the EU. And the third is in line with constructivist reasoning, that foreign policy is decisively influenced by values,

norms, and principles. The questions of consistent and coherent value expression will be empirically tested by applying the method of qualitative content analysis to EU foreign political documents concerning the Western Balkan states. A set of prominently featured European values included in the Union's founding documents, and identified in academic literature will be analyzed in a large number of official documents from the EU's three key institutions (Council, Commission, and Parliament), covering a time period before and after the entry into force of the Lisbon Treaty. These will be used as a framework for the analysis. They include the main value of peace, and core values of human rights, liberty and freedom, democracy, the rule of law, equality, and solidarity. Other new and complex values such as sustainable development, good governance, liberal market economy, and comprehensive security are also included. An obvious inconsistency and incoherence of values expressed through documents would point to problems in constructing the EU as a legitimate unitary actor and could undermine efforts to take on a more decisive international role. Inconsistency and incoherence could also point to a shift in power balance between the institutions following the entry into force of the Lisbon Treaty.

To summarize, this paper aims to examine the international role the European Union attributes to itself within the Western Balkans. Based on constructivist ground, and drawing on a qualitative content analysis of discursive practices, questions of consistency and coherence in role conception are examined through value expressions, norms and principles in foreign policy documents.

## **2. Role conception, consistency and coherence**

The EU's goal to define and secure itself a place in the world ultimately entails constructing a European Union's international role as a recognizable system of collective worldviews, norms and objectives to function as orientation for self-reference and action. The issues this paper addresses belong to a broader debate on the role<sup>1</sup> of the European Union as an actor in international relations. Efforts to define the European Union as an international actor have been present for almost four decades with academic debates being closely intertwined with institutional changes of the EU. Starting from François Duchêne's 1973 concept of the Europe-

an Communities being a civilian force aimed at spreading civilian and democratic standards internationally (in Orbie 2006), to Sjøstedt's concept of 'actorness' and Allen and Smith's 'presence' (in Ginsberg 1999), early approaches seek to understand if the EU can be conceptualized as an international actor. With the Union gaining ever more relevance in the international arena and affirming its presence, the debate that followed addressed the question what kind of actor the EU is. According to Lucarelli (2007, pp. 252-253) three main areas of this debate can be identified. First the "honestly rather sterile debate on the differences between 'civilian', 'normative', 'structural', 'gentle', etc., power", second the possibility of such a civilian or normative power to possess military capacity, and third the debate related to the idea of 'EU distinctiveness' in international relations. To analyze the distinctiveness argument Lucarelli (2007, p. 257) suggests utilizing the concept of role, defining it as "patterns of expected or appropriate behavior and are determined by both an actor's own conceptions about appropriate behavior and by the expectations of other actors." Referring to Holsti (1970, p. 240), one can add role performance, encompassing concrete actions and decisions governments take, as a third factor, noting that all three are intertwined and situated in a constant feedback-loop. Acting on role-concepts, actors introduce intrinsic norms and values to their foreign policy statements, thus further strengthening the normative structure of their international role.

This paper shall focus on the subjective dimension of the EU's international role and on the notion of role as normative self-expectation. It will further apply this self-conception to the recent EU foreign policy actions towards the Western Balkans. The analysis is essentially an assessment of the EU's capacity to put forward a unified (and yes, distinct) image towards the world in order to make its foreign policy more present. It is possible to find reference to desired roles underpinned by normative values in numerous major EU documents and treaties. For instance the Laeken Declaration on the Future of the European Union calls for Europe to play a leading and stabilizing role worldwide building on humane values, liberty, solidarity and above all diversity as well as solidarity and sustainable development (Laeken Declaration 2001). Aggestam defines (self-) conception of the role as "normative expectations of a

