

Statement by the Committee on Foreign Affairs 2019/20:UU16

The Committee's examination

The Committee on Foreign Affairs has examined the joint communication on the Eastern Partnership policy beyond 2020, JOIN(2020) 7.

Ever since the Eastern Partnership was launched in 2009 at the initiative of Sweden and Poland, the Committee has followed its development closely through presentations, statements, reports and travel. The Committee has, for example, taken up the Eastern Partnership in the reports and statements 2014/15:UU18, 2015/16:UU5, 2016/17:UU10, 2017/18:UU10, 2018/19:UU4 and 2018/19:UU4.

The Committee welcomes the fact that the development of the Partnership has been placed high on the EU agenda with the work to establish new, long-term political goals for the Eastern Partnership beyond 2020, and that the countries in the Eastern Partnership remain positive to this cooperation. The Committee is positive to the overriding policy framework of strengthening resilience and that the EU and its member states and partner countries will work together in achieving the policy objectives of resilient, sustainable and integrated economies, for accountable institutions, rule of law and security, for environmental and climate resilience, for a resilient digital transition, and for resilient, fair and inclusive societies.

The Committee stresses that promoting democratic development and economic integration in the EU's neighbourhood is among the EU's key foreign policy tasks. The neighbourhood policy is the central instrument in achieving stability, security and welfare in the EU's neighbourhood. The Committee furthermore considers that a long-term, stable development must be based on respect for human rights, democracy and rule of law, and that increased respect for women's rights, women's political participation and gender equality are of central importance to peace, security, democracy and sustainable development, and must therefore be clearly highlighted within the framework of the EU's neighbourhood policy. At a time characterised by a decline of democracy and human rights, incentives to promote these values within the framework of the Eastern Partnership are particularly important.

The Committee furthermore emphasises, as it did in report 2018/19:UU4, that last year was the tenth anniversary of the establishment of the Eastern Partnership, and that Sweden continues to support the ambition of the countries in the Eastern Partnership to develop closer ties with the EU and to implement the reforms necessary for a closer relationship. In addition, the Committee underlines that Sweden needs to continue to be a driving force for the Partnership within the EU.

The Committee supports the EU's incentive-based strategy ("more for more" and "less for less") which continues to favour the partner countries that commit the most to the reforms. The Committee emphasises that, in line with the more-for-more principle, there should be a clear membership perspective for the partner countries that are geographically situated in Europe and that implement political reforms for democracy, human rights and rule of law, as well as economic reforms.

The Committee maintains that more in-depth technical and sectoral cooperation is needed to promote ongoing work, but also political ambition in order to generate continued energy for time-consuming reform processes. The Committee continues to support reform processes in Ukraine and other countries in the EU's eastern neighbourhood.

Finally, the Committee underlines the importance of the European Green Deal and that a key component of the Partnership is decreasing carbon dioxide emissions and, at the same time, strengthening resilience to environmental impact and climate change.

The Committee notes that, on 22 April 2020, the Commission submitted a Communication in which it proposed that macroeconomic support should be used to support enlargement and neighbouring countries in connection with the COVID-19 crisis, including countries in the Eastern Partnership.

The Committee has nothing else to add regarding the examined joint communication.