

Eastern Partnership Multilateral Platforms

General Guidelines and Rules of Procedure

1. General Guidelines

1.1 According to the Joint Declaration of the Prague Eastern Partnership Summit, the multilateral framework of the Eastern Partnership will provide for cooperation activities and open and free dialogue serving the objectives of the Partnership. It will operate on a basis of joint decisions of the European Union and the partner countries. It will provide a forum to share information and experience on the partner countries' steps towards transition, reform and modernization and give the EU an additional instrument to accompany these processes. It will facilitate the development of common positions and joint activities. The multilateral framework is aimed at fostering links among partner countries themselves and will be a forum for discussion on further developments of the Eastern Partnership.

1.2 Legislative and regulatory approximation is crucial to those partner countries willing to make progress in coming closer to the EU. The multilateral framework will provide the setting for the systematic undertaking in this respect, including through dedicated sessions devoted to the presentation and explanation of EU legislation and standards, as well as its comparison with national policy and legislation.

1.3 Four thematic platforms will allow for target-oriented sessions and serve for open and free discussions, on the basis of the main areas of cooperation:

- i/ Democracy, good governance and stability;
- ii/ Economic integration and convergence with EU sectoral policies;
- iii/ Energy security
- iv/ Contacts between people.

1.4 Each platform will adopt a set of realistic, core objectives that should be updated periodically, with a corresponding work programme, and will review the progress achieved. Meetings would be held at least twice a year at the level of senior officials engaged in the reform work in the relevant policy areas. The platforms will report to the annual meetings of Ministers of Foreign Affairs. The work of the platforms may occasionally be promoted through sector-specific Ministerial meetings. There will also be panels to support the work of the thematic platforms in specific areas.

1.5 Third states will be eligible for the participation on a case-by-case basis in concrete projects, activities and meetings of thematic platforms, where such participation contributes to the objectives of particular activities and the general objectives of the Eastern Partnership.

Activities within the multilateral framework of the Eastern Partnership should be voluntary and based on the principles of a cooperative approach.

2. Participation in the Eastern Partnership platforms

2.1 Full participants in all four platforms are the EU Member States, the Partner Countries, the European Commission and the European External Action Service.

2.2 Permanent participants are the European Parliament and the General Secretariat of the Council of the European Union, the Committee of the Regions, the European Economic and Social Committee (in all four thematic platforms as presented under paragraph 1.3), the Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe (i/), the Council of Europe (i/ and iv/), the European Investment Bank (ii/ and iii/), the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (ii/ and iii/) and the UNESCO (iv/).

The EaP Civil Society Forum is invited to participate in the meetings of the four thematic platforms as a permanent participant.¹

Moreover, European and international organisations, as well as financing institutions able and willing to contribute to the goals of the Eastern Partnership can also become permanent participants in a platform if so decided by full participants of the concerned platform. Permanent participants shall be involved in all the activities of the platform(s) with the exception of decision-making.

2.3 Ad hoc participants are eligible to participate on a case-by-case basis in specific meetings, projects and activities. (Paragraph 1.5) Case-by-case decisions on ad hoc participation based on proposals submitted by any full participant will be taken prior to the respective meeting, project or activity either by the platform sessions or by way of written procedure involving all full participants. A wide range of stakeholders can become ad hoc participants, including inter alia, third countries, European and international organisations, financing institutions and representatives of civil society.

3. The Platform Chair

3.1 The European External Action Service (i/) and the European Commission (ii/, iii/ and iv/) provide the chair for all platforms at Director or Deputy Director General level.

3.2 The chairs of the four platforms have the following tasks and responsibilities:

Convening a meeting after due coordination;

Submitting to participants the provisional agenda for each meeting;

Opening, presiding at and closing each meeting;

Making rulings on points of order raised at meetings of the platform, provided that each full participant retains the right to request that any such ruling be submitted to the platform for approval;

Preparing meeting reports for transmission to full participants for comments; Presenting

¹ To be reviewed in one year's time.

reports concerning work in the platform, including to meetings of Eastern Partnership Foreign Ministers; Reports by the Chair will reflect all the views expressed, including views by permanent and ad hoc participants. Where meetings have been chaired by more than one chairperson, they will jointly carry out these tasks;

Exercising other tasks and responsibilities as provided in the present guidelines ensuring that the business of the platform is carried out effectively and in accordance with its decisions.

4. The Agenda

4.1 The Chair prepares each platform meeting's provisional agenda.

4.2 The provisional agenda is submitted by the Chair to all participants of the platforms at least 25 days² in advance of the platform's meeting, including related explanatory memoranda or reports. Any comments on the provisional agenda, supported by explanatory memoranda, should be conveyed to the Chair no later than 10 days in advance of the meeting.

4.3 Based on the provisional agenda, the agenda of each platform meeting should be jointly approved by full participants at the beginning of the meeting.

5. Conduct of Business

5.1. Platforms will meet at least twice a year in Brussels, unless platforms decide otherwise. Platform meetings shall in principle be held in Brussels.

5.2. Platforms are working fora promoting the objectives of the Eastern Partnership. Platforms conduct their business without prejudice to the decision-making autonomy and processes of the European Union. As a general rule, they make joint decisions relating to their conduct of business, such as adopting working documents or pronouncing on issues of procedural nature.

5.3 The decisions of the platforms shall be taken jointly by the full participants present and in accordance with the principles set out in paragraph 1.1.

5.4. If platforms discuss sensitive issues concerning the Common Foreign and Security Policy, any full participant can request a discussion restricted to full participants.

5.5 All full and permanent participants of the Eastern Partnership appoint a coordinator/contact point to facilitate proper and fluid conduct of business of each platform.

Given the long periods between the meetings and the high number of issues to be dealt with in written procedure, a network of coordinators/contact points for each platform will be established, involving both full and permanent participants.

² All reference to days are to working days at the European Commission

6. Eastern Partnership Panels

6.1 Panels are expert-level working groups attached to a platform. Panels can be permanent or temporary.

6.2 Panels can be established and abolished by a joint decision of full participants of a platform. Panel rules concerning the chair, the agenda and the conduct of business are similar to those applying in platforms.

All platform full and permanent participants can participate in a panel, established under the given platform. Rules for involvement of ad hoc participants are the same as described under paragraph 2.3.

6.3 Panels will meet according to needs. Panel meetings can be attached to platform meetings but can also take place independently.

6.4 Panels submit reports to the respective platforms.

7. Amendments to the General Guidelines and Rules of Procedure

7.1 The present General Guidelines and Rules of Procedure, common to all Eastern Partnership thematic platforms, have been adopted by joint decision of the full participants of the Platform on Democracy, good governance and stability at its first meeting. They can be amended by joint decision taken by the full participants of the Platform on Democracy, good governance and stability, taking due regard of experience accumulated as well as views presented in all four thematic platforms.

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