



## Of Special Interest

Israeli Elite Perceptions on the EU

Elite Interviews in Palestine

The EU as a Partner for Ukraine



## The C3EU Consortium: Year Two

### C3EU Partners

- University of Canterbury New Zealand
- National Institute for Strategic Studies of Ukraine
- Cherkasy National University
- V.N. Karazin Kharkiv National University
- Ben-Gurion University of the Negev
- Vytautas Magnus University
- Technische Universität Darmstadt
- Royal Hollow, University of London
- Katholieke Universiteit Leuven

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This Newsletter presents key results of the second year of the Jean Monnet Network *Crisis, conflict and critical diplomacy: EU perceptions in Ukraine, Israel and Palestine* (C3EU). Year 2 featured three main research activities: 1) analysis of EU perceptions among national elites in Ukraine, Israel and Palestine (representatives of political, business, media, civil society and cultural cohorts); 2) analysis of “mirror” perceptions (views on the EU’s relations with Ukraine, Israel and Palestine among EU practitioners who deal with the three conflicted societies); and finally, 3) analysis of EU narratives among educated youth (university students) in *te* Ukraine, Israel and Germany. Newsletter 2 reports main findings of EU perceptions among policy-, decision- and opinion-makers – influential members of the respective polities who contribute to foreign policy and external relations, as well as shape public opinion.

Year 2 featured two research meetings of the C3EU Network, each paired with research trainings of the early-career researchers. In April 2017, our team met in KU Leuven (Belgium) where C3EU researchers reported results of

elite interviews in Ukraine, Israel, Palestine and Brussels. The C3EU meeting in Leuven also included training in the Q-Sort method to study EU narratives among youth – we piloted this method with the help of MA students from KU Leuven. Year 2 finished with yet another Network meeting – this time in Kyiv (Ukraine). During this meeting, the C3EU consortium discussed final results of the youth opinion study in Ukraine, Israel and Germany (with more focus groups upcoming in Palestine and Lithuania in Year 3). The team also undertook the first round of systematic comparative analysis of the elite youth narratives (external vs. “mirror” perceptions, as well as comparisons across cohorts in each case), media framing of the EU and youth opinion. Both qualitative and quantitative techniques were showcased – a learning opportunity for all members of the team, senior academics and early-career researchers.

Importantly, Year 2 finished with several major dissemination outputs and outreach to stakeholders. In April 2017, the C3EU KU Leuven partners organized the first high-profile stakeholder event – a public lecture of HE Mykola Tochytsky, Ambassador of Ukraine to Belgium and Luxembourg, Representative of Ukraine to the EU and the European Atomic Energy Community. The C3EU briefed Ambassador Tochytsky about the main results of the project. The C3EU team also briefed Ambassador of Belgium to Ukraine, **HE Luc** Jacobs, during the Network meeting in Kyiv. Ambassador Jacobs presented to the C3EU team. Meetings and discussions with the diplomats were instrumental in shaping

and organizing the C3EU events and outreach activities with the stakeholders in Year 3, the final year of the project. Following Year 1 practices, in Year 2, members of the C3EU team continued to engage in discussions and interviews with the local stakeholders and representatives of civil society and media. C3EU U findings and methods keep informing courses taught by the members of the consortium.

Rich results of the Network’s research have been presented in multiple international academic fora. In Year 2, C3EU results were profiled at the major conferences in EU studies field, among those a panel at ECPR 2016 in Prague (section “EU Global Perceptions”), UACES 2016 in London, EUSA 2017 in Miami, EUSA Asia Pacific 2017 in Tokyo. The C3EU results and policy recommendations were also discussed in the course of the C3EU Academic Road Show – public guest lectures/seminars at the universities in Lithuania (Vytautas Magnus University), Belgium (Ghent University), New Zealand (University of Canterbury, Victoria University of Wellington), Poland (Jagellonian University), Germany (Fulda, Giessen, Göttingen).

To conclude, one of the main outcomes of the Network in Year 2 is broader circle of early-career researchers who are now actively engaged with the C3EU project and who have formed a close group of collaborators between each other and with the senior partners, across countries and generations. This Newsletter profiles several research articles by the C3EU’s early-career researchers – their commitment and enthusiasm made Year 2 of the C3EU a great success.

