

# Regional perspectives on democratisation of Eastern Partnership countries

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**Abstract:** Interest in studies and measurements of democracy and human rights in terms of globalisation and regional cooperation has extended beyond the academic context, reflecting the features of government policies and the development strategies of countries. Countries in a region with higher and closer levels of democracy have more opportunities for political and economic cooperation. From this point of view the assessment of democracy and human rights levels of Eastern Partnership member states such as Armenia, Georgia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Ukraine and Moldova, is of special interest. Academic literature presents a great variety of theories and definitions of democracy. There are also various indices covering different aspects of democracy. Some of them emphasise the formal or institutional aspects of democracy, whereas others define its procedural features. Other indices measure the implementation of the level of declared rights and even consider democracy in terms of economic development. Thus, to measure and present the comparative analysis of democracy and human rights levels of Eastern Partnership countries, the article first provides the selection and description of democracy indices (proceeding from the differences in covering aspects of democracy). Then, based on the selected indices, a new aggregated index of democracy is calculated through the method for constructing composite indices for providing a multi-sided analysis of democracy and human rights of Eastern Partnership countries. Finally, drawing on the obtained and calculated data, I rank Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine by democracy levels, revealing regional perspectives on human rights and democratisation.

**Key words:** democracy; measurement; Eastern Partnership; democracy indices; aggregated democracy index

## 1 Introduction

The Eastern Partnership (EaP) was launched in 2009 to encourage the closer cooperation of Armenia, Georgia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Ukraine and Moldova with the European Union (EU). It mainly implies deeper integration into the EU's political and socio-economic systems.

In 2014, Moldova, Georgia and Ukraine officially ratified both economic and political chapters of the Association Agreement with the EU, strengthening the perspectives for the development of the European

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integration vector.<sup>1</sup> In contrast, Armenia declared its willingness to join the Eurasian Customs Union, and later a new integration project, the Eurasian Economic Union, initiated by Russia, Kazakhstan and Belarus. Thus, the Presidents of Russia, Kazakhstan and Belarus signed the Treaty on the Establishment of the Eurasian Economic Union on 29 May 2014,<sup>2</sup> and Armenia signed the Treaty on 10 October 2014.<sup>3</sup> After these states had ratified it, the agreement entered into force on 1 January 2015.

In this regard, the Eurasian and European cooperation was revised in a new format with Armenia, while Belarus developed a concrete structure for economic cooperation. As far as Azerbaijan is concerned, the country has neither signed the Association Agreement nor joined the Eurasian Economic Union.

Taking into account the information provided above, the EaP countries were involved in diverse international and regional integration processes and different development projects, including economic and political cooperation.

In this sense, the research is aimed at disclosing not only individual but also general democratic developments in conditions of multidirectional trends.

The main issues and questions examined in this research are

- (i) whether the EaP countries, with diverse integration directions, have closely-related or largely differing democracy levels;
- (ii) whether the chosen integration vectors differently affect the democracy levels;
- (iii) what the regional perspectives on the issue of democratisation of these countries are.

Quantitative and qualitative research methods are used to study the democracy levels of the countries discussed. A comparative analysis of the democracy levels and the human rights norms of each country is done by way of studying their annual reports on human rights and democracy, and also by analysing the democracy indices of renowned international organisations. Therefore, on the one hand, I use well-known and already computed indices of democracy; on the other hand, I do my own calculations based on the methodology of some of those indices in order to obtain more recent data. Finally, I use the method for constructing composite indices (Mazziotta Pareto 2013) to create a new aggregate and comprehensive index of democracy based on well-known indices that cover various aspects and components of democracy.

1 European Commission MEMO on the EU's Association Agreements with Georgia, the Republic of Moldova and Ukraine, Brussels, Belgium, 23 June 2014, available at [http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release\\_MEMO-14-430\\_en.htm](http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release_MEMO-14-430_en.htm) (last visited 20 March 2018).

2 Treaty on the Eurasian Economic Union, ratified on 29 May 2014 in Astana, Kazakhstan, available at [https://docs.eaeunion.org/docs/ru-ru/0013611/itia\\_05062014\\_doc.pdf](https://docs.eaeunion.org/docs/ru-ru/0013611/itia_05062014_doc.pdf) (last visited 21 March 2018).