certain kind of foreign policy behavior expressed by the role-beholders themselves" where "actors play a crucial part in defining their own roles" (2004, pp. 88-89). 'Normative expectations' create a certain 'image' of appropriate objectives, interests, and functions in the international arena, this 'image' being the actors own role-conception. This does not render the analysis of EU foreign policy discourse a theoretical exercise, for, as Larsen points out, "at the very least, the dominant EU discourse can be seen as an expression of the level of common language between EU actors' discourses, which is of interest when analyzing the scope for joint action within the EU" (2002, p. 288). "The crucial point therefore is that there is a dominant EU discourse which articulates the EU as an international actor" (Larsen 2004, p. 69). Focusing on role concept we are able to operationalize self-conception as it implies how normative qualities are transformed into verbal statements on international behavior and orientation and expected foreign policy action (Aggestam 1999, 2004). Analyzing verbal statements by investigating the normative foundations of the EU's role conception, it is possible to draw conclusions to the international image the Union seeks to establish in official communication. Aggestam points out that the role is "conceived of in terms of a characteristic behavioral repertoire" capturing elements of continuity in foreign policy (2004, p. 88).

It is exactly such elements of continuity that this paper seeks to find out, thus evaluating the consistency and coherence of the EU's normative self-conception. Even documents referring to different policy areas should display certain amount of consistency and coherence in normative expressions, since a stable normative foundation should have impact throughout the Union's foreign policy. As only relatively stable and continuous communicative practices define appropriate behavior and thus the role, the consistency and coherence of the EU's foreign policy discourse is crucial. Consistency and/or coherence have been touched upon by many authors as representing a challenge to formulating Europe's international role (Allen and Smith 2007, Diez 2005, Sedelmeier 2003, Biscop 2004, Nuttall 2005, Wagner and Hellmann 2001, Barbé and Herranz 2005, Johansson-Nogués 2007, amongst others) but so far have not been analyzed concerning the EU's role conception. Allen and Smith recall a critical paradox that, although pursuing a very active

foreign policy in 2006, the EU's activity "did not always add up to the development of consistent or coherent strategies" (2007, p. 163). Sedelmeier (2003) cautions of repeated inconsistencies in foreign policy undermining achievements reached on EU international identity with regard to human rights conditionality policy. Wagner and Hellmann (2001) warn that institutional overlapping of foreign policy competences creates contest among EU-institutions leading to visible incoherency and undermining the Union's perception in the world. Diez (2005, p. 614) has similar concerns when asking if the European Commission, Parliament, and Council pursue different norms and interests. Nuttall finally argues that "consistency in EU foreign-policy making is desirable, if not for its own sake, then for the credibility of the Union as a foreign-policy actor and thus its capability of defending its interests and values on the international stage" (2005, p. 94). Consistency and coherence in foreign policy are, by all means, crucial and the quest for achieving them has also been very present in official European Union discourse. The Luxembourg Report of October 1970 states that "...Europe must prepare itself to exercise the responsibilities which to assume in the world, [... this] is both its duty and a necessity on account of its greater cohesion and its increasingly important role." In the Communiqué of the Paris Summit in December 1974 "the Heads of Government consider it essential to ensure progress and overall consistency in the activities of the Communities and in the work of political co-operation..." The Single European Act of 1987 provided that "the external policies of the European Community and the policies agreed in European Political Co-operation must be consistent. The Presidency and the Commission, each within its own sphere of competence, shall have special responsibility for ensuring that such consistency is sought and maintained." This was amplified, and slightly altered, in the Maastricht Treaty "The Union shall in particular ensure the consistency of its external activities as a whole in the context of its external relations, security, economic and development policies" (from Nuttall 2005, pp. 94-96). More recently, the (unsuccessful) Constitution for Europe and the Lisbon Treaty adapted almost identical formulations while referring to consistency a total of 36 times, for example: "The Union shall ensure consistency between the different areas of its external action and between these and its other policies. The Council and the Commission, as-

sisted by the High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, shall ensure that consistency and shall cooperate to that effect" (Treaty of Lisbon, 2007, Treaty on the EU, Title V, Chapter 1, Article 21). The goal of realizing a consistent foreign policy has been requested in EU documents throughout the past 40 years and the analysis on whether it has been reached and to what degree is far overdue.

