Eastern Partnership

The Eastern Partnership (EaP) is a joint initiative involving the EU, its Member States and six Eastern European Partners: Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, the Republic of Moldova and Ukraine.

The Eastern Partnership aims at building a common area of shared democracy, prosperity, stability and increased cooperation. Additionally, bonds forged through the Eastern Partnership help strengthening state and societal resilience: it makes both the EU and the partners stronger and better able to deal with internal and external challenges.

Heads of state or government from the EU member states and the six Eastern Partner countries meet every other year in Eastern Partnership Summits. The latest Eastern Partnership Summit took place in Brussels on the 24th of November 2017 and endorsed a result-oriented approach, based on the implementation of 20 deliverables by 2020 and multilateral engagement through a renewed Eastern Partnership institutional set-up.

Besides governments, the Eastern Partnership also involves broader society:

- the Eastern Partnership Civil Society Forum ensures that the views of the civil society are taken into account;
- the Conference of Local & Regional Authorities for the Eastern Partnership (CORLEAP) brings in the perspective of the levels of governance that are the closest to the people;
- the EURONEST Parliamentary Assembly provides a platform for parliamentary oversight of the Eastern Partnership;
- in addition, there are high-level events with youth, business and media representatives every second year in the run-up to the Eastern Partnership Summit.

Background and key developments

The European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP) was developed as a framework for relations with the EU's neighbouring countries in 2004. The Eastern Partnership (EaP) was established as a specific Eastern dimension of the ENP, which contains both a bilateral and multilateral track. It was launched at the Prague Summit in 2009. Since then, the Eastern Partnership has evolved; the substance of the policy
has broadened, deepened and been adapted to changing realities. The latest important policy developments are guided by the 2015 review of the ENP and the 2016 EU Global Strategy. Both call to focus on achieving the goal of increasing stabilisation and resilience of the EU’s neighbours.

The EU is committed to building strong and mutually beneficial relations with all six partners, irrespective of their individual level of ambition in their relations with the EU. Bilateral relations are based on differentiation whilst the multilateral EaP structure offers an inclusive framework involving all six partner countries. Please find a brief overview below.

The Association Agreements and Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Areas (AA/DCFTAs), concluded in 2014, have brought the relations between the EU and Georgia, the Republic of Moldova and Ukraine to a new level. The agreements aim at strengthened political association and economic integration. They entail significant reforms that aim to bring the Partner Countries closer to the EU by aligning their legislation and standards to the EU ones. Most importantly, they have the objective of improving the lives of citizens in a tangible way. A notable example is the Visa liberalization that has entered into force for Georgia and with Ukraine in 2017 – in addition to the Republic of Moldova in 2014.

As a result of the 2015 review of the ENP, which stressed ownership and differentiation of the policy, a more tailored approach was taken to relations with Armenia, Azerbaijan and Belarus. For more information see the 2017 report on the implementation of the 2015 ENP review. Concretely, a new Comprehensive and Enhanced Partnership Agreement has been negotiated with Armenia, whose political and economic cooperation with the EU will take account of Armenia's other international commitments. The EU is also negotiating a new Framework Agreement with Azerbaijan, to better reflect our respective interests and values. With Belarus, the EU is deepening its critical engagement in carefully calibrated mutual steps.

Eastern Partnership engagement is focused on the four priority areas of cooperation, agreed at the 2015 Riga Summit: stronger governance: strengthening of institutions and good governance; stronger economy: economic development and market opportunities; better connectivity: interconnectivity; mobility and stronger society: people-to-people contacts. Discussions in EaP multilateral Platforms and Panels, where all six partners and EU Member states participate, help exchange best practices across these areas and develop regional cooperation.

Financial cooperation

In the period of 2014-2020 - the European Neighbourhood Instrument (ENI) is the key EU financial instrument for cooperation with the Eastern Partnership. Between 2014 and 2017, Partner Countries have already benefited from an overall of €2.8 billion of EU funds.

