



MULTILATERAL COOPERATION

EASTERN PARTNERSHIP: SUPPORTING REFORMS, PROMOTING CHANGE



Many of the challenges partner countries face are shared ones and are usefully addressed by all partners together. Multilateral cooperation under the Eastern Partnership involves the EU institutions, the interested Member states and the 6 EaP partner countries – Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, the Republic of Moldova and Ukraine. It takes place across a wide array of issues, ranging from democracy, good governance and stability to economic issues, energy security and contacts between people. This work is guided by four thematic platforms, supported by various expert panels, flagship initiatives and projects.

Democracy, good governance and stability

Work under the EaP Platform on Democracy, good governance and stability aims at strengthening democratic principles and good

governance in areas such as public administration, civil service, judiciary, management of state borders, fight against corruption, elections, asylum and migration, Common Security and Defence Policy, civil protection, police cooperation or cybercrime. Work in these areas promotes the application of good governance and appropriate reforms by learning from others and by means of targeted pilot projects.

An example of successful cooperation, the Integrated Border Management Flagship Initiative, contributes to better collaboration between the border control services. At the same time, this initiative trains hundreds of officials from the partner countries in skills linked to safer and more efficient border controls of persons and goods. The EU Agency Frontex has been instrumental in assisting border guards and customs officers in enabling coordinated border management and patrolling.



Economic integration and convergence with EU policies

Cooperation under the EaP Platform on Economic integration and convergence with EU policies promotes smart, sustainable and inclusive development of a free market economy in the partner countries. Cooperation in this area helps growth and employment.

For Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine it is important to address the application of their Association Agreements including Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Areas (AA/DCFTAs) in trade and related regulatory cooperation, standards, sanitary and phytosanitary measures and customs. Economic cooperation with the EU and the streamlining of sectoral policies is just as important for Armenia, Azerbaijan and Belarus. Cooperation on agriculture and rural development is using the experience accumulated in the EU Member States to support the development and the implementation of modern, viable, sustainable long-term agricultural and rural development strategies.

Small and Medium-sized Enterprises (SME) are key for a sustainable economic development. Flagship Initiative in this area addresses regulatory impact assessment, business infrastructure, access to finance and innovation, promotion of green technologies, eco-innovation and women entrepreneurship. Partner countries are increasingly participating in the Programme for the Competitiveness of Enterprises and SMEs (COSME). A new area of work concerns harmonisation of the Digital Markets, including issues such as sharing of infrastructure for electronic communications networks, e-Signature and e-Government.

Energy Security

Cooperation on Energy Security addresses diversification of electricity, gas and oil interconnections, as well as energy efficiency and renewable energy. More integrated energy markets allow for an increased competitiveness, diversification of energy supply sources and transit routes and also facilitate the integration of variable renewable energy sources into the energy system. Energy efficiency and renewable energy, if exploited to their full potential, contribute significantly to energy security by decreasing dependency on imported fossil fuels. Establishment and strengthening a regulatory framework in nuclear safety contributes to safe use of nuclear energy in partner countries where nuclear energy is part of their energy mix.

People-to-people contacts

More interaction between EU citizens and

those of partner countries promotes better understanding between the people. The work in this area focuses in particular on students, teachers, researchers, young people, artists and cultural professionals. It involves a number of EU international cooperation programmes: Erasmus+ in the area of education and youth, Creative Europe in culture and media, Horizon 2020 and Marie Skłodowska-Curie in research and innovation.

As of 2014 a wide range of activities in the fields of education, training, youth and sport are available to the EaP partner countries through Erasmus+ providing learning mobility, opportunities to build partnerships and deliver system reforms. Youth representatives from the Eastern Partnership region meet at the EaP Youth Forum, most recently in February 2015 in Riga, Latvia with discussions focused how to reduce youth unemployment.

Participation of EaP researchers in EU programmes has increased with Moldova becoming associated to Horizon 2020 programme since 2014, Ukraine in 2015 and Armenia and Georgia exploring their possibilities. The launch of the E@P Connect initiative will help linking the research and academic communities in the Eastern European partner countries to the pan-European research and education network GEANT.

Flagship Initiatives

Cooperation in the key areas of importance is supported by EaP Flagship Initiatives, mobilizing resources and bringing added focus to the issues, including the Integrated Border Management, Civil Protection, SMEs, Environmental Governance and Energy. In 2014, the EU committed €152 million for various EaP regional programmes and disbursed €47 million to implement ongoing regional programmes and deliver results.

A new Flagship Initiative in 2015 will focus on several aspects of Sustainable Municipal Development, bringing together a number of sectoral strands of work. It will include the work under the Covenant of Mayors on sustainable energy, address local economic strategies and energy efficiency, while taking account of historic and cultural heritage.