

Meet Ambitions and Consolidate Partnerships

EPP Declaration for the EU's EaP Riga Summit
21 May 2015



Recent developments in Eastern Europe have seriously challenged the very concept of the Eastern Partnership (EaP), which was originally developed in a different geopolitical context. Based on a shared community of values and a joint commitment to international law and fundamental values, as well as on the principles upon which the EU was founded, notably those of peace, friendship, solidarity and prosperity, the Eastern Partnership was put to the test by the Russian war against Ukraine and its interference in other states of the region, which has seriously undermined the EU and Eastern Partnership states' common endeavours to extend the area of prosperity, stability and security to the entire region. The new developments within the EaP states have brought the urgent need to strengthen the EaP policy, applying a more differentiated approach towards every single EaP state and subsequently acknowledging the European integration objective of those that are interested. Through better-developed, individual engagement for each country, the reinforcement of European security, stability and prosperity must be sought, as well as the consolidation of European values and principles in the region. It is high time to reinforce the EaP policy in the face of new challenges and enrich it with the principles of differentiation, conditionality, joint ownership, joint responsibility, solidarity, and "more for more".

The EPP EU and EaP leaders' met in Riga on 21 May 2015:

TO ASSESS ACHIEVEMENTS

Welcoming the ratification of the Association Agreements by the national parliaments of the EU Member States and the European Parliament. The Associated States call on the remaining Member States to swiftly ratify the Association Agreements to complete this process as soon as possible.

Highlighting the progress achieved in reaching the major goals set in the Vilnius Summit Joint Declaration.

Commending the signature and the launch of the provisional implementation by Georgia, the Republic of Moldova and Ukraine of the Association Agreements; reiterating its support for the reform process of Ukraine and the decision to start the DCFTA implementation as of 1 January 2016. The Associated States agreed on Association Agendas that will serve as the main monitoring tool for the implementation of AAs;

Commending the smooth and well-managed implementation of the visa-free regime with the Republic of Moldova, which is a vivid argument and stimulus for the development of people-to-people contacts and economic growth. Looking forward to the introduction of visa-free travel with Ukraine and Georgia in 2016, upon the final report of the European Commission based on the assessment of the relevant benchmarks in the implementation.

Looking forward to launching a Dialogue on the Visa Liberalisation with Armenia as soon as possible. **Welcoming** the progress achieved in the Visa Facilitation and Readmission Agreement with Azerbaijan and Belarus.

Appreciating the support the EU and the Member States have conveyed to Belarusian civil society and the solidarity with those who are exposed to political persecution in Belarus for their democratic beliefs.

Recognising the EURONEST Parliamentary Assembly as an important forum for multilateral, inter-parliamentary cooperation between the EU and the EaP countries, and taking note of the results of the EURONEST session held on 16-19 March in Yerevan.

TO MEET AMBITIONS

Declaring that the Eastern Partnership countries must be **free** and **sovereign** in exercising the right to determine their future, including to join any international organisation or alliance without being subjected to undue external pressure, threats or intimidation. The EU will remain supportive of the sovereign choice of the Eastern Partnership countries and their peoples.

Underlining that the Eastern Partnership policy requires a **thorough assessment** of its effectiveness, including an accurate evaluation of its successes and failures, and that it needs further reflection, a new impetus and a clear and strengthened vision for the way forward.

Recognising that now more than ever the Eastern Partnership societies in favour of integration with the European Union need strong, proactive and immediate support from the EU, which should be provided via different channels and policy sectors ranging from financial assistance to visa facilitation, from investing in immediate progress for citizens to support youth and future leaders as well as cultural and student exchange programmes.

Stressing that the Eastern Partnership countries differ in many respects and have different ambitions merged with different expectations; and therefore, **calling** for the creation of a more functional policy framework that could deal with such diversity, applying a genuine tailored approach to individual partner countries.

Believing that the Eastern Partnership must be forward-looking and flexible in order to provide long-term incentives for all partners, including those seeking to accomplish their European aspirations.

Stressing that a **European perspective** constitutes a **driving force for reforms** in these countries and further strengthens their commitment to shared values and principles such as democracy, the rule of law, fight against corruption, strong and independent justice systems, respect for human rights and good governance, and that the Eastern Partnership countries most committed to deepening relations with the EU and willing to undertake and implement the necessary reforms at both political and economic level should be duly taken into account and supported, thus creating an incentive for further European integration.

Declaring that the depth and scope of relations with each partner country should reflect its own **European integration ambition, commitment to shared values, and progress in reforms** based on EU legislation, assessed on the basis of clear benchmarks and on its own merits.

TO CONSOLIDATE PARTNERSHIPS

Inviting the EU to develop **more targeted support** aimed at assisting Eastern Partnership states in the implementation of the Association Agreements, and reforms, a particular emphasis being put on SMEs, as well as consolidating capacities of local self-governments and civil society, which will create a solid foundation for well-governed and prosperous states.