To ensure implementation of EaP policy priorities, the new Multiannual Assistance Frameworks for the period 2017/2018-2020 have been designed in an inclusive manner between the EU, its Member States and the six Partner Countries. Functioning as work plans guiding the actions until 2020, they cover the four priority areas of the Eastern Partnership.

Eastern Partnership cooperation: Priority areas

Tangible results for citizens are at the centre of EU engagement within the Eastern Partnership. The pursuit of tangible results has resulted in 20 deliverables of Eastern Partnership cooperation for 2020. These were developed in close consultation with all the stakeholders. Some of the most important
deliverables include:

- Modernised transport connections through the TEN-T network;
- Increased political ownership of energy efficiency;
- Easier access to finance for SMEs, including to lending in local currency;
- Establishing ways of reducing roaming tariffs between partners by conducting a study;
- Increased trade opportunities;
- Greater outreach to grassroots Civil Society Organizations; and,
- More support for youth.

A joint staff working document "Eastern Partnership – 20 Deliverables for 2020" drafted by the Commission and the EEAS details the key priorities and the tangible results in the four priority areas agreed at the Eastern Partnership Summit in Riga in 2015.
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1. Stronger Governance: Strengthening institutions and good governance

Strengthened institutions and good governance are important preconditions for economic growth and societal resilience. Improving governance, strengthening of electoral systems, reforming the justice sector, fighting corruption, strengthening security cooperation – notably to disrupt organised crime – supporting conflict resolution, crisis prevention, civil protection against new threats and cybersecurity are key elements for citizen's trust in their state and a fairer society. Furthermore, enhanced cooperation in the area of security will make the EU and its Eastern Partners better equipped to protect their citizens.

2. Stronger Economy: Economic development and market opportunities

In the area of economic development and market opportunities the 20 Deliverables for 2020 will aim to create more and better jobs and higher incomes, notably by improving the business environment. The EU will support its Eastern Partners in moving towards diversified, sustainable and modern economies, to create jobs in new sectors, attract investments and support macroeconomic stability, to drive the economic transition process forward and to improve the capacity of Partner Countries to take advantage of the trade opportunities with the EU and among each other.

3. Better Connectivity: Connectivity, energy efficiency, environment and climate change

Better connectivity, energy efficiency, measures to preserve the environment and reduce climate change will further bolster the resilience of Partner Countries. Better transport links will support trade and travel by citizens. Energy interconnections and enhanced energy efficiency will strengthen energy security and open new opportunities for economic development. Enhanced climate change adaptation and mitigation efforts help Partner Countries to develop more efficient economies while becoming less vulnerable to the adverse impact of climate change and improving the quality of life.

4. Stronger Society: Mobility and people-to-people contacts

Enabling easier and more frequent exchanges among citizens is central in the field of mobility and people-to-people contacts. Mobility and multi-faceted contacts between societies, including visa liberalisation, in a secure and well managed environment offer opportunities to learn from best practices in other countries. Particular efforts will be made to invest in youth as an investment in the future by supporting and empowering the young generation, specifically in terms of developing their skills and fostering their employability.

5. Involvement of broader society, gender and communication

A structured engagement with a wider range of civil society organisations, furthering gender equality and non-discrimination, as well as better, clearer and tailor-made strategic communications will be pursued as horizontal elements relevant for all four Eastern Partnership priority areas.
**Multilateral cooperation**

While Partner Countries have different characteristics and diverse ambitions in their engagement with the EU, they also share important opportunities and challenges. In order to address these common elements, the multilateral dimension of the Eastern Partnership complements the EU’s bilateral activities. It does so typically in areas which specifically require a transnational approach – e.g. border management, environment and climate change, migration or disaster prevention. At the same time, multilateral cooperation enables the exchange of best practices in areas such as the fight against corruption. The multilateral framework is aimed at fostering links and regional cooperation among partner countries and between them and the EU Member States.

