



Q&A: The Eastern Partnership policy beyond 2020

Brussels, 18 March 2020

Why is the EU adopting a new policy framework for the Eastern Partnership beyond 2020?

With the current Eastern Partnership (EaP) “20 Deliverables for 2020” framework expiring at the end of this year, a wider reflection on its future was needed. Coinciding with the 10th anniversary of the launch of the Partnership, the European Council tasked the European Commission and the High Representative in June last year to present a further set of long-term policy objectives beyond 2020 in view of the next Eastern Partnership Summit this June.

The Eastern Partnership aims to strengthen and deepen political and economic relations between the European Union, its Member States and the six Eastern partner countries and remains a cornerstone of EU's foreign policy. The [new policy framework](#) will strengthen resilience in partner countries in light of today's challenges, foster sustainable development and deliver tangible results for citizens. It will also contribute to building a stronger Europe in the world.

What is the new EaP policy framework proposing? What is different/new?

Over the past ten years, the Eastern Partnership has delivered concrete, positive results for citizens in the EU and in its eastern neighbourhood. Based on the results of an extensive consultation process and the building on these achievements, [the new EaP policy](#) outlines five flexible and connected long-term policy objectives that aim at responding to new priorities, strengthening resilience to address common challenges, foster sustainable development and continue to deliver concrete results to citizens, namely:

1. Together for resilient, sustainable and integrated economies;
2. Together for accountable institutions, the rule of law and security;
3. Together towards environmental and climate resilience;
4. Together towards a resilient digital transformation; and
5. Together for resilient, fair and inclusive societies;

Our joint efforts will ensure that the EU and partners work together across the five objectives to better support the ecological and digital transformations, promote sustainable development and provide more decent job and economic opportunities, in particular for young people, and to promote gender equality.

What do you mean by strengthening resilience?

Resilience is multi-dimensional and contributes towards stability, security and prosperity. The EaP policy beyond 2020 focuses on the modernisation and implementation of sustainable reforms, which are key for investing in a resilient economy, democracy, environment and climate, and society.

Strengthening the resilience of the Eastern Partnership will be the core of our new policy in order to address jointly the common challenges in a changing global environment. This has also been reflected in the outcomes of the structured consultation.

When will the implementation of the new policy framework start? How much money will the EU invest?

The EaP Summit among Heads of State and Government in June this year will be an opportunity to endorse the proposed long-term policy framework and give a mandate to develop a new set of tangible deliverables, building on the current “20 Deliverables for 2020” agenda. The Commission and the European External Action Service will then propose realistic and measurable result-oriented deliverables in the second part of 2020, after further in-depth discussions with Member States, partners and key stakeholders.

The EaP policy beyond 2020 will guide our future joint work and assistance and set the basis for the future programming of the EU cooperation with partner countries at regional level, but also with clear indications for bilateral cooperation. As discussions on the future Multiannual Financial Framework are still ongoing, the specific amount of money to be invested in both bilateral and regional cooperation is still to be determined.

How will the EU help create jobs and opportunities in Eastern partner countries?

To support the creation of job and economic opportunities in partner countries, the EU is proposing to further deepen the economic integration with and among partner countries, and to increase trade, which has nearly doubled in the last decade. The EU will support the full implementation of the Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Areas (DCFTAs) with Ukraine, Georgia and Moldova, and also encourage enhanced cooperation with non- DCFTA countries, for example through sectoral trade facilitation arrangements of common interest involving all partners.

How will the new EaP policy address on issues of climate change and environmental protection?

Joint work on combating climate change, ensuring more opportunities for greening societies and economies and fostering a circular economy is an integral part of the Eastern Partnership policy framework beyond 2020. The EU will help partner countries to fulfil their nationally determined contributions to the Paris Agreement and modernise their economies, reducing their carbon footprint and moving towards climate neutrality, while acknowledging the investment challenges.

How will the new EaP policy address digital transformation?

As indicated in the [Strategy on Shaping Europe's digital future](#), the digital transformation can enable growth and drive sustainable development for both the EU and partner countries. This is why the EU will invest in the digital transformation of the partner countries, in line with EU legislation and best practice, and aim to extend the benefits of the Digital Single market to them. This will allow for better access to digital infrastructure and services, better public services and administration for citizens, the extension of broadband infrastructures especially in regions and local areas, and a strengthened e-Governance.

How will the new EaP policy address challenges to governance, rule of law and the fight against corruption?

Good governance, democracy, the rule of law and human rights are fundamental values that lie at the heart of the EU's relationship with partner countries and of the Eastern Partnership itself. They are also preconditions for a functioning market economy and for sustainable growth. In particular, the rule of law is a key factor in ensuring an effective business environment and an important consideration in attracting foreign direct investment.

The EU will keep working together with the governments of partner countries to strengthen the rule of law and anti-corruption mechanisms, as well as the independence, impartiality, efficiency and accountability of justice systems, and to reinforce public administration. The EU remains committed to promote and defend human rights in the region, including through its support to civil society and media.

There needs to be a renewed commitment to the fundamentals of the partnership and better measure the impact of judicial reforms. In this context, the EU will consider progress in rule of law reforms when deciding on assistance. Serious or prolonged stagnation or even backsliding in reform implementation should lead to EU funding being decreased, with the exception of support to civil society.

