

# Preface

Interest in Europe's global role has increased sharply in recent years, both among policy-makers and academics. This book aims to contribute to the debate and the literature, focusing on those external policies where the European Union is potentially and *prima facie* a powerful actor. More specifically, the contributions examine the Union's international role in 'first pillar' domains such as trade, development, humanitarian aid, environment, energy, competition, social issues, and asylum and migration. Europe's influence in the 'near abroad' by means of its enlargement and neighbourhood policies is also considered.

The EU is arguably an important international actor in these 'civilian' domains. But the extent of the Union's power in these areas, as well as Europe's successfulness as regards reaching the objectives that are pursued through these external policies, remain to be examined. This book aims to take a step in this direction by systematically analysing the EU's means of power as well as its pursued goals. This should also enable a critical and well-founded evaluation of the Union's role on the international scene.

Another objective of the book at hand is to present a comprehensive overview of the EU's external relations, paying particular attention to those areas that are often overlooked in textbooks on EU foreign policy, but which nevertheless form vital dimensions of the Union's putative 'civilian power' image. From this perspective, the means-end distinction throughout the chapters creates a pragmatic toolkit with which to structure an increasingly complex area of research. Hopefully, the publication will thus prove useful reading for all students and scholars who are interested in Europe's global role.

The idea behind this book originated from the Centre for EU Studies, which was established within the Department of Political Science at Ghent University (Belgium) in 2005.

One main area of research at the Centre is the 'soft' dimension of Europe's international policies. This publication, which also involves scholars from other universities, is one of the first outcomes of this new line of research. A special note of thanks goes to Prof. Hendrik Vos, Director of the Centre for EU Studies, for his encouragement during this research project.

I also owe special thanks to an external reviewer commissioned by Ashgate, and to Kirstin Howgate, Margaret Younger and Pauline Beavers for their support and efficient handling of the manuscript. In addition, I would like to thank Cecilia Fitch for the careful language editing and the students on my Master's degree in European External Policies course for their critical and constructive comments. Above all, I am very grateful to the contributors for their diligence in meeting the tough deadlines and, more importantly, for their motivating enthusiasm for this project. I am confident that this book has laid the foundations for further

political science research on Europe's global role at the Centre for EU Studies in the years to come.

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