## Elite Interviews: Behind the Stage



**Iana Sabatovych**  
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**University of Canterbury,  
New Zealand**

Analysis of EU perceptions among elites and leaders of public opinion constitute a crucial part of the C<sup>3</sup>EU project. On the one hand, elites inform the general public and thus shape perceptions in the selected locations. On the other hand, decision-makers rely on their own perceptions while making their choices. The C<sup>3</sup>EU also aimed to study elite opinion in terms of convergences and divergences between EU external perceptions and its

self-perceptions. The analysis of the elite views was expected to register rich, nuanced, and potentially diverse opinions (not lastly due to the ongoing violent conflicts in the three locations). To ensure we capture the nuances as well as warrant comparison across cohorts and locations, our team ran a series of semi-structured face-to-face key-informant interviews in Ukraine, Israel and Palestine, and in the EU (Brussels).

The C<sup>3</sup>EU team came with a set of interviewing strategies. Researchers in Ukraine, the largest country in our study, ran 50 interviews with political, business, civil society, cultural sector and media elites. While most of the interviews took place in Kyiv, a number of them was conducted in the regions (Cherkasy in Central Ukraine and Kharkiv in Eastern Ukraine). The geography of the interviews allowed to track and compare views of elites both in the capital and in the provinces. The same cohorts were approached in the cases of

Israel and Palestine – 25 interviews were held in Israel and 17 in Palestine.

The C<sup>3</sup>EU made a choice to approach those decision-makers and opinion-leaders who are aware of the EU and its policies – those who are experts in the field and/or engaged in cooperation with the EU, its institutions, or member states.

To study the “mirror” perceptions, the C<sup>3</sup>EU interviewed those EU elites in Brussels who are engaged in developing and/or implementing EU policies in the neighborhood: 12 interviewees with those who deal with Israel and Palestine and 13 interviewees with those who deal with Ukraine. In Ukraine and Brussels, teams of interviewees worked coordinating with each other. In Israel and Palestine, interviews were conducted by single researchers respectively.

Importantly, each interview (lasting an hour on average) generated rich insights and nuanced narratives.

It goes without saying that due to the busy schedule of the interviewees securing interviews with key stakeholders and conducting these interviews for an hour was one of the main challenges

In Ukraine and Brussels, teams of interviewees worked coordinating with each other. In Israel and Palestine, interviews were conducted by single researchers respectively.

Moreover, each interview was later transcribed verbatim and translated into English for comparative analysis (while respecting and ensuring the anonymity of respondents). The C<sup>3</sup>EU consortium is grateful to the team of the early-career researchers who organized and delivered the interviews gathering comprehensive, high quality data and generating in-depth analysis, with the key findings showcased in this Newsletter.

## Convergences and Divergences: Analyzing Interviews with Ukrainian Elites



**Yevheniia Hobova**  
**National Academy of  
Sciences of Ukraine**

The Ukrainian interviewing team consisting of four early-career researchers recorded and processed 45 hours of interviews with the key policy- and decision-makers in Ukraine. Conducted in a native language by our team of the pre-trained researchers, these interviews provided an insight into ideas, experiences and emotions of the elites, among those Ukrainian newsmakers and editors, leaders of business, cultural and civil society circles, and politicians.

As predicted, there were some differences in how the EU was perceived among elites from Kyiv, Ukraine’s capital, and among their counterparts in (in our case, Cherkasy and Kharkiv). Perhaps, one of the strongest differences was observed in the case of interviews in Kharkiv (Eastern Ukraine) vis-à-vis interviews in Kyiv and Cherkasy (Central Ukraine). In the former case, more interviewees appeared to be in favor of Russia, rather than the EU.

Irrespective of the region, the EU was often described as the antagonist to Russia – either in a positive or a negative context.

Another main theme coming from the interviews in Ukraine was the idea of Ukraine being left alone in the war against Russia, with the EU not doing and not willing to do more to exert real pressure on the aggressor. There is a certain amount of disillusionment in the EU’s mediating efforts triggered by a perceived lack of its action in the ongoing conflict with Russia and annexation of Crimea.