How will the new EaP policy address challenges to civil society space?

The Eastern Partnership goes beyond relations with governments. Partnerships with other key stakeholders, such as civil society organisations are equally important. Working with civil society has become an indispensable element of the Eastern Partnership and plays a vital role in promoting democracy, the rule of law and advancing key reforms.

In this regard, the EaP Civil Society Forum is a unique, multilateral platform for experience-sharing, mutual learning, support and partnership building. The EU will also further develop strategic partnerships with key civil society organisations to strengthen cooperation, build up the leadership skills of civil society activists, and engage with social partners such as trade unions and employers' organisations.

Will the EU continue to tackle fake news and disinformation from Russia?

In the wake of growing disinformation against EU values in recent years, the EU has worked to put in place a stronger and more strategic approach to communication. We have strengthened the EU's communication in partner countries through clear, tailor-made messaging and raising awareness of the positive impact of EU policies and actions to people across the region. Under the new Eastern Partnership framework, there will be a renewed focus on outreach to youth. Strategic communication is crucial for building resilience and is a core duty for policy-makers at the service of citizens.

The EU will also consider providing training opportunities and capacity building to the partner countries, including on countering hybrid threats, where appropriate.

You say the EU will work with the Eastern partners to tackle common challenges, what

about Coronavirus?

The concept of resilience is even more important against the background of the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic. The EU will support partner countries in the area of public health, in particular in the modernisation of medical facilities, e-health, training of medical staff and providing affordable medical care and promoting access. This will include support in better addressing communicable and non communicable diseases as in the case of the coronavirus disease (COVID-19).

The EU is also looking at what can be done in terms of mitigating the socio-economic consequences of the crisis, for example how to adjust SME support schemes to take into account liquidity and other challenges they face. When it comes to state aid, the Commission allows more flexibility in the EU state aid rules, to allow for swift support for companies in the Member States. The flexibility is by extension valid also for the partners, while staying within the provisions of the Association Agreements and DCFTAs.

What has the EaP delivered in the past 10 years?

Over the past 10 years, the Eastern Partnership has progressed based on common values, mutual interests and commitments, as well as on shared ownership and responsibility. This strategic partnership has matured and evolved with achievements such as Association Agreements (including Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Areas), a Comprehensive Enhanced Partnership Agreement, Visa Facilitation and Readmission Agreements, visa liberalisations and Partnership priorities, which are today the cornerstones of our relations and cooperation.

Trade between the EU and Eastern partner countries has nearly doubled in the last decade. The EU is the first trading partner for Azerbaijan, Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine and second biggest for Armenia and Belarus. In the period between 2016 and 2019, trade volumes between the EU and Armenia went up by 27%, by 55% with Azerbaijan, by 40% with Belarus, by 7% with Georgia, by 42% with Moldova and by 50% with Ukraine.

Furthermore, over 125,000 small- and medium-sized companies in the Eastern partners have benefitted from EU funding, creating or sustaining more than 250,000 jobs. More than €60 million was allocated to almost 7,250 SMEs led by women and 290 women entrepreneurs received training through the EU4Business initiative in 2018 alone.

In the area of transport connectivity, a €20 million technical assistance facility to help implementation of the extension of the Trans-European Transport Network has been set up. The EU's TENT-T extension foresees 4,800 km of new and rehabilitated roads and railways by 2030, which will open new opportunities for economic development and exchanges between the EU and Eastern partner countries and amongst themselves.

In terms of investments to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, through the Eastern Europe Energy Efficiency and Environment Partnership, the E5P Fund has provided more than €150 million in investment grants to 36 projects benefitting 8 million people. This has made it possible to leverage almost €800 million in total investments.

The Eastern Partnership is also delivering for the youth and researchers. The EU has supported 100 projects supporting civic engagement and entrepreneurship amongst the young people and 23.000 young people in the region have benefitted from EU4Youth grants to support six large-scale projects to boost youth employment, their employability and transition to work and 915 researchers from the region benefit from the Marie Curie scheme.

Since 2016, 32.000 students and academic staff from the Eastern partner countries have participated in academic exchanges thanks to Erasmus+ and 46.000 young people were involved in other exchanges, including volunteering.

The structured consultation in 2019 confirmed that the Eastern Partnership is robust and delivering concrete benefits to citizens. The results-oriented approach "20 deliverables for 2020" has delivered notably on stronger economy, stronger connectivity and stronger society. There have been some achievements when it comes to stronger governance, but more remains to be done on the rule of law, the fight against corruption, independent media and civil society space.

For More Information

[Joint Communication: Eastern Partnership policy beyond 2020: Reinforcing Resilience – an Eastern Partnership that delivers for all](#)

[Press Release: Eastern Partnership: new policy objectives for beyond 2020](#)

[Factsheet: Eastern Partnership beyond 2020](#)

[Factsheet on EU-Armenia relations](#)

[Factsheet on EU-Azerbaijan relations](#)

[Factsheet on EU-Belarus relations](#)

[Factsheet on EU-Georgia relations](#)

[Factsheet on EU-Moldova relations](#)

[Factsheet on EU-Ukraine relations](#)

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