



EUROPEAN COMMISSION

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Dear President,

The Commission would like to thank the Camera Deputaților for its Opinion concerning the Joint Communication on the Review of the European Neighbourhood Policy {JOIN(2015) 50 final}.

The Commission would also like to take this opportunity to thank the Camera Deputaților once more for the contribution it made in May 2015 to the consultation on the review of the European Neighbourhood Policy, which was studied with interest.

The Commission has taken note of the Camera Deputaților's thorough assessment of the European Neighbourhood Policy and of the current situation in the region and beyond. As the Camera Deputaților rightly points out, variable geometry – i.e. differentiation – is key to supporting partner countries wishing to pursue their relations with the EU.

A more integrated and comprehensive approach is needed in order to tackle the many challenges in the region, bringing together the European Neighbourhood Policy, the Common Foreign and Security Policy, the security dimension, the EU's migration policy, etc. The close involvement of Member States is key in this regard.

As regards the Camera Deputaților's call for coherence in the development of wider policy frameworks, the Commission recalls that the findings of the review of the Neighbourhood Policy will feed in to the development of the High Representative's Global Strategy. As regards outreach beyond the neighbourhood and the development of thematic frameworks, ongoing discussions with partner countries on the bilateral track are expected to provide further guidance on how to take these proposals forward in the near future.

In addition, the Commission would like to underline that the European Neighbourhood Policy Review reiterates a strong commitment to the respect for human rights, democracy and the rule of law. Rather than seeking to depart from its own values and principles or the lowest common denominator, the reviewed policy will – with the support of Member States – identify more effective ways of engaging with all partners in

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an inclusive dialogue on human rights and democracy issues, including on areas where experiences may differ.

As regards the Camera Deputaţilor's statement that associated partner countries should be given clear prospects for European integration, transforming the Neighbourhood Policy into a future enlargement policy, the Commission would like to refer to the Joint Communication which states that '[w]here a partner wishes to pursue deeper relations with the EU based on shared values, work will develop on the existing basis. The EU will work with those partners to further develop their relations and to maximise the benefits for both parties to those [existing] agreements.'

In addition, the Commission strongly believes that EU funding provided to partner countries in the neighbourhood has significantly contributed to the implementation of jointly agreed objectives and to bringing the partners closer to the EU. The Commission would like to recall that the allocation of funds under the European Neighbourhood Instrument, which is the main EU funding source for the neighbouring countries, is based on the Regulation establishing a European Neighbourhood Instrument¹. Article 4(1) of the Regulation sets out in detail the specific criteria for setting allocations, including progress on reforms. Furthermore, in line with the incentive based approach, overall allocations are adapted taking into account progress in democracy and human rights and other jointly agreed reform objectives.

Also, while EU relations with the Russian Federation may have been impacted as a result of the illegal annexation of Crimea and Sebastopol and the destabilisation of Eastern Ukraine, the Commission does not agree with the Camera Deputaţilor that the Russian Federation has acquired a de facto veto on EU action. The reviewed European Neighbourhood Policy has been designed to take into account externalities in the region, of which an increasingly assertive Russian foreign policy is but one example. As stated in the Joint Communication, there are limits to the EU's leverage, but the reviewed European Neighbourhood Policy will play its part in helping to create the conditions for positive development.

According to the proposals outlined in the Joint Communication, work is ongoing on the implementation of the review of the European Neighbourhood Policy and further discussions will take place with Member States, as well as with partner countries and their civil societies, for instance on the proposal to discuss new partnership priorities.

The Commission hopes that the points made above address the concerns raised by the Camera Deputaţilor and looks forward to continuing our political dialogue in the future.

Yours faithfully,

*Frans Timmermans
First Vice-President*

*Federica Mogherini
High Representative/Vice-President*

¹ Regulation (EU) No 232/2014 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 11 March 2014 establishing a European Neighbourhood Instrument.