The majority of the interviewees expressed their hope that international forces including the EU, would intervene if the conflict escalates, yet some questioned if it were a realistic scenario. One of the most discussed issues in the EU-Ukraine relations was the visa liberalization process for Ukrainian citizens (NB: the interviews took place before the liberalization process for Ukrainian citizens no-visa regime was granted to Ukraine)

The fact that the no-visa entry had been postponed and constantly reviewed made Ukrainian interviewees feel that Ukrainians were mistreated, misled by the EU, or even considered inferior.

The results of the interviews reveal the opinions expressed by the individuals who are very much involved with the EU in their careers, be it in business, political or social spheres. Respondents shared their views freely and related frequently to their personal experiences –

with some taking critical positions towards the EU and its actions and some showing a strong antipathy to the “West” in general, as opposed to Russia and sometimes Asia. Yet, those opinions were in minority.

In general, the attitudes towards the EU traced among the elites were positive and sympathetic, despite the prolonged visa-free negotiations and the perceived weaknesses of the EU in the conflict mediation.

The interviewed elites also recognized the problems facing the EU in the context of its multiple crises. Those were often mentioned with understanding and commiseration, and parallels were drawn to Ukraine’s fight with terrorism and IDPs. The general consensus was that the EU still stands strong despite its many crises, and Ukraine is willing to follow and join it. At the same time, elites agreed that Ukraine is not yet ready to join the EU. Many concluded that Ukraine needs to be more self-reliant and independent in dealing with its own problems.

## Perceptions of the EU as a Partner for Ukraine



**Anastaysia Pshenychnykh  
and Olena Morozova**  
V.N. Karazin Kharkiv  
National University

Ukrainian elites were found to take a 'close-to-home' perspective on the EU -- about 40% of the respondents associated the EU with Ukraine. The interviewees perceived the EU's partnership with Ukraine with positive connotations, linking it to the concepts of support, market, security, peace, open borders, integration and good prospects for Ukraine. For many, the EU is seen as a model of future for Ukraine or even a dream. Twenty six interviewees explicitly stated that the EU is the most important international region for Ukraine in

terms of cooperation, Ukraine's integration into the EU, its opposition to Russian aggression, and its common past with some EU countries. However, twenty-five respondents considered the USA to be the most important country for Ukraine -- as an influential power and an ally. Importantly, eighteen elite representatives saw Russia as another major actor influencing Ukraine -- an actor who cooperates with Ukraine's East and presents a threat in the context of the ongoing conflict.

Overall, the images of the EU and Russia demonstrated a distinct tendency for regional variation: elites from the central parts of Ukraine viewed the EU as a partner and Russia as an enemy, while in the eastern part of Ukraine, there were respondents who perceived Russia as a partner and the EU as an enemy (see also article by Yevheniia Hobova in this Newsletter).

According to the elites' opinion, the issues that hinder effective

Ukraine-EU cooperation the most are corruption and the slow reform process in Ukraine, the Russia-Ukraine conflict, as well as crises inside the EU. The rise of populism and the activation of the far right in the EU, the irregular migration crisis and the Brexit triggered skepticism among Ukrainian decision-makers towards the EU and have impacted its image negatively. From the point of view of the Ukrainian elite representatives, such issues in the EU-Ukraine relations as Association Agreement, DCFTA, visa liberalization and reform process in Ukraine present more opportunities both for Ukraine and for the EU, though the risks are perceived to be still higher for Ukraine. On the one hand, the EU was described as an agenda-setter who is not ready to accept Ukraine either as a member or a candidate because the Ukrainian system needs to be adapted, with liberal and democratic values firmly instilled. On the other hand, any help provided by the EU for Ukraine in order to overcome the crisis,

resolve the conflict, implement reforms or transform Ukrainian system is recognized and appreciated. Importantly, it is reflected in the positive outlooks towards the EU's in its overall image. Elites recognized Germany and Poland among the most active EU states in this respect

The most visible EU's public diplomacy initiatives were Erasmus+, self-government in the regions and the support of the art sphere in Ukraine. Nevertheless, half of the respondents see the future for Ukraine in the EU as a partner.