3 Treaty of Accession of the Republic of Armenia to the Treaty on the Eurasian Economic Union of 29 May 2014, signed on 10 October 2014, Minsk, Belarus.

## 2 Indices of democracy

Different indices cover various aspects of democracy within the frameworks of modern political science. Some scholars suggest indices that emphasise the formal or institutional aspects of democracy (for instance, Phillip Cutright's 'Index of Political Development'), while others (Kenneth Bollen, Robert Dahl and Tatu Vanhanen) specify their procedural features. Furthermore, it is important to mention that some indices measure the level of the implementation of declared rights ('Freedom in the World' of Freedom House). Other studies are ground on the close correlation of democracy with economic development (Rostow 1960; Lipset 1994; Przeworski et al 2000). Thus, within the framework of the method for constructing composite indices, I select the individual indicators of the research based on the above-mentioned theoretical approaches. To provide a multi-sided analysis of democracy and human rights of EaP countries, the indices that cover these aspects are as follows:

### 2.1 Cutright's 'Index of Political Development'

Cutright (1963) developed an 'Index of Political Development' based on the formation of executive and legislative bodies according to the principles of democracy. Cutright states that politically-developed nations have more complex national political structures than less developed countries. The rating scale of Cutright's Index (Cutright 1963: 256) comprises 0-3 points, in which the highest score means the highest level of development.

During the data normalisation in the research calculations, the highest accepted overall value (maximum) is 3, whereas the lowest value (minimum) is 0.

*Table 1: Measuring parameters of Cutright's 'Index of Political Development'*

Points	Measuring Parameters
	Legislative branch of government
2	The lower or the only chamber of parliament has representatives of two or more political parties and the minority party or parties have at least 30 per cent of all seats.
1	Members of Parliament are the representatives of one or more political parties, where the '30 per cent rule' is violated.
0	No parliament existed or the above-mentioned types of parliament were abolished or discarded by the executive power. Parliaments, whose members are not representatives of political parties and are not self-governing bodies (mock parliaments of colonial governments).
	Executive branch of government
1	The nation is ruled by a chief executive, who is in office by virtue of direct vote in an open election on the basis of a multi-party competition, while conditions necessary to receive 2 points on the legislative branch are supported.

0,5	The executive is selected neither by virtue of his hereditary status nor by criteria necessary to attain 1 point on the executive branch (on the basis of a multi-party competition where the minority party or parties have at least 30 per cent of all seats).
0	The nation is governed by a hereditary ruler.

Cutright's criteria were criticised for their formalism since the existence of democratic institutions not always indicates the effectiveness of their activity. Experts subsequently turned to the study of procedural aspects of the political development of countries, that is, to the analysis of the electoral process and its conditions. This shift was reflected in Vanhanen's 'Index of Democracy'.

## 2.2 Vanhanen's 'Index of Democracy'

Tatu Vanhanen (1997; 2000; 2003) developed and designed his index based on Dahl's concept (Dahl 1971). Dahl particularly examined two theoretical dimensions of democratisation, namely, the public contestation and the right to participate. Vanhanen called these dimensions 'competition' (C) and 'participation' (P): transforming them into two quantitative indicators. Competition is the proportion of votes won by smaller parties in parliamentary and/or presidential elections to indicate the degree of competition in a given political system. This figure is calculated by way of subtracting from the total (100 per cent) percentage of votes won by the largest political party.

Participation is the percentage of the population that actually voted in the elections. It should be noted that this percentage is calculated from the total population and not from the adult or enfranchised population. It is essential to distinguish between these two variables as they represent different dimensions of democratisation.

Therefore, an acceptable assumption would be that only the combination of these two suggests the most realistic and effective indicator of democratisation.

$C = 100 - \text{largest political party (\%)}$

$P = (\text{population voted in the elections} / \text{total population}) \times 100$

**Democracy Index** =  $C * P / 100$

These indicators were used by Vanhanen (2000) to categorise political systems as democratic, semi-democratic or non-democratic. A democracy index scoring 5 and more defines a democratic system, whereas a democracy index scoring from 2 to 5 is a semi-democratic system. Overall, the lower scores mean that a political system is non-democratic.

During the data standardisation the highest accepted value (maximum) is 50 and the lowest value (minimum) is 0.<sup>4</sup>

4 The minimum and maximum values were based on Vanhanen's studies (Vanhanen (2002), while as the minimums and maximums were regarded as the average value of the three highest and lowest values of the countries surveyed. The maximum recorded value is 50 and the minimum 0.

