Abstract

The thesis examines the policy of good neighborliness as one of the conditions for the accession of (Balkan) countries to the EU. As it is an unanchored concept, the thesis should focus on its development and the possibility of its enforcement as a conditionality. It is its enforceability that the EU has at least partially achieved after the enlargement to Croatia in 2013, or by modifying the conditionality in 2018, when the settlement of bilateral disputes became a condition for the admission of the new state. This paper explains this change in conditionality and what led EU officials to make it. The EU has also changed its role in these disputes. It has moved from being an active mediator to a passive position from which it primarily motivates the parties involved in the dispute to resolve it. The EU demonstrates its role as a normative power, which is what it uses conditionality for. The basic premise is that previously the EU has tried to intervene more and resolve such disputes, while at the same time it accepted states that have not resolved them. The Union has learned from this and its policy has changed to less involvement but more emphasis on resolving such disputes. This thesis recalls the fundamental turning point that led to the decision of EU leaders, which was Croatia's accession to the EU despite an unresolved dispute with neighboring Slovenia. This thesis stands on the premise that the EU has found that it is not an effective mediator, which the text points out by recalling some of the EU's past attempts to mediate problems. In an original way, the paper then adds to the element of conditionality the role of Schengen and borders in this space, which is not often associated with conditionality in the literature. The thesis offers an answer to the questions why the EU does not want to integrate bilateral disputes and why it is less involved in their resolution.