Emphasising the important role of **civil society** in the EaP countries as an integral element of a well-functioning democracy. Initiatives such as the Civil Society Forum, Civil Society Dialogue and Eastern Partnership Youth Forum are important tools in the structural engagement of civil society in the process of European integration and ensure its active involvement in cooperation with national authorities and their counterparts in EU Member States based on the principle of twinning homologues. Additional efforts should be made in assisting partner states via the active engagement of civil societies in countering information campaigns from outside aimed at discrediting the European integration path they have chosen to follow, inter alia by implementing the Association Agreements with the EU.

Underlining that strengthening partnerships with various organisations and sectors of society is crucial for enhancing ownership of the EaP policy by societies both within the EU and in partner countries.

Proposing to initiate a **dialogue format for EU-Belarus relations** with the participation of representatives of democratic organisations and the political opposition in Belarus. The end of the persecution of journalists, the freeing of political prisoners, the registration of public associations and political parties, the holding of free and fair elections and the admission of the opposition to the state media can contribute to national dialogue and compromise.

Expressing concern over the prosecution of political opponents, selective justice and violent incidents against the opposition in Georgia; **calling** on the Georgian Government to address concerns enumerated in the OSCE/ODIHR Trial Monitoring Report (2014) and focusing on the implementation of the Association Agreement agenda.

Welcoming efforts to build closer interconnection in energy and transport routes between the EU and the EaP countries as well as within the region and calling for more funds to be devoted, eligible as well for the Eastern Partnership states, to this particular purpose.

Emphasising that the EU and Eastern European partners face common challenges with regard to ensuring a reliable and safe energy supply. **Recalling** that energy security cooperation is clearly identified as a high priority under the Eastern Partnership.

Welcoming efforts undertaken and expecting further enhanced cooperation in the energy field to increase the energy security of both sides.

Calling on the EU to invite non-association partner countries – Armenia, Azerbaijan and Belarus, to engage in sectorial cooperation following a model of **ENP Plus tools**, including prospects for the conclusion of sectorial agreements that would facilitate the integration of the non-association partner countries into given sectorial parts of the single area of the four basic freedoms of the EU and **welcoming the common understanding** reached on the scope for a future agreement between the EU and Armenia, and looking forward to an early start of the negotiations.

TO IMPROVE SECURITY AND COOPERATION IN EASTERN EUROPE

Stressing that the Eastern Partnership is not aimed at damaging or hampering bilateral relations with the Russian Federation, or with any other third party, but, on the contrary, is open to developing synergies in order to create the most favourable conditions for the sustainable development of the common neighbours;

Underlining the importance of finding peaceful and negotiated settlements to the **frozen conflicts** in the region. Inviting the EU to further explore in its dialogue with the interested EaP partner countries the opportunities to strengthen their security and defence architecture using the CSDP framework. A mid-term goal should be to further strengthen cooperation in the field of the CSDP.

Reaffirming our full support for the efforts of the three co-chair countries of the OSCE Minsk Group, aimed exclusively at the peaceful resolution of the Nagorno Karabakh conflict, based on the norms and principles of international law, in particular those of non-use of force or threat of force, territorial integrity, and the equal rights and self-determination of peoples.

Welcoming the renewed increased efforts undertaken by the new Government of the Republic of Moldova aimed at achieving a comprehensive political resolution of the Transnistrian conflict on the basis of sovereignty and territorial integrity of the Republic of Moldova with a special status for the Transnistrian region in accordance with relevant OSCE ministerial statements. In this context participants support the implementation of confidence-building measures and call for unconditional continuation of the negotiations in the 5+2 format. Participants welcome an increased role of EU in promoting the conflict resolution process.

Condemning the Russian aggression against Ukraine, especially the illegal annexation of the Crimea and the city of Sevastopol and the occupation of some parts of the Donetsk and Lugansk regions of Ukraine, as well as the continued occupation of two Georgian regions in violation of the EU-brokered cease-fire agreement, which has seriously threatened security in Europe.

Calling for the full implementation of the Minsk Agreements, starting with the full respect of the ceasefire and removal of heavy weapons as well as the exchange of hostages, the release of unlawfully detained persons, including Nadia Savchenko, the restoration of full Ukrainian governmental control over the border, the withdrawal of all “foreign armed contingents”, weapons and mercenaries from Ukrainian territory. Full implementation of the Minsk Agreements constitutes a precondition for any improvement in relations with Russia.

Deploring the recent agreements of the Russian Federation with the two occupied regions in Georgia, the continuous failure to comply with the EU-brokered CFA, which constitutes the de facto annexation of the regions and therefore another brutal violation of international law undermining peace in Europe.

Highlighting the need for, if the above conditions are met, constructively engaging Russia in initiatives that reflect common interests in the context of a secure, stable and prosperous European continent, thus overcoming obsolete and dangerous thinking in terms of spheres of influence.

Believing the EU should focus on building capacities to promote security sector reform and engaging further in promoting and assisting in the peaceful settlement of conflicts in the region; in its policy towards its neighbours the EU should be enabled to show its solidarity when its partners are under threat.

Calling to initiate debates on possibilities of deployment on the EU CSDP Mission in support of implementation of the Minsk Agreements in line with the ideas suggested by Ukraine.

** The Armenian delegation approved this Declaration with reservations.*

**If you have any question
you would like to ask
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