It is worth mentioning that Vanhanen's Index of Democracy was criticised by some scholars as countries with compulsory voting systems received higher scores.

### 2.3 'Freedom in the World' of Freedom House

'Freedom in the World' by Freedom House (2016b; 2018a; 2018b) measures the levels of political rights and civil liberties. The 2018 index of 'Freedom in the World' includes the period from 1 January 1 to 31 December 2017. These calculations were based on developments occurring in 195 countries and 14 selected territories. Researchers and report evaluators use diverse sources of information, such as news topics, academic researches, analytical reports, as well as reports of non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and experts. The political rights indicator is based on a 10-point questionnaire and grouped into three subcategories, namely, electoral process (three questions); political pluralism and participation (four questions); and functioning of the government (three questions).

The civil liberties' questionnaire comprises 15 points, grouped into four sub-categories, namely, freedom of expression and belief (four questions); association and organisational rights (three questions); rule of law (four questions); and personal autonomy and individual rights (four questions). Scores are awarded to each of these questions on a scale of 0-4. The highest score that can be awarded to the political rights checklist is 40. The highest score that can be awarded to the civil liberties checklist is 60. The raw points are converted into a 1-7 point rating scale, where 1 point denotes the highest freedom indicator and, correspondingly, 7 points the lowest. These ratings, which are calculated based on the methodological process described above, determine whether or not a country is classified as free (1-2,5 points), partly free (3-5 points) or not free (5,5-7 points) by the use of survey (Freedom House 2016b). In this research, the standardised data is scaled as a maximum value of 1 point and a minimum value of 7 points.

The main criticism of Freedom in the World is that there is a certain degree of subjectivity and that it places much emphasis on individual rights and personal freedoms.

### 2.4 'Index of Economic Freedom'

The Heritage Foundation brings out the 'Index of Economic Freedom' (IEF) in partnership with the *Wall Street Journal*, where the rating system is 0-100 points. Here, 100 points indicate the highest level of Economic Freedom and 0 points the lowest level. Countries that scored below 50 are 'repressed'; those that scored 50-59,9 are considered 'mostly unfree' or 'moderately free'; those with a score of 60-69,9 are classified as 'mostly free' (70-79); and, finally, a designation of 'free' scores 80 or above. This scoring system is based on 12 specific categories (Heritage Foundation & Wall Street Journal 2018: 453-466). These categories are property rights; judicial effectiveness; government integrity; tax burden; government spending; fiscal health; business freedom; labour freedom; monetary freedom; trade freedom; investment freedom; and Financial freedom.

The calculations conducted in this work are based on the 2018 Index of Economic Freedom, since it involves indicators measured during the

period from 1 July 2016 to 30 June 2017. In general, IEF denotes the guarantee of the construction of legislative body and property rights and is also considered as one of the most important indicators of democracy. For this reason, the index is included in the model as a separate variable. In this model, the value of 100 points (maximum) is estimated as the highest indicator, whereas 0 points (minimum) is the lowest indicator of the rating scale. During the data standardisation analysis, the highest accepted value (maximum) is 100 and the lowest (minimum) is 0.

According to some experts, IEF focuses mainly on market development, which covers only one element of development.

### 3 Assessment and comparative analysis of democracy and human rights in countries of the Eastern Partnership

After the collapse of the Soviet Union, new independent countries were involved in the transformation processes, ranging from totalitarian to democratic regimes. The democratisation of post-Soviet Union countries was accompanied by the involvement of these countries in various projects, and membership of and cooperation with international organisations. Democratic developments in the post-Soviet area were not proportionate to and conditioned by nations' systems of values, religion and cultural differences, historical features and other factors.

One such democratic development that occurred in Armenia, Georgia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Ukraine and Moldova was cooperation with the EU, within the ambit of the Eastern Partnership. However, the differences in developments in the sphere of democracy and human rights of these countries were not eradicated. Moreover, the recent deepening of integrating in various vectors is likely to further exacerbate differences in the levels of democracy and human rights in these countries.