So how do we operationalize consistency and coherence in regard to our research question? Is Europe's self-defined role in the Western Balkans an *ad hoc* affair, or does it follow a distinct pattern? Consistency, characterized as stability in norm expression within a given timeframe, provides us with an indication of the degree of political commitment to certain foreign policy goals and the persistence of intrinsic values influencing such commitment. Coherence, described as stable norm expression across EU-institutions, gives us insight into the (non-)fragmentation of external policy discourse within the Union, inter-institutional dialogue, and the underlying normative influences affecting separate decision-making bodies of the EU. An ideally consistent and coherent foreign policy discourse and role conception would thus show minimal change in expressing objectives, interests and values over a relative period, and a unanimous degree of expression along institutional lines. For the EU to possess a credible international role, both consistency and coherence have to be achieved.

### 3. Values in the EU foreign policy

A distinct set of common values is presented as being at the core of European foreign policy-making and identity construction. These common values, interconnected and mutually reinforcing, create an "EU discourse on joint values, and not just on decision-making procedures" (Larsen 2004, p. 73). Many authors have touched upon the subject and attempted to identify the normative structure underlying European policy. Risse (2004, p. 170) describes the European institutions as trying to construct a post-national identity emphasizing democracy, human rights, market economy, welfare state, and cultural diversity as constitutive values. Harnisch and Maull (2001, p. 4), focusing on civilian powers, mention six intertwined objectives: multilateralism, rule of law, democracy,

peace, social justice, and interdependence; while Merlingen, Mudde and Sedelmeier (2001, p. 63) emphasize the Union's firmly established role in the protection of fundamental rights. Manners and Whitman (2003, p. 398) argue the EU's international identity to be constructed around specific interpretation of principles including peace, liberty, democracy, rule of law and human rights as well as social solidarity, anti-discrimination, sustainable development and good governance. Citrin and Sides (2004, p. 183) consider Europe's 'civic religion' as encompassing a "demonstrated commitment to democracy, a tolerance for minorities, and a spirit of transnational cooperation" along with support for a welfare state and extensive social justice, and a commitment to multilateralism. Referring to European strategic culture, Kagan (2004, p. 55) recalls negotiation, diplomacy, education, commercial ties, international law, and multilateralism as the qualities it is constituted of. According to Biscop (2004, p. 5) a characteristic of the EU is a broad, comprehensive notion of security based on interdependence of political, socio-economic, ecologic, cultural and military security. Relating to the root causes of conflict, these are defined as lack of "sustainable economic development, democracy and respect for human rights, viable political structures, and healthy environmental and social conditions, with the capacity to manage change." Finally Aggestam and Hill (2008, p. 99) point to the inherently multicultural idea of 'unity in diversity' inherent to the EU, as well as ideals of democracy, tolerance and respect for human rights. It is hard not to notice that quite a few values and normative implications keep re-appearing throughout works of several authors hinting to some degree of salience in the EU's normative role expression.

In order to analyze consistency and coherence in the European Union's expression of normative principles, we have to agree on a set of values considered prominent to the EU. Drawing on constitutive documents of the EU itself (foremost Lisbon Treaty) and academic literature (Manners 2002, pp. 242-243; Manners 2006, pp. 32-38; Lucarelli and Manners 2006, pp. 203-205), as well as an initial analysis of 15 randomly selected EU foreign policy documents<sup>2</sup>; I identify eleven fundamental values of the EU. These include the central value of peace, basic values of human rights, liberty and freedom, democracy, and the rule of law, as well as equality, solidarity and more recent

and complex values, i.e. sustainable development, good governance, liberal market economy, and comprehensive security. Along this set of eleven values I shall analyze the discursive international role conception of the European Union. Further elaboration and interpretation of the values into foreign policy principles, objectives, and ultimately normative expressions will be spelled out in the Codebook to be used for analysis. Actively promoting and defending of such values through policy practice (also discursively) in a consistent and coherent manner will clearly define Europe's international role (Tonra 2003, Sedelmeier 2003).

