

Name of the student:	Olha Kovalska (u175461)
Title of the thesis:	Determinants of Individual Support for European Integration: The Case of Ukraine
Reviewer:	Andrea Noferini

### **1. KNOWLEDGE AND CONNECTION TO THE FIELD**

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

The study deals with individual policy preferences in the case of Ukrainians' attitude towards the EU. It contributes to explore what orientations and aspirations the young citizens of Ukraine have and what factors do determine their attitudes in favor/against the EU.

The research question is particularly relevant for two reasons. Firstly, it focuses on the micro-level (personal attitudes) meanwhile the majority of specialized literature deals with macro-factors. Secondly, it contributes to a wider understanding of factors that boost general pro-EU support and could be useful for testing causal relations in countries from the EU Eastern Neighborhood (such as Georgia and Moldova).

The main research objectives consist in testing the principal factors than can determine pro-EU support in the context of young Ukrainians. The students demonstrate to properly dominate the specialized literature on Enlargement and on EU foreign policy by selecting the most salient independent variables stemming from previous studies on Central-Eastern European countries and by adapting them to the context of EU Neighborhood policy and Ukraine.

### **2. ANALYSIS**

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

The theoretical framework is correctly framed along the traditional neo-institutional divide that distinguishes between rational choice arguments and more sociological approaches. According to the author, adherence to democratic values, as well as personal exposure to the West, can be strong predictors for individual support for the European Union, more than regional cleavages and geographical characteristics (usually the two variables debated both within Ukrainian and western scholarly literature).

The authors decided to focus on youth population of Ukraine, which is seen as the most 'pro-EU' among other age groups. To test the link between individual identity and perceptions of the EU as a foreign policy direction data were gathered through an original survey conducted among the young citizens of Ukraine (N=316). The sample was balanced in order to save representativeness and includes information on gender, regional background, type of employment, socio-demographic parameters as well as the answers to the original questions contained in the questionnaire study. The econometric analysis relies on different logistic regression methods that try to validate the initial hypothesis.

### **3. CONCLUSIONS**

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

Results are convincing and are clearly connected to the research objectives and the theory. The study presents some robust conclusions that are aligned to previous studies and that can pave the way for next researches on the determinants of EU support in countries surrounding the EU. The study confirms indeed that both values-based and utilitarian indicators might work well for predicting people's support for EU membership of their country. Interestingly, those who agree that despite its shortcomings democracy is the best model of governance were four times more likely to support Ukraine's membership in the European Union than those who are less favorable towards

democracy.

Nevertheless – and against the majority of studies that attach great explanatory power to sociodemographic and cultural/geographic characteristics – the original analysis run by the student challenges these explanations showing that among the youth socio-demographic distinctions – and even the line between Ukrainian-speaking ‘pro-EU’ and Russian-speaking ‘anti-EU’ citizens - demonstrate low significance or are more blurred than it was assumed by earlier investigations.

#### **4. FORMAL ASPECTS AND LANGUAGE**

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

Language, style and format are appropriate and correct and there are no mistakes in the bibliography (that is also pertinent and sufficiently extensive). The structure of the entire study is extremely clear and it is close to the level of a standard academic article.

#### **5. SUMMARY ASSESSMENT**

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

This is an excellent MA thesis that focuses on some very prominent issues within EU integration studies (foreign policy, neighborhood policy and Europeanization) in a particularly original format (an original data set on a country that is not usually included in eurobarometers or other EU surveys).

Although methodologically debatable, the choice to focus on the youth as target population is justifiable. As the author herself admits “...probably, youth can be assumed to be a more homogenous social group, comparing to the elder ones”. As the youth is usually identified by the scholars as the core supporter for the EU integration in Ukraine, it is worth to test what characteristic do determine their attitude towards foreign policy preferences. Also, it could be equally interesting to shed more light on what determines a negative attitude towards a country’s EU integration, possibly searching for qualitative explanations from citizens (e.g. via focus groups).

As a minor point, I miss some initial reference to the classical debate within the EU dealing with the concept of ‘permissive consensus’ according to which scholars have often assumed that public opinion towards European integration is passive and shallow, especially over foreign policy issues. Consistent with contemporary findings about the complexity of comparative foreign policy attitudes, this idea is being revisited today.

Grade: A (equal to 9)

Date: July, the 5<sup>th</sup>

Signature: Andrea Noferini

Percentile	Prague		Krakow		Leiden		Barcelona	
	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'.