

Eastern Partnership – Questions and Answers

1. Why is the EU proposing the Eastern Partnership?

Because the time is ripe to step up our relations with our Eastern neighbours.

Events in the countries in Eastern Europe and in the Southern Caucasus affect the EU. Successive EU enlargements have brought these countries closer to the EU and their security, stability and prosperity increasingly impacts on the EU's.

All these countries, to varying degrees, are implementing political, social and economic reforms, and have stated their wish to come closer to the EU.

The conflict in Georgia in August 2008 underlined the vulnerability of these countries.

The policy towards these countries has to be strong, proactive and unequivocal: with the Eastern Partnership the EU offers its Eastern partners concrete, far-reaching support for democratic and market-oriented reforms and thus contribute to the their political and economic stability.

2. Which countries does the Eastern Partnership address?

Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine. The level of Belarus' participation in the EP will depend on the overall development of EU-Belarus relations.

3. Why do you propose to put such different countries in one basket?

The Eastern partners do not have identical objectives in their relationship with the EU but all of them, to varying degrees, are carrying out political, social and economic reforms. At the same time, all of them seek to intensify their relations with the EU.

The Eastern Partnership is the reply of the EU to these challenges and aspirations as the EU has a vital interest in seeing further economic development, greater democratic governance and increased stability in the Eastern neighbourhood. Based on the progress made in the European Neighbourhood Policy, the Eastern

Partnership offers both bilateral and multilateral measures for enhanced cooperation. The partner countries will come closer to the EU depending on their individual capabilities and timeframe and together Eastern partners will cooperate more on issues related to the EU, share their experience and best practices among themselves.

4. What about conditionality – is the offer the same for each partner country despite different level of engagements with the EU?

The principle of the European Neighbourhood Policy will be maintained: how far we go in relations with each country will continue to depend on the progress made by the partners in their reform and modernization efforts.

The Eastern Partnership is clearly about both – common interests and shared values.

5. What's in the Eastern Partnership for Belarus? Why it is included? How it will participate?

Belarus is an important Eastern neighbour of the Union, interested in deepening its relations with us.

Depending on its own choices and decisions, Belarus will be able to benefit from the Eastern Partnership to intensify bilateral relations with the EU.

Belarus has a real opportunity to become an active partner of the EU in the framework of the European Neighbourhood Policy provided that the country embarks on fundamental democratic and economic reforms and brings itself closer to European common values. Therefore the level of Belarus' participation in the Eastern Partnership will depend on the overall development of EU-Belarus relations.

6. What about the Russian Federation? Is this proposal anti-Russian?

This is not at all an anti-Russian initiative. We are responding to a desire expressed throughout the countries in our Eastern neighbourhood who are looking into substantially deepening and widening their relations with the EU. At the same time are also neighbours of Russia and we have stressed that these countries will

need good working relations with all their neighbours, including the Russian Federation.

7. What are the main new points in this initiative?

- New association agreements including deep and comprehensive free trade agreements, for those willing and ready to take on the far-reaching commitments with the EU that these entail;
- Comprehensive programmes funded by the EU to improve partners' administrative capacity in order to be able to take up our offer;
- A conclusion of "mobility and security pacts", allowing for easier legitimate travel to the EU while at the same time stepping up efforts to combat corruption, organized crime and illegal migration. These pacts would also cover the upgrading asylum systems to EU standards and the establishment of integrated border management structures, etc. The ultimate long term goal would be visa-free travel with all cooperating partners;
- The Commission will study possibilities for labour mobility with aim of further opening of the EU labour market;
- Enhanced energy security in the partner countries themselves and with the European Union;
- Multilateral track will support individual countries' efforts by providing a framework in which common challenges can be addressed. This will include seminars to improve understanding of EU legislation and standards, sharing of experience, and where appropriate development of joint activities. Four policy platforms are proposed: on Democracy, good governance and stability; Economic integration and convergence with EU policies, Energy security; and Contacts between people;
- Enhanced cooperation on environment and climate issues;
- Increased people-to-people contacts and greater involvement of civil society and other stakeholders.

8. What are "flagship initiatives" proposed within the Eastern Partnership?

The Commission proposes to launch five flagship initiatives with a strong focus on multilateral cooperation and high profile. Their success will depend on the strong political commitment of partners with the support of adequate funding from the EU's side.

- **Integrated Border Management Programme** (aligned to EU standards, a prerequisite for progress on the mobility of persons).
- **SME Facility** (small and medium enterprises would receive external stimulus for growth and employment through technical assistance, financial intermediaries, risk capital and loans).
- **Regional electricity markets, improved energy efficiency and increased use of renewable energy sources** (appropriate regulatory framework and financing mechanisms).
- **Southern energy corridor** (this is a key infrastructure initiative serving to diversify transit routes and sources of supply for the EU and its partners.).
- **Prevention of, preparedness for, and response to natural and man-made disasters** (strengthen disaster management capacities and establish effective cooperation between the EU and the partner countries – also among them themselves).

9. Is there new financing involved?

YES. Total assistance for the six Eastern neighbours will gradually grow from € 450 million in 2008 to € 785 million in 2013, an increase of nearly 75%.

This will mean allocating a supplementary envelope of € 350 million in addition to the planned resources for the period 2010-2013.

Moreover we will refocus €250 million that was already allocated to the ENP regional east programme to initiatives relevant for the implementation of the Eastern Partnership.