**The Multilateral Platforms**

Policy issues in our main areas of cooperation are discussed in four thematic platforms. The platforms and the panels under them allow for target-oriented sessions with open discussions between stakeholders. A more detailed overview per platform is given below:

1. **Strengthening institutions and good governance**;
2. **Economic development and market opportunities**;
3. **Connectivity, energy efficiency, environment and climate change**;
4. **Mobility and people-to-people contacts**.

**Platform 1: Strengthening institutions and good governance**

The Platform aims to improve governance in public administration, the civil service, the judiciary, management of state borders, combating corruption, elections, asylum and migration, cooperation on the Common Security and Defence Policy, civil protection, police cooperation and cybercrime. Furthermore, a series of specific Panels have been established under Platform 1:

- **Public Administration Reform**: aims at fostering cooperation with partners to make public administration more effective, improving civil service integrity and developing e-governance and data protection capacities. It also aims to promote local democracy, focusing on building support for reforms and receiving capacity for foreign assistance projects, sharing reform practices & analysing the main obstacles to sectoral reforms.
- **Integrated Border Management**: shares best practices in strengthening cooperation between customs and border services and improving the management of border crossing points.
- **Rule of Law**: facilitates exchange of information and best practices in the field of the judiciary reforms, building integrity, preventing and prosecuting corruption, and meeting international standards – especially those enshrined in relevant Council of Europe & UN conventions.
- **Migration and Asylum**: pursues dialogue and cooperation in the framework of the Global Approach to Migration and Mobility (GAMM) and assists partner countries in meeting the agreed reforms in bilateral Action Plans and Association Agendas.
- **Common Security and Defence Policy**: aims to develop a dialogue on political and practical aspects of participation by interested partner countries in EU CSDP missions and operations.
Platform 2: Economic development and market opportunities

Platform 2 aims at economic integration between partner countries and between them and the EU, as well as their convergence with relevant EU policies based on multilateral cooperation. Activities of Platform 2 and the corresponding Panels contribute to the smart, sustainable and inclusive development of a free market economy in Partner Countries. Designing policies for modern, social and environment-friendly economies provide jobs and growth and thus increase resilience and stability. The following Panels have been established under Platform 2:

- **Business Development:** facilitates exchange of best practices between Partner Countries and Member States to achieve sustainable economic development. This is done by improving the business environment, improving the access to finance and to new export markets, as well as by assisting small enterprises, start-ups and spin-offs to translate innovation into viable products. The EU4Business initiative provides financial support for achieving these goals. The Eastern Partnership Business Forum strengthens contacts between businesses and business support organisations in Partner Countries with their counterparts in the EU, as well as their dialogue with big investors (IFIs) and decision makers. Increasingly, Partner Countries also participate in the Programme for the Competitiveness of Enterprises and SMEs (COSME).

- **Transport:** aims to improve connections within and between Partner Countries as well as between the EU and its partners. The Panel helps partners to prepare and implement infrastructure projects (Eastern Partnership transport network) and share best practices on innovative infrastructure financing, efficient traffic management systems and increased transport safety and security.

- **Environment & climate change:** promotes sustainable economic development, environment protection and green economy. It was tasked by the Eastern Partnership Ministerial on Environment and Climate change (which took place in October 2016) to implement its declaration on cooperation and environment recommendations. While keeping participants up to date on the specific acquis and exchange best practices on its implementation, this panel contributes to modern environmental policy making, based on relevant, scientific data.

- **Trade & related regulatory cooperation:** focuses on quality control and certification for goods and services; on animal and plant health measures; on customs – facilitation of circulation of legally traded goods. The main aim of this panel is to promote trade between partners and between them and the European Union, especially for DCFTA partner countries.

- **Agriculture & rural development:** uses the EU countries' experience to help partners develop and implement modern, viable, sustainable farming and rural development strategies.

- **Statistics:** aims to exchange best practices in generating reliable statistics. The data collected can serve as a basis for good governance and decision-making in all policy areas and as a source of transparency for the monitoring of the policies implemented.