In order to assess the levels of democracy and human rights of EaP countries, the calculations and analyses of democracy indices described above are set out as follows:

*Table 2: Cutright's 'Index of Political Development' of EaP countries<sup>5</sup>*

Country	Legislative branch	Executive branch	Overall score
Moldova	2	1	3
Armenia	2	1	3
Georgia	1	0.5	1.5
Ukraine	1	0.5	1.5
Azerbaijan	1	0.5	1.5
Belarus	1	0.5	1.5

Taking into account the calculated data stated above (Table 1, Table 2), Armenia scores 2 points for the legislative branch of government and

5 Source: calculations by the author on the methodology of Cutright's Index of Political Development (see Table 1).

1 point for the executive branch of government. Thus, after the 2017 parliamentary elections, the majority of allotted 105 seats in parliament went to the Republican Party of Armenia (58 seats). Other parties, the Tsarukyan Alliance, the YELK Alliance and the Armenian Revolutionary Federation parties were allotted 31, 9 and 7 seats respectively (OSCE/ODIHR 2017a: 27). The Republican Party of Armenia and the Armenian Revolutionary Federation formed a governing coalition.

Together with the data of the 2016 parliamentary elections of Georgia, the country scores 1 point for the legislative branch of government and 0,5 points for the executive branch of government. The reason for this is that the Georgian Dream-Democratic Georgia coalition won 115 of the 150 parliamentary seats, while the remaining 35 places (23,3 per cent of all seats) went to the United National Movement Party (with 27 seats); the Alliance of Patriots of Georgia, Industrials, Our Fatherland (with 1 seat) and 1 seat was won by an independent candidate (OSCE/ODIHR 2017b: 34-35). It is important to note that previous parliamentary elections held in 2012 were extraordinary because of the change in power in Georgia. This had been the first peaceful change accompanied by the preservation of democratic norms and constitutional procedures since its independence. In the results of the 2016 parliamentary elections, the Georgian Dream strengthened its position in parliament by achieving a constitutional majority in the highest legislative body.

According to the independent international NGO European Platform for Democratic Elections, many instances of political imprisonment, violations of freedom of assembly and other political rights took place in the 2015 parliamentary elections in Azerbaijan. Moreover, the elections were accompanied by limitations such as the absence of televised debates and total control over it (European Platform for Democratic Elections 2014; Freedom House 2016a; Hunanyan 2016: 84-85). As a result, members of the ruling New Azerbaijan Party occupy 71 of the 125 seats in Milli Mejlis; 42 are non-partisan; and the remaining 12 seats are distributed among 10 parties (the minority parties have 9,6 per cent) (European Forum for Democracy and Solidarity 2015; OSCE/ODIHR 2015a). Most importantly, the majority of independent members and smaller parties are under the control of the government (Guliyev 2015: 2-3). Thus, Azerbaijan scores 1 point for the legislative branch of government and 0,5 points for the executive branch of government, since the '30 per cent rule' has been violated (see Table 1, Table 2).

An unusual situation and distribution of seats occurred in the Parliament of the Republic of Belarus. While 94 of the 110 seats went to non-party members, the remaining 16 seats were distributed among five parties. As in the case of Azerbaijan, in Belarus the President also controls the majority of independent and non-independent Members of Parliament. The opposition parties actively participated in the elections. However, in reality they did not stand a chance of being elected or influencing the political agenda in Belarus (OSCE/ODIHR 2016: 33-35). Taking these factors into account, Belarus also scores 1 point for the legislative branch of government and 0,5 points for the executive branch of government, as the '30 per cent rule' was not supported (see Table 1, Table 2).

The 26 October parliamentary elections in Ukraine were extremely tense after the regime change in 2014. In this case, 29 political parties and blocs took part in the elections, but only 11 passed the 5 per cent

threshold. According to the election results, out of the 500 seats, the Petro Poroshenko Bloc Party received 132; the People's Front Political Party 82; the Samopomich Political Party 33; the Opposition Bloc 29; the Radical Party of Oleh Lyashko 22; and the Batkivshchyna All-Ukrainian Union Political Party 19. Another five parties received 10 seats with 96 non-parties, and there were two vacancies (OSCE/ODIHR 2014a: 35-36; Укрдержреєстр 2015; Aleksanyan 2016: 223-224). In order to make valid calculations, it is important to note that the Petro Poroshenko Bloc and the People's Front Political Party formed a government coalition, while the Samopomich moved to the opposition. Therefore, the minority parties in the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine have 25 per cent, thus not conforming to Cutright's '30 per cent rule'. Accordingly, Ukraine scores 1 point for the legislative branch of government and 0,5 points for the executive branch of government, since the minority parties occupy more than 30 per cent of all seats in parliament (see Table 1, Table 2).