10. How will the Partnership address security issues?

By effectively bringing Eastern partners closer to the EU, like the European Neighbourhood Policy, the Eastern Partnership will contribute to the stability and security on the EU's borders while

enhancing good neighbourly relations and effective cooperation among partners. The Eastern Partnership will also seek to promote confidence in the region by increasing political contacts between partners (including among administrations, members of parliaments, NGOs and citizens) as well as reducing trade barriers.

The Eastern Partnership foresees in addition more cooperation on specific issues within the EU's Common Foreign Security Policy and European Security Defense Policy, including the participation of partner countries in EU missions and exercises and the coordination of diplomatic activities. Security-related early-warning systems will be enhanced, with particular focus on conflict areas. Closer cooperation on arms-export practices and non-proliferation is also envisaged.

11. What can the Eastern Partnership offer Ukraine given that Ukraine has already been offered the benefits of deeper cooperation through an Association Agreement (integral to which is the establishment of a deep and comprehensive Free Trade Area) and the launch of a visa dialogue?

Ukraine is a front-runner among our Eastern partners and already has close bilateral relations with the EU. The Eastern Partnership will provide opportunities to intensify significantly our joint work in particular as regards its efforts towards regulatory approximation.

Furthermore, the Eastern Partnership will add a multilateral dimension to our cooperation with Ukraine. In particular, the Eastern Partnership platform on economic integration and regulatory approximation will include a panel on establishing a deep and comprehensive free trade areas that may one day build into a Neighbourhood Economic Community bringing together the EU and its Eastern partners, which will benefit the Ukrainian economy.

12. Were the partner countries consulted on this initiative?

YES. Partner countries made a number of proposals on how to make the Eastern Partnership more effective. These suggestions were incorporated into the Commission's proposal.

13. How will the Eastern Partnership work in practice? How can we avoid the multilateral framework becoming just another "talk shop"?

The success of this initiative will depend on strong political will of EU Member States and partner countries alike – joint ownership is essential in this.

The Commission will also play a crucial role in making the multilateral framework an effective tool for cooperation although it cannot replace the engagement of the partner countries and the EU Member States.

14. What is the Eastern Partnership offering to the civil society organizations in partner countries?

The development and involvement of the civil society is a key factor for the success of the democratic and market-oriented reforms. The Commission proposes to support civil society actors and to engage them in the initiative through the establishment of an Eastern Partnership Civil Society Forum. The forum will promote contacts between civil society actors as well as facilitate their dialogue with public authorities.

15. Does the Eastern Partnership mean that the EU will offer an enlargement perspective to all/some of its Eastern neighbours?

Nothing is changed in this respect. The participation in the Eastern Partnership does not contain an accession perspective but at the same time it does not prejudice the nature of the future relations between the EU and each of the partner countries.

16. What structures of the Eastern Partnership are proposed?

The proposed structures are very light.

Biannual meetings of Heads of States or Governments involving the 27 EU Member States and the partner countries of the Eastern Partnership would provide direction and profile to the Partnership.

Annual spring meetings of Ministers of Foreign Affairs would review progress and provide more detailed political guidance.

Senior officials engaged in reform work in the relevant policy areas would meet at least twice a year. These meetings, prepared and

chaired by the Commission, would take place within the framework of four thematic platforms (Democracy, good governance and stability; Economic integration and convergence with EU policies, Energy security; and Contacts between people).

Panels to support the work of each of the platforms would meet as often as appropriate and in the format according to need.

Bilateral cooperation will continue through the structures of the European Neighbourhood Policy.

17. When will the Eastern Partnership be launched? What will be next steps?

After adoption of the Eastern Partnership by the EU Member States, it should be launched at an “Eastern Partnership Summit” in spring 2009, involving Heads of States or Governments of EU Member States and Partner Countries. The leaders should adopt a political declaration establishing the Partnership, spelling out its main goals and principles and determining the general features of the ensuing cooperation process.

18. What about the Black Sea? Isn't the Eastern Partnership duplicating existing cooperation?

NO. The Black Sea Synergy (covering five Eastern ENP countries, Russia and Turkey, but not Belarus) and other regional cooperation initiatives will be complementary to the Eastern Partnership.

The Black Sea Synergy aims at solving problems which require region-wide efforts and attention. Its centre of gravity is the Black Sea. The Eastern Partnership will pursue alignment of partner countries with the EU. Its center of gravity will be Brussels.

19. What about the Southern neighbours? Will they lose money because of the focus on the East?

Our Southern ENP partners will not be forgotten, on the contrary. At the same time as we are implementing the Eastern Partnership we are intensifying relations with our neighbours to the South: both bilaterally, based on their commitment to reform (for example an advanced status for Morocco was recently agreed) and multilaterally,

with the renewed Euro-Mediterranean Partnership i.e. Union for the Mediterranean.

Any additional resource for the Eastern Partnership would not come at the expense of our Southern neighbours. They will also see their financial envelopes increased overtime, as planned.

20. What will be the difference between the Eastern Partnership and Union for the Mediterranean?

Union for the Mediterranean is a project oriented initiative – it primarily seeks to launch regional projects which are going to bring tangible benefits for citizens in the Mediterranean region.

The main focus of the Eastern Partnership is different. It is more focussed on convergence with EU legislation and standards, and therefore has to operate on a "more for more" principle. We have also structured it differently to reflect this.