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## C3EU – Upcoming Events Year Three

- April 2018 – Workshop : Public Diplomacy and EU Conflicted Neighbours (Vilnius)
- April 2018 – Public Event : Crisis, Conflict and Critical Diplomacy: EU Perceptions and Narratives In Ukraine, Israel and Palestine (in conjunction with Vilnius Institute of Political Analysis) (Vilnius)
- June 2018 – Public Event : Crisis, Conflict and Critical Diplomacy: EU Perceptions and Narratives In Ukraine, Israel and Palestine (Kyiv National University, Kyiv)
- June 2018 – Think Tank Presentation (Strategic and Securities Studies Group and the Foreign Policy Council, Kyiv)



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## Israeli Elites perceptions on the EU



**Ido Rosenblum**  
Ben-Gurion University of  
the Negev

Between April 2016 and February 2017, as a part of the second stage of the C3EU project, our research center secured and conducted 25 interviews with Israeli elites from five different sectors: media, politics, business, civil society and cultural sphere (five elite representatives in each cohort). The aim was to bring the voices of the leaders that influence and shape the Israeli public opinion and policies. The sample of the interviewed elites reflects the diversity of the

Israeli society: right and left, center and periphery, as well as migrants, minorities, religious and secular leaders. Analysis of the interviews revealed three key trends in how the Israeli elites perceive the EU, its institutions, member states, leaders, challenges and relations with Israel.

The first trends has to deal with certain cognitive confusion – the interviewed Israeli elites showed a somewhat limited understanding of the EU’s role, its institutions, main actors and history. Moreover, many of the interviewed elites showed low interest and knowledge on the EU and its issues. The media elites claimed that if their story on the EU did not involve terror or relations with Israel, it would rarely find a place in the news.

The second trend in perceptions – found in responses of the business interviewees, as well as of political and media elites – was linked to a view that the EU is a biased moderator in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Some

of the respondents said that it is clear that the EU is pro-Palestinian. Views coming from civil society and cultural elites were somewhat different. These opinions varied between perceiving the EU being either a non-biased moderator, or pro-Israeli (the latter view was related to xenophobia and anti-Muslim sentiments in the EU). It has to be said that both groups saw the conflict as the main interest of the EU in the area, with the conflict being the main prism that coloured perceptions.

In the third trend -- found in all cohorts -- the elites claimed that the bilateral relations between Israel and EU member states are more visible and important for Israel than relations with EU institutions. These responses claimed that the EU as a body is a weak actor on the global stage (although it is a rich body). Many of the elites claimed that the bilateral and multilateral relations might get closer due to the challenges that Europe is going through (specifically, immigration and terror).

In general, it seems that both pro- and anti-EU Israeli elites think that the EU and its representatives can do more in Israel and the Middle East. Some of the interviewees said that the EU representatives stay in their comfort zone instead of getting involved with and around Israel and listening to the "real problems".



## Elite Interviews in Palestine: Assessing the EU’s Image as an External Actor



**Patrick Muller**  
The University of the  
Basque Country

The elite interviews conducted in Palestine provide rich empirical material for studying the perception of the EU - and its strategic narratives - by different audiences from Palestinian society. 15 interviews were carried out in Palestine’s administrative capital Ramallah and Jerusalem in December 2016. The different interviews were based on a standard questionnaire developed by the C3EU team with mostly open-ended questions, generating novel data relating to broader themes

such as “the EU as a partner”, “the EU in a changing international context”, “the EU as an actor/mediator in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict”, as well as “the EU’s image in times of crisis”.

Furthermore, information that relates to the dissemination and reception of EU strategic narratives has been collected, i.e. concerning the main media and other information resources consulted by members from the Palestinian elite to obtain information about the EU. The interviews focused on four main societal groups, including political representatives as well as members of the business, civil society, and cultural elites. High-ranking members from each group participated in the interviews, including representatives from the Palestinian Authority (PA), the Palestinian Trade Center, NGOs like the Palestinian Academic Society for International Affairs, as well as representatives from cultural organizations such as the Popular Art Center.

