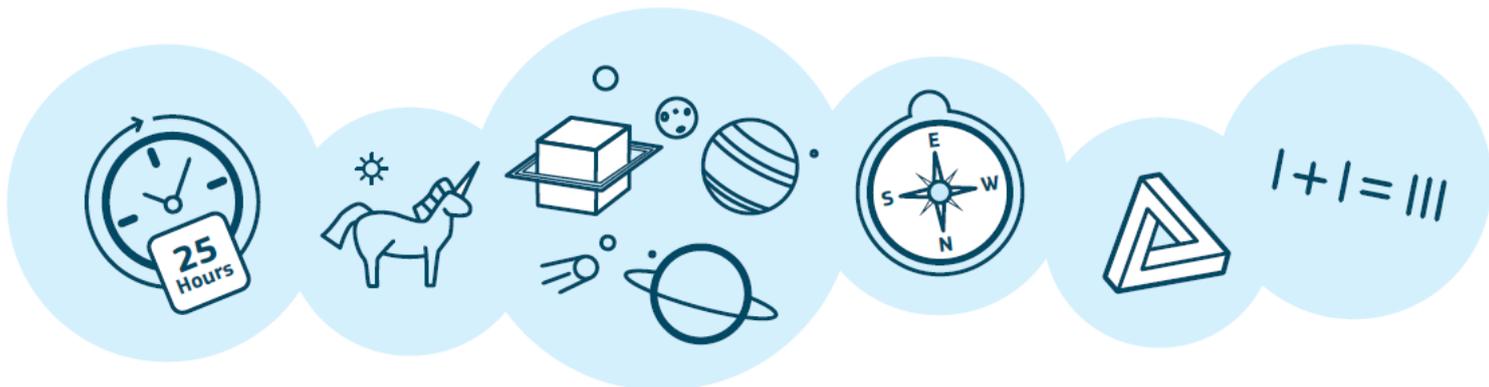




European
Commission



5th Eastern Partnership (EaP) Summit in Brussels

Myths about the Eastern Partnership



Myth 1

Participation in the Eastern Partnership leads to EU membership

FALSE: The Eastern Partnership initiative is **not an EU accession process**. Its aim is to build a common area of shared democracy, prosperity, stability and increased cooperation. The Eastern Partnership initiative provides an **inclusive framework** for the European Union Member States, plus Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, the Republic of Moldova and Ukraine to cooperate notably on: (1) economic development and market opportunities; (2) strengthening institutions and good governance; (3) connectivity, energy efficiency, environment and climate change; and (4) mobility and people-to-people contacts. Each country is free to choose the level of ambition and the goals to which it aspires in its relations with the European Union.

Myth 2

The Eastern Partnership initiative was designed by the EU to provoke Russia

FALSE: The Eastern Partnership initiative is **not against any country**; it is a **mutually beneficial and constructive** platform for countries in the region to build a closer relationship with the EU, if they so choose. The EU does not demand that any of its partners need to make a choice between the EU or any other countries. We stand for good neighbourly relations. The Eastern Partnership respects the individual aspirations and ambition of each partner country.



Myth 3

The Eastern Partnership engenders destabilisation or regime change

FALSE: The Eastern Partnership's transformative agenda aims at bringing positive change to the lives of citizens of the European Union and of the Eastern Partnership countries. One of the key ways to achieve this is through embedding and encouraging democratic rules and principles. **The EU does not impose any action or programme on the partner countries.** The overall aim of cooperation is to **build a common area of shared democracy, prosperity and stability** in line with each individual country's aspirations.

Myth 4

The Eastern Partnership agenda is pushed onto partners against their wishes

FALSE: The Eastern Partnership is a joint initiative of the European Union and the six partner countries. It was not imposed and countries have the choice as to the level of their engagement and of their ambition. The EU does not impose any reform agenda or values onto partner countries. It is actually the opposite. **Partner countries choose to align with EU standards.** This is done through, for example, the adoption of transparent and accountable governance structures and the harmonisation of industry standards to benefit from mutual trade opportunities.

Myth 5

EU money is being lost due to corruption

FALSE: EU funds are always subject to **strict monitoring and reporting procedures.** Furthermore, corruption hits everyday people the hardest, and that is why one of the top priorities supported by the EU in partner countries **is the fight against corruption:** reform of the judiciary; constitutional and electoral reforms; the overall improvement of the business climate, and reform of public administration. Supporting these reforms, which aim at establishing a fair system, with checks and balances, is in the interest of the EU citizens and the citizens of the partner countries.