#### 4. The EU foreign policy in the Western Balkans

The Western Balkans (WB) is a high priority issue for EU foreign policy. First of all the region is surrounded by EU states and designates an 'empty area' unregulated by common laws close to the very center of the EU. Related to this, and of greater significance, the region is viewed as unstable and a potential threat to security in Europe. The wars and upheavals of the 1990's have devastated most WB countries. Institutional and material infrastructure is in dire need of being strengthened and societal trust needs to be rebuilt. The region provides a fertile breeding ground for corruption, smuggling and organized crime. If left to its own, the countries could grow isolated and pose even more significant risks to the EU and individual member states. The EU, guided by its founding principles, assert its commitment to promote and advance peace, freedom, democracy and rule of law through its foreign policy, and the most obvious beneficiaries would be the states in the immediate neighborhood, including the Western Balkans.<sup>3</sup> The primary vehicle for such involvement is the ongoing enlargement process, with the overarching EU membership perspective for all Western Balkan countries that is being continuously repeated in official statements. In effect the Union is attempting to replicate the first 'eastern-enlargement' process in regard to South-East Europe founded on conditionality, compliance and reward as well as norm-export. This policy is albeit met with limited success. Noutcheva (2009) argues that non-compliance in the case of Western Balkan countries cannot be explained by the rational conditionality model and by domestic adoption costs of democratization to incumbent political leaders, as was the case in

Central-Eastern Europe. Instead, she points to the recent EU enlargement policy lacking strong normative foundations as a source of legitimacy. The external legitimization for required reforms is built on efficiency arguments around which it is difficult to rally local political support. Instead, local leaders then tend to revert to domestic sources of legitimacy, no matter whether these are based on rationality or identity, sometimes in resistance to external views on statehood conditions. Noutcheva argues that the EU policy towards the Western Balkans, based on rational motives instead of values, has not produced the necessary domestic consensus of compliance to conditionality requirements. "The outcome has been less voluntary compliance and more imposed compliance with implications for the EU's international identity" (Noutcheva 2009, p. 1081).

It is compelling to examine if the EU foreign policy towards the Western Balkans is indeed lacking normative legitimacy. Do normative values give way to efficiency arguments in foreign policy documents? Another question asks whether institutional changes introduced with the Lisbon have had effect on value expression in EU foreign policy documents.

### 5. Case selection and codebook

I shall focus on discursive practices in the EU's external relations, i.e. look at and analyze foreign policy documents of the EU. Thus a case is an official, publically available EU policy document -- defined in broadest terms -- that is directed towards and concerns countries of the Western Balkans. The document selection was made according to four criteria: 1) European institution and document type, 2) policy area in concern, 3) timeframe, and 4) country/regional focus. Documents of the three most prominent and influential European institutions are selected: the Council of the European Union, the European Commission, and the European Parliament. All three institutions are involved in preparing and adopting the EU legislature. By focusing on them, on what they represent and to whom they respond, it is possible to cover a broad spectrum of interests and preferences in EU policy-making. Barbé and Herranz (2005) describe the European Parliament, apart from being the only directly elected EU institution, as always considering its duty to be closely linked to defending European values and topics

of public interest. The Commission is often depicted using the words of Catherine Day<sup>4</sup> as being "the only body paid to think European" and acts accordingly initiating most EU regulations and working with the intention of strengthening the Union. The Council is seen as an extension of the member states' national politics into the European arena and it acts in an intergovernmental, multi-lateral fashion. The following types of documents will be selected for the mentioned institutions:

- For the Commission: Commission decisions, Commission regulations, Commission notices and communications, proposals for a Council decision and for a Council regulation, press releases, speeches of Commissioners, and other relevant documents;
- For the Council: Council regulations, decisions, joint actions and conclusions as well as draft versions of these documents, working documents, position papers, implementation reports, action plans, press releases, and other relevant documents;
- For the Parliament: Parliament resolutions and motions for resolutions, Parliament regulations (joint adoption with Council), draft reports, recommendations, and opinions, press releases, and other relevant documents.

The case selection shall include all foreign policy actions of the EU: economic, political, security, and judicial cooperation, with a slight emphasis on international political relations (pre-Lisbon CFSP). In order to obtain relevant results in regard to consistency, an equal timeframe was selected for pre-Lisbon and post-Lisbon cases<sup>5</sup>. Two periods of ten months each were identified as pre-Lisbon (01.02.2009—30.11.2009) and post-Lisbon (01.12.2009—30.09.2010) and shall serve for comparison. Finally, cases should have specific focus on the Western Balkan region and countries. In this regard documents containing keywords Croatia/n, Bosnia/n, Serbia/n and Balkan/s have been selected.