At the first glance, the general portrait of the EU in Palestine is based on the perception that the EU as an actor possesses considerable potential, but often fails to translate its potential into meaningful influence. Describing the perceived gap between the EU’s strong potential and weak influence, one interviewee used the metaphorical image of a “big elephant with the legs of a chicken”. While there certainly has been variance in the views expressed across the four societal groups as well as among individual members of a group, a number of relatively widely shared general perceptions exist. The EU is typically seen as a relevant partner with close relations to Palestine, though in the cultural field the member states are still considered more important. Similarly, the EU is frequently considered to be a great (albeit declining) power in economic and political terms, whilst it is considered to be less powerful in security and cultural terms.

Moreover, the EU’s policy positions, norms and values in relation to Palestine — such as its commitment to human rights and international law — are generally appreciated.

However, the EU’s external image as an important partner is substantively undermined by its perceived inability (or unwillingness) for implementing its declared policy positions, values and vision for peace. Among other things, interviewees have noted that “the EU has not done much in practice, despite its talk about human rights, liberty and democracy” that the EU “is mainly talk but does not change policies on the ground” and that the EU is “an underutilized power”. For the public diplomacy of the EU – which has substantively invested in its relations with Palestine – managing these negative perceptions represents a timely challenge.

## Perceptions from Brussels: The EU as an Conflict Diplomacy Actor in Ukraine



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Between December 2016 and July 2017, as part of the second stage of the C3EU project, two teams – KU Leuven (Belgium) and TU Darmstadt (Germany) -- cooperated in collection and analysis of the interview data gathered in the course of 25 interviews with EU practitioners. These EU elites are dealing with Ukraine, and Israel and Palestine, and through these interviews the C3EU aimed to study how the EU views itself and its role as an international and diplomatic actor in relation to the neighbours embroiled in the ongoing conflicts.

This article focuses on those EU experts and practitioners who deal with Ukraine and particularly in the context of the

Russia-Ukraine conflict.

We assessed perceptions according to four themes: 1) international roles of the EU in general; 2) relations between the EU and Ukraine, including the roles of the EU and its member states around the Russia-Ukraine conflict; 3) the role of the EU as a conflict diplomacy actor in Ukraine; and, finally, 4) future outlooks for Ukraine and possible long-term resolutions.

Remarkably, perceptions of how the EU elites perceived the EU as an international actor and how they saw the EU's roles as an actor within Ukraine and in the context of the Russia-Ukraine conflict differed significantly. While some saw the EU primarily as an economic power, others saw the EU mainly as a normative and ethical power. One interviewee stressed an important diplomatic role the EU plays in international negotiations: "...you can find it in the WTO, on bilateral free trade agreements with partner countries". Importantly, we did find one striking similarity -- all interviewees agreed that they see the EU as a "peace-provider", both within the EU and internationally.

When it came to the perceived role of the EU as an actor within

Ukraine and the Ukraine-Russia conflict, some stressed that the EU "supports [Ukraine] in a very consistent and strong manner" and "that the EU is still there supporting their country, paying the [economic] price for it". Significantly, they also shared an opinion that the EU is not an effective mediator. In the eyes of many interviewed in Brussels, the EU was effective in economic sanctions against Russia. Many interviewees insisted on differences between the EU and EU member states as actors. In their view -- and in the case of the Russia-Ukraine conflict -- it is the EU member states who are more or less effective international political diplomacy actors, and not the EU.

This summary is only a small insight into rich and nuanced research of perceptions on EU-Ukraine relations coming from Brussels. But even this brief analysis is indicative of a clear asymmetry in EU elite attitudes and perceptions in terms of how EU representatives perceive the EU as an international actor in general and how they perceive the EU's diplomatic efforts in the specific case of Russia-Ukraine conflict.



*"Many interviewees insisted on differences between the EU and EU member states as actors. In their view -- and in the case of the Russia-Ukraine conflict -- it is the EU member states who are more or less effective international political diplomacy actors, and not the EU."*



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