- **Harmonisation of Digital Markets:** aims at enabling individuals and businesses everywhere to seamlessly exercise online activities with a high level of protection of consumers and personal data. Harmonised digital markets will foster better online services at better prices, offer more choice and boost employment. To this end, the 2nd Eastern Partnership Digital Ministerial 5 October 2017 in Tallinn has adopted an ambitious Declaration whose implementation is foreseen towards the 2020 horizon and further supported by the EU4Digital initiative.

Platform 3: Connectivity, energy efficiency, environment and climate change

The Energy Security Platform aims at enhancing cooperation between the EU and partners in the
strategic field of energy security, with the financial support of the EU4Energy initiative. More specifically, its core objectives are:

1. **Approximation of the regulatory framework**: In order to increase security of supply, competitiveness and sustainability of the energy sector. Such approximation contributes to the creation of a homogeneous, stable and predictable legal framework in the regions, encouraging the large investments required in the energy sector. It increases the security of supply via opening and liberalising energy markets.

2. **Development of electricity, gas and oil interconnections**: Interconnectivity is key to the EU and the Eastern Partner Countries. The longer-term objective is to develop a common approach in the region. Approximation to and integration of European energy markets requires both a set of common rules in the energy sector and the construction of the necessary infrastructures.

3. **Increasing energy efficiency and use of renewable energy**: National sources of renewable energy and improved energy efficiency can greatly contribute to reducing greenhouse gas emissions and to energy security by decreasing dependency on (imported) fossil fuels. Integrating large quantities of electricity generated from variable renewable sources may require certain adaptations to the generation, the transmission and the distribution systems. In many cases, a regional approach can optimise this process.

4. **Establishment and strengthening of a regulatory framework in nuclear safety**: Several EU Member States and Eastern Partner Countries use nuclear energy and some others intend to do so in the near future. While this is a national decision, potential accidents could have grave consequences beyond borders. Therefore, a high level of nuclear safety is of interest to all.

5. **Exchange of expertise on conventional and unconventional oil and gas resources**: The exchange of expertise is meant to maximise the safety and efficiency of operations and covers issues such as: safety and environmental standards for exploration and production activities, regulatory aspects for transparent access to oil and gas exploration, innovative technologies for oil and gas exploration and production, etc.

**Platform 4: Mobility and people-to-people contacts**

This platform aims to create strong people-to-people contacts between the EU and the Partner Countries and between the Partner Countries themselves. Therefore, the platform works to increase participation of EaP Countries in EU programmes in the fields of education, research, innovation, youth, culture and creativity as well as information society. It also aims to foster cooperation between the EU and its partners' education and training authorities, higher education institutions, schools, research institutions, youth organisations, cultural organizations, etc. It also seeks to contribute to partners' capacity to implement policies in these areas and to enhance knowledge and exchange good practices amongst EU and Eastern partner stakeholders in these fields.

**Panel on Research and Innovation** – aims to boost and streamline the cooperation in the area of research and innovation, including EU and partner countries’ policies and programmes (e.g. Horizon 2020, Marie Skłodowska-Curie actions).

For more information on past activities of the Multilateral Platforms you may wish to also consult their current 2014-201 work programmes below.

**Current work programme 2018-2019:**
Documents

Financing the ENP
ENP Action Plans
ENP Progress reports
Eastern Partnership Key documents

See also

Facts and figures on EU-Armenia relations
Facts and figures on EU-Azerbaijan relations
Facts and figures on EU-Belarus relations
Facts and figures on EU-Georgia relations
Facts and figures on EU-Moldova relations
Facts and figures on EU-Ukraine relations
EU support to businesses in Armenia
EU support to businesses in Azerbaijan
EU support to businesses in Belarus
EU support to businesses in Georgia
EU support to businesses in Republic of Moldova
EU support to businesses in Ukraine
Planning Of Eastern Partnership Multilateral Events For 2019
European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP)
Myths about the Eastern Partnership - Factsheet

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