Myth 6

The Eastern Partnership has allowed mass migration from these countries to the European Union

FALSE: The European Union has agreements in place with Georgia, the Republic of Moldova and Ukraine that allow their citizens who hold biometric passports to travel to the Schengen Area without a visa for **90 in any 180-day period.** They can come for tourism, to visit relatives or friends, or for business purposes, but not to work. Visa



facilitation agreements are in place with Armenia and Azerbaijan whereby visas are still required, but there is less of an administrative burden for their citizens to travel to the Schengen Area. These agreements are accompanied by **readmission agreements**, which establish the procedures for **the return of illegal immigrants to their countries**, including those involved in criminal activity. There are systematic checks against relevant databases on people crossing the external borders of the EU, to verify that they do not represent a threat to public order, internal security or public health. These databases include the Schengen Information System and Interpol's database on stolen and lost travel documents. A project run by Frontex, the European Border and Coast Guard Agency, is working to **strengthen border management** in the six partner countries. Tailored training is offered to relevant authorities to help them improve security, protect vulnerable people (e.g. asylum seekers, victims of human trafficking), prevent cross-border crime and decrease corruption.

Myth 7

Free trade opens the door to unfair competition of partner countries' products on the EU market and cheaper labour

FALSE: Trade relations between the EU and partner countries are **mutually beneficial**. The eastern partnership countries offer new markets and consumers to European businesses, and the Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Areas with Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine allow citizens in those countries to benefit from greater choice, quality and safety of products available to them thanks to increased standards of consumer protection. EU exports to the six partner countries have nearly doubled, increasing from €16.3 billion in 2004 to €30 billion in 2016. The figures for the first eight months of 2017 are also promising, showing a clear growth in bilateral trade in all six countries. Customs controls at the EU's external borders mean that imported products must still comply with EU standards and requirements. The EU can also take measures if an EU-based industry complains about the damage caused by unfair practices such as dumping or subsidies.

Myth 8

Through the Eastern Partnership, the EU cooperates with authoritarian leaders that don't respect democracy or human rights

FALSE: The European Union was founded on **the principles of democracy and the respect for human rights**. It is a proponent and defender of these values both within the European Union and beyond its borders. The added value of the Eastern Partnership is that it offers a platform for the Member States of the European Union and the six partner countries to come together, share experience and good practice. Stronger governance, including the strengthening of institutions and good governance, is one of the priority areas of the Eastern Partnership. Outside of the Eastern Partnership framework, which is a multilateral framework, the European Union also enjoys strong bilateral relations with each of the individual countries, and addresses issues related to democracy and human rights in dedicated, annual dialogues.



Myth 9

Membership of the Eastern Partnership means that those countries can't be members of the Eurasian Economic Union

FALSE: Involvement in the Eastern Partnership initiative **does not exclude membership** of the Eurasian Economic Union. Armenia and Belarus, for example, participate in both. The EU is a **supporter of regional integration** in all areas of the world. But its support is based on the free choice of the participating countries and the respect for international law, including the respect for international borders. When it comes to the European Union's own cooperation with the Eurasian Economic Union, engagement is possible if the EU Member States decide to pursue this, in synchronisation with the implementation of Minsk agreements.

Myth 10

EU citizens don't benefit from the Eastern Partnership

FALSE: Stable, secure and prosperous countries in our neighbourhood **are essential for the EU's own stability, security, prosperity**, and of direct benefit to EU citizens. Building a common area that possesses these qualities is the objective of the Eastern Partnership. Furthermore, the Eastern Partnership brings **new markets and consumers for businesses on both sides**, especially through the signature of Association Agreements which include Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Areas. Under such agreements, geographical indications and intellectual property of EU citizens, businesses and regions are protected. Other benefits of the Eastern Partnership and of close relations with our eastern neighbours are the increase of tourism and of opportunities for exchanges, particularly for young people (e.g. [Erasmus+ programme](#), [Eastern Partnership Youth Forum](#)). The European Union is also supporting **independent media in the Eastern Partnership countries** as a critical and free media environment is crucial to democracy, which in turn promotes stability in the EU's neighbourhood.

[Learn more about the 5th Eastern Partnership summit](#)

