

Abstract

Since its inclusion in the Copenhagen criteria, the protection of minority rights has been an important political condition set by the European Union (EU) for candidate states. This thesis examines the effectiveness of EU conditionality on the Baltic States of Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania to change their ethnic policies and its affect on the Russian-speaking minority of the states. The main argument of this thesis is that the European accession process has promoted minority rights in the three Baltic states, following which the Russian-speaking minority in the Baltic States have been partially integrated. However, the domestic opposition and the potential threat from Russia hindered EU's efforts to influence outcomes of the domestic policies.