In Moldova, the last parliamentary elections were held on 30 November 2014. According to the OSCE /ODIHR reports, this election was well organised and a wide choice of political alternatives was provided. Here, the main rivalry was between two parties, namely, supporters of the Customs Union Integration, represented by the Socialist Party (25 seats) and the Communist Party (21 seats), and defenders of the ruling European Integration Coalition including the Liberal Democratic Party (23 seats), the Liberal Party (13 seats) and the Democratic Party of Moldova (19 seats). The Socialist Party, participating in the elections for the first time, unpredictably received 25 out of a total of 110 seats and was the winner of the elections (OSCE/ODIHR 2014b; Hunanyan 2016: 254-255). Although the Democratic Party of Moldova together with the Liberal Party and several ex-Communist members and ex-Liberal-Democrats formed the parliamentary majority, the '30 per cent rule' continued to be supported, according to Cutright's methodology (see Table 1, Table 2). In this way, 2 points for the legislative branch of government and 1 point for the executive branch of government were scored.

In order to evaluate the level of democracy of the EaP countries, I applied Vanhanen's Index of Democracy. In particular, I calculated the levels of competition and electoral participation in accordance with Vanhanen's methodology.

The calculations of EaP countries by Vanhanen's Index of Democracy are as follows:

ARMENIA, 2017 parliamentary elections (OSCE/ODIHR 2017a: 27)

$C = 100\% - 55.3\% = 44.7\%$

$P = (1,575,786 / 2,924,816) \times 100 = 53.9\%$

$Democracy\ Index /_{ARMENIA} = (44.7 \times 53.9) / 100 = 24.1$

GEORGIA, 2016 parliamentary elections (OSCE/ODIHR 2017b: 34-35)

$C = 100 - 48.7\% = 51.3\%$

$P = (1,825,054 / 3,719,300) \times 100 = 49.1\%$

$Democracy\ Index /_{GEORGIA} = (51.3 \times 49.1) / 100 = 25.2$



**AZERBAIJAN**<sup>6\*</sup>: 2015 parliamentary elections (European Forum for Democracy and Solidarity 2015)

$C = 100\% - 56.8\% = 43.2\%$

$P = (2,897,188 / 9,649,341) \times 100 = 30\%$

$Democracy\ Index /_{AZERBAIJAN} = (43.2 \times 30) / 100 = 13$

**BELARUS**: 2016 parliamentary elections<sup>7\*\*</sup> (OSCE/ODIHR 2016: 33-35)

$C = 100\% - 85\% = 15\%$

$P = (5,211,871 / 9,501,534) \times 100 = 54.9\%$

$Democracy\ Index /_{BELARUS} = (15 \times 54.9) / 100 = 8.2$

**UKRAINE**: 2014 parliamentary elections (OSCE/ODIHR 2014a: 35-36)

$C = 100\% - 22.14\% = 77.9\%$

$P = (16,052,228 / 45,362,900) \times 100 = 35.5\%$

$Democracy\ Index /_{UKRAINE} = (77.9 \times 35.5) / 100 = 27.7$

**MOLDOVA**: 2014 parliamentary elections (OSCE/ODIHR 2015b: 28)

$C = 100\% - 20.5\% = 79.5\%$

$P = (1,649,402 / 3,556,397) \times 100 = 46.4\%$

$Democracy\ Index /_{MOLDOVA} = (77.9 \times 46.4) / 100 = 36.1$

**Table 3: Vanhanen's 'Index of Democracy' of EaP countries<sup>8</sup>**

Country	Competition (C)	Participation (P)	Democracy Index
Moldova	79.5	46.4	36.1
Ukraine	77.9	35.5	27.7
Georgia	51.3	49.1	25.2
Armenia	44.7	53.9	24.1
Azerbaijan	43.2	30	13
Belarus	15	54.9	8.2

As is shown in Table 3, the lowest democracy indices are Belarus and Azerbaijan, while Moldova is the highest, which is conditioned with the highest value of competition. Belarus and Armenia reveal the best results of political participation, while Azerbaijan has the lowest indicator. An interesting and contradictory situation developed in Belarus. On the one hand, it has the highest result for participation because of a high turnout (74,7 per cent) in the parliamentary elections. On the other hand, Belarus has the lowest value for competition due to the fact that 94 out of 110 Members of Parliament are independents and totally controlled by the President.

