

Name of the student:	Gayane Gevorgyan
Title of the thesis:	Civil Society Organisations as Agents of Europeanisation in Armenia
Reviewer:	Toni Rodon

1. KNOWLEDGE AND CONNECTION TO THE FIELD

(relevance of the research question, research objective, literature review):

Gayane analyzes a research question that is relevant both from a theoretical and an empirical point of view. Understanding whether democracy promotion efforts work and, in particular, whether EU missions to countries in the area of Russian influence have any effect on people's attitudes still constitutes an open question about which is worth (re)directing our efforts. In this sense, Gayane studies an important topic. The research objective is also clearly stated: to analyze the effect of EU-backed democracy promotion measures in Armenia.

Yet, and despite the reader is never lost and the goal of the research undertaken is clear, the project has two important shortcomings. First, it does not engage as much as one would expect with the literature on democracy promotion efforts. Gayane asserts that she has not been able to find a single paper on the effectiveness of EU democracy promotion actions. However, even if this is true—which is not—the literature on the effect of democracy promotion efforts elsewhere is massive. Most of this literature is missing. In other words, one has the feeling that the Thesis would have benefited from a better connection with the existing theoretical debates. In its current form, we do not exactly know what is the contribution. Along these lines, the existing literature also offers mechanisms for why democracy promotion efforts work/do not work, which could have guided the theoretical debate and subsequent analysis. This discussion is largely missing.

All in all, the Thesis is a nice product and shows the student has worked hard in doing it, but it also falls short in some of the objectives, such as a clear connection with the current theoretical debates.

2. ANALYSIS

(methodology, argument, theoretical backing, appropriate work with sources):

The methodology is the main shortcoming of the Master Thesis. The goal of the Thesis is to study whether EU democracy promotion efforts worked in Armenia, using a particular programme implemented in the country as a case study. A survey and an analysis of a FB group were conducted. The main problem, however, is that only participants in the programme were included in the survey. Therefore, it is consequentially not possible to assess the effectiveness of the programme. There is no variation in the main explanatory factor. This could have been recognized upfront and the student could have redirected her efforts in understanding why participants thought it worked and how they saw the participation in the programme. A clear indication of the bias is shown in the data presented in the Thesis: almost no one that participated in the programme says he/she had a negative image of the EU. My bet is that self-selection in the programme took place, although this constitutes an intuition as a lot of details of how recruitment in this programme took place are not explained.

Similarly, the survey analysis, albeit interesting, is very descriptive. A more sophisticated approach could have been undertaken. Data would still have been biased, but at least we would have some further correlational patterns to summarize the relationships presented in the article.

Finally, the analysis of the FB group represents an interesting an innovative approach, but once again falls short of the expectation. The student could have used the opportunity to analyze the arguments employed by the participants instead of classifying the messages posted in the page by type.

3. CONCLUSIONS

(persuasiveness, link between data and conclusions, achievement of research objectives):

From a methodological point of view, the conclusions are not credible. As I mentioned, it is not possible to know whether the programme was effective if only those that participated in the programme were analyzed. Yet, that does not mean that some of the conclusions are not interesting. The Thesis gives the reader an interesting overview of how EU democracy promotion policies work and it represents an interesting analysis of the particularities of the Armenian case.

4. FORMAL ASPECTS AND LANGUAGE

(appropriate language, adherence to academic standards, citation style, layout):

Language is appropriate, and citations are correct. The graphs are very basic and several mistakes or things to be improved are detected (for instance, the lack of grouping of categories or the jump to conclusions based on small samples that likely made the differences indistinguishable).

5. SUMMARY ASSESSMENT

(strong and weak point of the dissertation, other issues)

The strongest point of the Thesis is the careful description of the rationale behind the EU democracy promotion policies and the case of Armenia. I learned a lot reading this part.

The weakest point is the methodological and empirical part. The student did not show me the design prior to its implementation, which would have likely prevented the problem.

Grade (A-F):	
Date:	Signature:

Grade: C (7-7.5)

classification scheme

Percentile	Prague		Krakow		Leiden		Barcelona	
	91-100 %	8,5%	5	6,7%	8,5-10	5,3%	9-10	5,5 %
A (91-100)	91-100 %	8,5%	5	6,7%	8,5-10	5,3%	9-10	5,5 %
B (81-90)	81-90 %	16,3%	4,5	11,7%	7,5-8,4	16,4%	8-8,9	11,0 %
C (71-80)	71-80 %	16,3%	4	20%	6,5-7,4	36,2%	7-7,9	18,4 %
D (61-70)	61-70 %	24%	3,5	28,3%			6-6,9	35,2 %
E (51-60)	51-60 %	34,9%	3	33,4 %	6-6,4	42,1 %	5-5,9	30,1 %

Assessment criteria:

Excellent (A): 'Outstanding performance with only minor errors';

Very good (B): 'Above the average standard but with some errors';

Good (C): 'Generally sound work but with a number of notable errors';

Satisfactory (D): 'Fair but with significant shortcomings';

Sufficient (E): 'Performance meets the minimum criteria';

Fail: 'Some/considerable more work required before the credit can be awarded'.