

15 Years of the Eastern Partnership Initiative: A Bibliometric Reflection

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Introduction

After the collapse of the Soviet Union, the European Union (EU) played a key role in promoting regional cooperation among former Soviet states. The EU focused on strengthening relations both with these post-Soviet countries and among them (Delcour, 2011). The EU extended its borders to several Eastern countries with historically weaker economic ties. These countries are characterized by significant institutional and structural differences. The European Union's regional cooperation policy framework aimed at enhancing prosperity, stability, and security, to create a 'ring of friends' and extend the EU's influence to its neighboring regions (Petraikos et al., 2015). This initiative led to the creation of the Eastern Partnership (EaP) on May 7, 2009, which is a specific Eastern dimension of the European Neighbourhood Policy. The creation of the EaP was part of the EU's broader strategy to strengthen ties with six Eastern European countries: Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, Moldova, and Ukraine (Korosteleva, 2011). The initiative aims to strengthen and deepen political, economic, and scientific relations between the EU, its Member States, and partner countries while supporting sustainable reform processes across the Eastern Partnership region (Eastern Partnership, 2009).

The European Union's integration policy has spurred extensive scholarly research, particularly focusing on the EU's pivotal role as a global actor (Delcour, 2011). Academic discussions have increasingly emphasized the EU's engagement with its Eastern neighbors through the Eastern Partnership initiative. 2024 marks the 15th anniversary of the Eastern Partnership initiative. It is an

opportune moment to reflect on the journey taken and evaluate the results achieved. There are various ways to do this, including bibliometric analysis. In this poster, we present the 15-year journey of the EaP based on the data collected from Web of Science. We aim to analyse the distribution of publication dynamics over these years, the involvement of the six-member countries in academic publications, and the relevant academic fields represented in these works. This will enable to picture of the bibliometric reflection of EaP since 2009.

Data and methodology

The data was collected from the Web of Science (WOS) international scientific database for the years 2009–2024. The search was conducted using the terms 'Eastern Partnership' and 'EaP' across all fields, returning 353 items. After data cleaning, the final result was 317 items, which refer directly to the EaP. The data was processed and illustrated in graphs to highlight publication dynamics over the years and the distribution across the six EaP countries and EU member states. The academic fields and disciplines of the publications were categorized according to Glänzel and Schubert's classification (Glänzel & Schubert, 2003). We used the full counting method, assigning full value to publications that covered all specified areas and countries simultaneously.

Results

The study found that 317 publications on the Eastern Partnership (EaP) were indexed in the WOS database between 2009 and 2024. The top 3 document types are Articles (249),

Book Chapters (70), and Conference Proceedings (48). The highest number of publications was recorded in 2014 and 2016. In the following years, the number of publications declined. However, since 2021, the number of publications has steadily increased and continues to rise through 2024 (Fig. 1).



Figure 1. Number of publications in WOS on EaP from 2009 to 2024.

When analysing the distribution of publications by country, we divided them into two main groups: EU member countries (Fig. 2) and EaP countries (Fig. 3). For the former, we observe the following pattern:

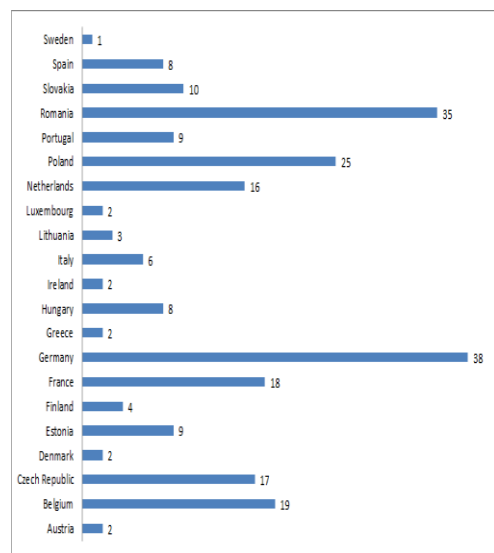


Figure 2. The number of articles involving researchers from EU countries.

And for the latter, there is the following picture:

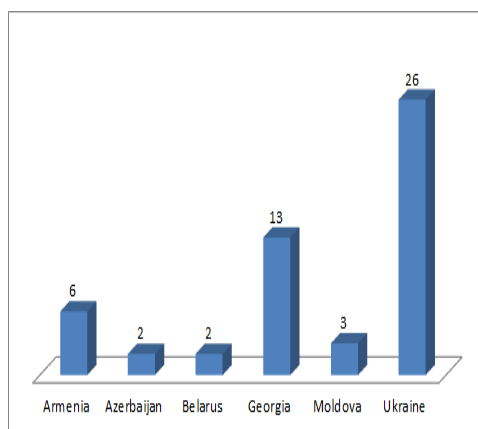


Figure 3. The number of articles involving researchers from EaP countries.

It is important to note that since June 2021, Belarus has suspended its participation in the EaP. However, the EU continues to maintain cooperation with Belarusian civil society.

When turning to the countries that are neither from the EU nor from EaP, the top 3 countries with the most publications are the UK¹ (35), Russia (19), and the US (15).

The results shown in Fig. 4 indicate that publications have been distributed across various fields as follows: the highest number of publications belongs to Social Science II (226) and Social Science I (119). The next two most popular fields—Arts and Humanities (10) and Multidisciplinary Sciences (8)—are far behind. Other fields have even fewer cases or none at all:

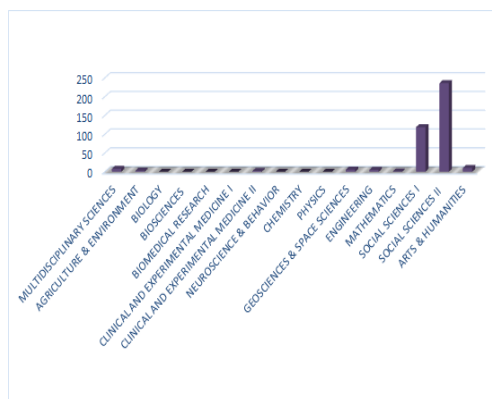


Figure 4. Number of publications categorized by Glänzel and Schubert classification.

¹UK left EU on February 1, 2020.

Conclusion

The bibliometric analysis of the EaP's 15-year journey reveals a dynamic and evolving academic interest in this initiative. The involvement of various countries, including significant contributions from EU member states and other non-EU countries, demonstrates the global relevance of the EaP. This growing scholarly attention serves as an important reminder of the EaP's significance for both regional stability and deeper integration into European structures.

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