A random selection of documents was compiled for the analysis from the official websites of the EU and the individual European institutions<sup>6</sup>. The documents take into account equal distribution along institutional and temporal criteria, as these are crucial for assessing consistency and coherence, while simultaneously encompassing a multitude of policy areas. A total

of 49 cases (documents) are selected for analysis. It is important to note that more than enough Council documents fulfilling our criteria were available, but the Commission and Parliament documents were not. It was therefore necessary to include all available documents from the Parliament (14) and the Commission (15). The final results take this disproportion into account, as well as the pre/post Lisbon disproportion (26/23), and weigh results accordingly resulting in comparative percentage values.

The analysis shall be conducted with direct reference to a Codebook. The Codebook is a list of normative and norm-related expressions or indicators sorted along the set of eleven core EU values<sup>7</sup>. The Codebook was compiled from definitions, synonyms and antonyms of core values, and completed by analyzing the first random batch of fifteen EU documents and adding the normative expressions found therein into the Codebook. The majority of normative expressions of importance for the EU should show up in this list and their categorization is what makes up this analysis. It is important to note that positive as well as negative expressions are assigned to the same core value (for example both *conflict* and *mediation* are assigned to the value of *peace*) and are included in the list. This is because in terms of the EU foreign policy discourse the 'other' is of great importance. A European role conception does not only build on declared values, but also on reference to 'anti-values' and principles describing what 'Europe' is not about. It is important to note that positive values have to be affirmed while negative values have to be condemned in policy discourse in order to be relevant.

Method of qualitative content analysis to the case selection was applied for the study using the Codebook as reference to categorize normative expressions as emphasizing one of the eleven core EU values. Qualitative content analysis interprets the content of a text through a systematic classification process of coding and identifying core consistencies and meanings (Zhang and Wildemut 2009). The analysis of the EU foreign policy discourse was conducted in two parts. Applying qualitative content analysis, the first batch of fifteen documents was analyzed with the purpose of completing the Codebook. Upon the Codebook's completion, that batch was then re-analyzed, along with the remaining documents. Normative expressions were counted and classified

according to core EU values. This process was repeated for all 49 documents, grouping them according to institution and date.

## 6. Results and findings

The results are presented in the two following tables thus making it possible to draw conclusions from the data.<sup>8</sup> The first table is set along temporal lines and focuses on consistency. Here the results from all institutions were combined and showed expressions for the set of EU values according to the pre- and post- Lisbon period of our timeframe. The second table is compiled along institutional lines where the temporal dimension is omitted. These results for the single institutions allow us to compare coherence. The two tables give different views, temporal or institutional, of the same primary data.

An initial finding is related to the median number of value expressions per document. Although the overall number is relatively stable<sup>9</sup>, the values fluctuate significantly with regard to the European Commission and the European Parliament, while they remain consistent for the Council of the EU. In the pre-Lisbon period the Commission had on average 79.9 normative expressions per document, while the Parliament had 39.5. After the entry into force of the Lisbon Treaty, the Commission had only on average 14 normative expressions per document as the Parliament had 96. These changes could be attributed to the institutional restructuring following the Lisbon Treaty, especially the broadening of competences for the Parliament. Some norms are mentioned more than others which may help answer the questions raised by Noutcheva. The values 'rule of law' and 'liberal market economy' feature most prominently receiving significantly more attention than other normative expressions (23.86 and 26.35 respectively). Both can be linked to rational requirements such as legislative frameworks and fiscal policies. The values 'equality' and 'solidarity' both featuring strong normative components received the least attention (1.39 and 2.6 respectively). Values of 'human rights' and 'liberty and freedom' did not come up often either, and the core European value of peace is also underrepresented. In this regard, we can confirm Noutcheva's thesis that rational motives prevail in the EU foreign policy towards the Western Balkans, undermining normative legitimacy arguments.



