

## Eastern Partnership

There is a need to strengthen the European offer in the Eastern direction and to develop an Eastern Partnership. Such a partnership should be based on, but go beyond the current ENP, confirming, on the one hand, the differentiation principle towards the neighbours, in line with the ENP, and, on the other hand, strengthening horizontal links between these neighbours and the EU. In this context, we propose:

- Deepening bilateral co-operation. An offer of more profound integration with the EU should be extended to all eastern partners. First and foremost Ukraine would benefit from this; others would follow according to ambition and performance.
- Creating a permanent formula for multilateral co-operation complementary to the existing regional co-operation schemes.

### **A deepened bilateral co-operation will include:**

- Deepening cooperation on the broader migration agenda and moving towards a visa-free regime as a long-term goal, and, in a short-term perspective, making a further step in the visa facilitation process. A road map towards visa freedom, with clearly laid down steps and conditions, should be established.
- Creating a deep Free Trade Area, built upon the basis of series of deep and comprehensive free trade agreements to be negotiated individually between the EU and the partner countries.
- Enhancing EU support to sector reforms in accordance with European standards.
- Intensifying people-to-people contacts through enhanced student and scholar exchange programmes, civil society platforms and seminars, cooperation and exchanges of local and regional partners etc.
- Adjusting the methodology of the internal reforms and promoting the EU integration process. A new generation of Action Plans, agreed with each of the partner countries, with clear benchmarks and linkage to the alignment towards EU legislation, standards and norms. Reforms should increasingly be assessed against EU standards, with due monitoring by the Commission.
- Successor agreements going beyond present PCA's could be offered to all eastern neighbours in due time and depending on reform progress. The New Enhanced Agreement with Ukraine could serve as a reference, with necessary adaptations to each of the partner countries.
- Ensuring a distribution of EU assistance funds that reflects progress in implementing agreed reform objectives as well as absorption capacity.
- The principle of differentiation among the partner countries is a key element.

## **Multilateral co-operation**

**Geographical scope:** The co-operation will include 27 EU countries and 6 Eastern partners, embraced by the ENP: Ukraine, Moldova, Azerbaijan, Armenia, Georgia and Belarus (the co-operation with Belarus would initially take place on a technical and expert level – an enhancement would take place if and when conditions allow). Projects within the ENPI framework could also be extended to Russia.

**Project-orientation:** The co-operation will be based on the implementation of concrete projects.

**Flexible participation in projects:** Involvement in activities conducted in the framework of the multilateral co-operation will be voluntary and dependent on the interest of particular countries in concrete projects.

**Complementarity with regional projects:** Multilateral co-operation with Eastern neighbours will be complementary with the existing regional initiatives: the Black Sea Synergy and the Northern Dimension.

### **Added value**

- Encouraging multilateral co-operation between the Eastern neighbours themselves, which will foster regional links.
- Creating a multilateral format to enable addressing issues which not only concern the regions of the Black Sea and the Baltic Sea, but also those which go beyond them, e.g. concerning land borders and initiatives strictly related to EU co-operation with the Eastern neighbours in the ENP framework.
- Enhancing an offer for Belarus, which has not been embraced by any of the EU multilateral initiatives so far. The multilateral co-operation would open an opportunity for inclusion of various social groups, e.g. the youth, SMEs and junior officials, in the co-operation with the European Union.

### **Financing**

Financial resources for the implementation of projects, launched within the multilateral co-operation, will come from the already available ENPI resources (including East regional and CBC lines). Therefore, strengthening the Eastern dimension will be neutral for the EU budget. The EU funds could be coupled with the EIB and EBRD credits, as well as resources handed over by willing EU member states, as well as EEA and other partner countries (promoting the Trust Fund mechanism).

### **Institutional framework**

An institutional structure should be as light-weight and goal-oriented as possible. It should be based on well-tried community mechanisms. Appointing a Special Coordinator might be an adequate formula, as well as creating appropriate working bodies (e.g. conferences or tables) as the needs arise. As the multilateral co-operation develops, ministerial meetings might become a matter for consideration. They could include the EU troika, neighbouring countries and the willing member states. Multilateral parliamentary co-operation would also be of use.

## **Areas of co-operation**

Areas of co-operation might be divided into the following subject fields:

### I: political and security

Democracy, common values, rule of law, as well as co-operation in the field of foreign and security policy, civil service and local administration;

### II: Borders and trans-border movement

Migrations, making visa regimes more flexible, border infrastructure;

### III: economic and financial

Implementation of reforms foreseen in the Action Plans; economic integration of the Eastern neighbours, removing trade barriers between the EU and the Eastern neighbourhood; development of transport and teleinformatic networks; energy; co-operation between independent regulators; tourism;

### IV: environment

Countering climatic change, environment-friendly technologies, developing ecological consciousness within society;

### V: social

Cross-border co-operation, people-to-people contacts, development of co-operation between NGOs, educational programmes, joint research.