6 Calculations for Azerbaijan were conducted based on the distribution of parliamentary seats due to the absence of a proportional system.

7 Calculations for Belarus were conducted taking into account the fact that 85% of the MPs are independents controlled by the President.

8 Source: calculations by the author on the methodology of Cutright's Index of Political Development (see Table 1).

**Table 4: Freedom in the World, EaP countries (as of 2017)**

Country	Political rights	Civil liberties	Overall score	Category
Georgia	3	3	3	Partly Free
Ukraine	3	3	3	Partly Free
Moldova	3	3	3	Partly Free
Armenia	5	4	4.5	Partly Free
Belarus	6	6	6	Not Free
Azerbaijan	7	6	6.5	Not Free

According to the Freedom House (2018a; 2018b) report (the 2018 report includes events of 2017), among countries studied, the best political rights and civil liberties indicators recorded Georgia (3); Moldova (3); and Ukraine (3). Hence, these countries are classified as ‘partly free’ and approaching the category of ‘free’ (see Table 4).

Although Armenia also counts among the ‘partly-free’ states, scoring 5 and 4 points in the categories of political rights and civil liberties respectively, it trails behind Central Asian and European countries. Meanwhile, EAEU member state evaluations reveal that Armenia and Kyrgyz Republic (5), the remaining states (Belarus (6), Russia (6) and Kazakhstan (5.5)), are also among ‘not-free’ countries (Freedom House 2018a; 2018b). According to Human Rights Watch, Belarus is the only country in Europe where capital punishment, false charges and arbitrary arrests, as well as the oppression of human rights defenders and civic activists, continue to take place (Human Rights Watch 2018).

Azerbaijan (6.5) attained the worst results in respect of the political rights and civil liberties indicators, also categorising the country as ‘not free’. Experts of Freedom House continuously report an increased clamp-down on dissent, including the arrest of human rights defenders and journalists, as well as an increase in the number of political prisoners, repressions and various other restrictions on rights. Azerbaijan managed to avoid criticism by the democratic world because of its energy resources and cooperation in security issues (Freedom House 2015; 2016a; 2017).

**Table 5: Index of Economic Freedom, EaP countries (2018 index involving period from 1 July 2016 to 30 June 2017)**

Country	IEF	Category
Georgia	76.2	mostly free
Armenia	68.7	moderately free
Azerbaijan	64.3	moderately free
Belarus	58.1	mostly unfree
Moldova	57.4	mostly unfree
Ukraine	51.9	mostly unfree

The next index included in the research is the Index of Economic Freedom (IEF). In general, it should be mentioned that IEF is an important index for measuring democracy. A comparative analysis of the (IEF) reveals that the highest index is recorded in Georgia. Georgia (76,2) occupies the ninth position; Armenia (68,7) holds the twentieth position; while Ukraine (46,8) occupies the last place among European 44 states and is defined as ‘mostly unfree’. Moldova (57,4) and Belarus (58,1) are also among the last places in the region and are considered as ‘mostly unfree’ economies. Azerbaijan (64,3) is in the third place among the observed countries (Heritage Foundation & *Wall Street Journal* 2018: 70).

As mentioned before, Ukraine has the lowest indicator in IEF. The political events of previous years, particularly the Russian-Ukrainian tensions and military actions in Donbas and Lugansk, considerably deepened the economic crisis, with the result that Ukraine remains the region’s least economically-free economy. Inefficient management, political instability, the high level of corruption and a shadow economy are obstacles hampering the country’s development (Heritage Foundation & *Wall Street Journal* 2018: 46; Aleksanyan 2017: 264-265). Many organisations in Ukraine complain about high taxes and corruption (Heritage Foundation & *Wall Street Journal* (2016: 39). At the same time, because of attempts at avoiding high taxes, a shadow economy has developed which, according to International Monetary Fund (IMF) researches, is the highest in the world and composes approximately 50 per cent of gross domestic product (GDP) (The Economist 2014).