TABLE 1: Results of qualitative content analysis: pre/post Lisbon

	Peace	Liberty and Freedom	Human Rights	Democracy	Rule of Law	Equality	Solidarity	Sustainable Development	Good Governance	Liberal Market Economy	Comprehensive Security
Pre-Lisbon (2009)	11.23%	2.32%	2.44%	5.83%	25.03%	1.39%	1.94%	10.04%	6.54%	26.49%	6.75%
Post-Lisbon (2009-2010)	11.27%	2.28%	3.67%	4.73%	22.69%	1.38%	3.26%	9.17%	7.83%	26.21%	7.51%

*Values weighed and in percent*

TABLE 2: Results of qualitative content analysis: EU institutions

	Peace	Liberty and Freedom	Human Rights	Democracy	Rule of Law	Equality	Solidarity	Sustainable Development	Good Governance	Liberal Market Economy	Comprehensive Security
COM	11.53%	1.45%	1.06%	4.15%	11.28%	0.16%	2.39%	12.77%	5.13%	46.87%	3.21%
CEU	6.63%	2.46%	2.55%	2.62%	35.20%	0.76%	1.87%	5.85%	10.01%	18.80%	13.24%
EUP	15.60%	2.99%	5.56%	9.07%	25.10%	3.23%	3.54%	10.20%	6.41%	13.39%	4.93%

*Values weighed and percentage*

Specific results related to consistency (Table 1) find normative expressions in the pre- and post-Lisbon timeframes incredibly consistent. Not a single value showed relevant fluctuations between the two timeframes. It is easy to conclude that in general EU foreign policy towards the Western Balkans remains very consistent. This is true even in light of institutional restructuring following the implementation of the Lisbon Treaty and the mentioned inconsistencies within individual institutions.

Focusing on coherence (Table 2) we can observe many discrepancies. The only two values expressed coherently are not very prominent (liberty and freedom, and solidarity). All other values show significant incoherence. Peace is stressed by the Parliament, while the Council gives it much less significance; human rights are also stronger emphasized by the Parliament, as is the case with democracy. It is interesting to note that the Council and Commission do not emphasize these two values stronger in relation to the Western Balkans. The value of equality is noteworthy since it is almost not expressed at all, especially by the Com-

mission and the Council. With regard to the rule of law, things look a bit different as it is one of the most prominent values, albeit a rational one. The Council and the Parliament clearly favors it, while the Commission does not relate to it very often. Concerning liberal market economy, it is the other way around with the Commission extensively stressing this rational value. Further, sustainable development is something that the Council does not relate to, in contrast to good governance. Especially comprehensive security is a prime concern for the Council and its member states. Summing up the results it is not possible to identify any coherence in the EU's international role conception. As individual institutions of the European Union stress different values through their foreign policy the picture of one European role in world seem illusory.

## 7. Conclusion

Building on diverse theoretical ground, a relevant and interesting research framework is formulated, on the topic of international role of the EU. The

conception is analyzed in regard to consistency and coherence of normative expressions in EU foreign policy towards the Western Balkans. Thereby the European Union is presented as having an explicit aim to ensure for itself a distinct and influential place within its neighborhood. This aim is articulated through various policy statements and presents the driving force for our research. Adopting a constructivist approach, along with core issues of mutual constitutiveness and importance of values, I have focused on analyzing the EU's foreign policy discourse. Using qualitative content analysis and looking at value expression in language it is thus possible to evaluate the Union's role conception. The main issues of the analysis are consistency and coherence, defined as stability in normative expressions over time, or throughout institutions respectively. An underlying issue especially relevant for Western Balkan countries is the relation between rational and normative expressions in EU policies.

The European foreign policy towards the region was found to be very consistent with values being expressed in a constant manner. On the level of individual institutions major inconsistencies were observed and attributed to institutional changes introduced through the Lisbon Treaty. Due to the limited number of cases available no correlation between these two disproportionate

findings on consistency could be made. Coherence was a much bigger issue with different European institutions emphasizing or demoting certain values to a noticeable extent. Overall EU foreign policy towards the Western Balkans was found to be influenced by the individual institutions, not by overarching common values. No cross-institutional patterns of coherence were observed. The minor significance of common values was underscored by the accentuation of rational objectives, such as legislative and judicial reform or fiscal policy, over normative expressions related to peace, liberty, freedom and equality. This identifies the EU's stance towards Western Balkan countries as driven by rational interests and efficiency goals rather than normative arguments.

Judging from our analysis a strong emphasis on consistency and coherence as put forward in the central EU documents and statements was not found. The EU lacks the ability to promote European values coherently because it internally focuses on and accentuates different aspirations. The European resolve to act more coherently should be addressed with urgency, especially regarding cross-institutional communication, dialogue and debate within the EU. This implies that a distinct and tangible international role of the EU has not been achieved, although the overall impression is not the one of an impossible prospect.

TABLE 3: Complete results of qualitative content analysis

	Peace	Liberty and Freedom	Human Rights	Democracy	Rule of Law	Equality	Solidarity	Sustainable Development	Good Governance	Liberal Market Economy	Comprehensive Security
COM pre-Lisbon	43 [6.7%]	12 [1.9%]	7 [1.1%]	27 [4.2%]	105 [16.4%]	2 [0.3%]	11 [1.7%]	98 [15.3%]	33 [5.2%]	286 [44.8%]	15 [2.3%]
COM post-Lisbon	16 [16.3%]	1 [1.0%]	1 [1.0%]	4 [4.1%]	6 [6.1%]	0 [0.0%]	3 [3.1%]	10 [10.2%]	5 [5.1%]	48 [49.0%]	4 [4.1%]
CEU pre-Lisbon	39 [6.7%]	13 [2.2%]	16 [2.7%]	9 [1.5%]	218 [37.5%]	4 [0.7%]	11 [1.9%]	29 [5.0%]	51 [8.8%]	121 [20.8%]	71 [12.2%]
CEU post-Lisbon	39 [6.6%]	16 [2.7%]	14 [2.4%]	22 [3.7%]	196 [32.9%]	5 [0.8%]	11 [1.8%]	40 [6.7%]	67 [11.3%]	100 [16.8%]	85 [14.3%]
EUP pre-Lisbon	64 [20.3%]	9 [2.8%]	11 [3.5%]	37 [11.7%]	67 [21.2%]	10 [3.2%]	7 [2.2%]	31 [9.8%]	18 [5.7%]	44 [13.9%]	18 [5.7%]
EUP post-Lisbon	63 [10.9%]	18 [3.1%]	44 [7.6%]	37 [6.4%]	167 [29.0%]	19 [3.3%]	28 [4.9%]	61 [10.6%]	41 [7.1%]	74 [12.8%]	24 [4.2%]

*Complete results (weighed results in percentage)*

*Results from a total of 49 documents included. Document distribution as follows: European Commission: pre-Lisbon: 8, post-Lisbon: 7; Council of the EU: pre-Lisbon: 10, post-Lisbon: 10; European Parliament pre-Lisbon: 8, post-Lisbon: 8.*

*Absolute number of normative expressions: peace=264; liberty and freedom=69; human rights=93, democracy=136; rule of law=759; equality=40; solidarity=71; sustainable development=269; good governance=215; liberal market economy=673; comprehensive security=217.*

## NOTES

<sup>1</sup> The concepts of image or identity are also used, but I prefer role as image is too vague and identity foremost describes individual identity (also see Lucarelli 2007)

<sup>2</sup> The same documents used for completing the Codebook

<sup>3</sup> For an overview of previous and current EU engagement in the Western Balkans see Bendiek (2007)..

<sup>4</sup> At that time acting European Commission Secretary-General

<sup>5</sup> The Treaty of Lisbon (short for "Treaty of Lisbon amending the Treaty on European Union and the Treaty establishing the European Community") became effective on December 1<sup>st</sup> 2009

<sup>6</sup> Documents have been obtained from the following web-sites: <[http://europa.eu/documentation/official-docs/index\\_](http://europa.eu/documentation/official-docs/index_)

<http://eur-lex.europa.eu>, <<http://ec.europa.eu/transparency/regdoc/registre.cfm?CL=en>>, <<http://www.consilium.europa.eu/showPage.aspx?id=1279&lang=EN>>, and <<http://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegWeb/application/registre/guideAccessDoc.faces>>. All documents accessed on 05.10.2010 and 06.10.2010.

<sup>7</sup> These core values are: peace, human rights, liberty and freedom, democracy, the rule of law, equality, solidarity, sustainable development, good governance, liberal market economy, and comprehensive security.

<sup>8</sup> Complete results can be found annexed to this paper.

<sup>9</sup> Pre-Lisbon: 59.19, and post-Lisbon: 56.50 average value expressions per document.

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