In order to have a better understanding of democratisation in EaP countries, and considering the aggregated democracy indices, I also made another calculation. In particular, I normalised (standardised) all the above-mentioned scores and converted them to a 0-10 scale, where high scores denote high democratic development. This step also allows one to make comparisons between spheres.

All variables are normalised by the following formula:

$$X' = \frac{x_i - \min\{x_i\}}{\max\{x_i\} - \min\{x_i\}} \times 10$$

$\min\{x_i\}$  and  $\max\{x_i\}$  are the lowest and highest values, the variable  $x$  can attain the magnitude of descriptive indicator respectively.

The Aggregate Democracy Index is the weighted average of all composite indices. Although the indices of Cutright and Vanhanen reveal various sides of democracy, I took into account the fact that these variables partly coincide as calculations for competition (Vanhanen’s sub-index) and legislative branch (Cutright’s sub-index) were made according to parliamentary votes. To address this, the weight of Cutright and Vanhanen’s indices were lowered by doubling the weights of the civil liberties and political rights indicators and IEF.

Thus, the final calculations for the aggregated democracy index are as follows:

$$\text{Agg Dem index} = (\text{Cutright's Index} + \text{Vanhanen's Index} + 2 * \text{Civ.Lib\& Pol.R.} + 2 * \text{IEF}) / 6$$

**Table 6: The standardised values of democracy indices and overall scores for EaP countries, 2017 (0-10)**<sup>9</sup>

Country	Cutright's Index	Vanhanen's Index	Civ Lib & Polit R	IEF	Aggregated Democracy Index
Moldova	10	7.2	6.7	5.7	7.0
Georgia	5	5	6.7	7.6	6.4
Armenia	10	4.8	4.2	6.9	6.2
Ukraine	5	5.5	6.7	5.2	5.7
Azerbaijan	5	2.6	0.8	6.4	3.7
Belarus	5	1.6	1.6	5.8	3.6

According to calculated data, Moldova has the highest aggregated democracy index (7), followed by Georgia (6,4) and Armenia (6,2). Ukraine is in the fourth place and scored 5,7 points, while Azerbaijan and Belarus are in the last places with 3,7 and 3,6 points respectively. According to the standardised data of Cutright's Index, Moldova and Armenia have more developed legislative and executive branches of government. Political participation and competition, civil liberties and political rights are the weakest sides of democracy in Azerbaijan. The development of the legislative and executive branches of government are imperfect in Azerbaijan and Belarus. Georgia also shows gaps in the sphere due to the fact that all decisions can easily be made only by one party in parliament as it has a constitutional majority. These three countries, together with Ukraine, do not meet the essential criteria of political development as the minority party or parties do not occupy at least 30 per cent of the seats in parliament. Ukraine has the lowest results in the sphere of economic freedom. However, Ukraine has the highest values in political rights and civil liberties together with Georgia and Moldova.

#### 4 Conclusion

In conclusion, Moldova, Georgia and Armenia have comparable high scores in levels of democracy and human rights. As is known, Moldova and Georgia joined the Association Agreement and expressed their willingness to develop a European integration vector. The estimations prove that these two countries can collaborate more closely and productively, and their regional perspectives of development are higher. Closer levels of development in the spheres of democracy, human rights, political stability, political systems formation and civil society will provide more productive regional cooperation. At the same time, Ukraine's low values in the area of economic freedom may cause obstacles for regional

<sup>9</sup> Source: calculations by the author.

economic cooperation and joint projects. Belarus and Azerbaijan also have close, almost equal (low) levels of Aggregate Democracy Index, but these are relatively different from the democracy levels of the other countries studied. This equality between Belarus and Azerbaijan is due largely to similarities in the political sphere. They share proportionate issues in the areas of violation of human rights and fundamental freedoms, as well as political pressures and restrictions.

With regard to Armenia, as mentioned, the country occupies a comparatively higher position together with Georgia and Moldova. Despite the fact that Armenia chose the Eurasian integration vector, this does not exclude Armenia's possible productive cooperation with regional countries of European integration as they have similar development levels as far as democracy is concerned. The best cooperation in the sphere of economy is foreseeable in the case of Georgia, due to its high and close Indices of Economic Freedom.

Taking into account the highest results of Moldova, Georgia and Ukraine in Vanhanen's Index and Freedom in the World indicators, it can be stated that the chosen vector of European integration positively affects the variables of democracy of these countries.

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