

The Eastern Partnership – Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ)

European Union External Action

Source: http://eeas.europa.eu/eastern/faq/index_en.htm

Why did the EU and partner countries launch the Eastern Partnership?

Because the time was ripe to step up EU's relations with its eastern neighbours. Events in Eastern Europe and in the Southern Caucasus affect the EU. Successive EU enlargements have brought these countries closer to the EU and their security, stability and prosperity increasingly impacts on the EU's. All these countries, to varying degrees, are implementing political, social and economic reforms, and have stated their wish to come closer to the EU.

The policy towards these countries has to be strong, proactive and unequivocal: with the Eastern Partnership, the EU offers its Eastern partners concrete, far-reaching support for democratic and market-oriented reforms and thus contributes to their political and economic stability. The multilateral component of the Eastern Partnership gives the EU an additional instrument to foster reforms, by providing a forum for the six partner countries to exchange experience and information in the framework of four platforms. The Eastern Partnership is a joint policy of the European Union and its Eastern Partners, aimed at bringing the EU's eastern neighbours closer. It is based on common values and has three objectives:

- accelerating political association;
- furthering economic integration between the European Union and its eastern neighbours;
- providing for citizen's mobility.

Which countries participate in the Eastern Partnership?

All 28 EU Member States and [Armenia](#), [Azerbaijan](#), [Belarus](#), [Georgia](#), [Republic of Moldova](#) and [Ukraine](#).

Why have such different countries decided to cooperate with the EU within one multilateral framework?

While the eastern partners may not have identical objectives in their relationship with the EU, they all seek to intensify their relations with the EU. The Eastern Partnership is the EU's reply to the challenges and aspirations of the partner countries – the EU has a vital interest in seeing further economic development, greater democratic governance and increased stability in its eastern neighbourhood.

Based on progress made in the European Neighbourhood Policy ([ENP](#)), the Eastern Partnership offers both bilateral and multilateral measures for enhanced cooperation. The partner countries will become closer to the EU, in line with their individual capabilities and within their own timeframes. Together, eastern partners will cooperate more on issues related to the EU and share their experience and best practices with one another. The Partnership is not about abstract values – it is about developing democracy, promoting human rights, the rule of law and good governance, and securing fundamental rights and freedoms in the Eastern European partner countries.

What about conditionality – is the offer the same for each partner country despite different level of engagements with the EU?

No, the principle of the ENP will be maintained: how far we go in relations with each country will continue to depend on the progress made by the partners in their reform and modernisation efforts. The Eastern Partnership is clearly about both – common interests and shared values.

Why was Belarus invited to be a member of the Eastern Partnership while Belarus does not participate in the ENP?

Belarus is an important eastern neighbour, interested in developing its relations with the EU. Depending on its own choices and decisions, Belarus may benefit from the Eastern Partnership to intensify bilateral relations with the EU. Belarus has a real opportunity to become an active partner of the EU in the framework of the European Neighbourhood Policy provided that the

country embarks further on fundamental democratic and economic reforms and brings itself closer to the EU's common values. As a first step, Belarus could participate in the activities of multilateral platforms.

What about the Russian Federation? Is this proposal anti-Russian?

This is not at all an anti-Russian initiative. We are responding to a desire expressed throughout the countries in our eastern neighbourhood who want to substantially deepen and widen their relations with the EU. We always stress that the members of the EaP will need good working relations with all their neighbours, including the Russian Federation.

What are the main new points in this initiative?

- New association agreements (AAs), including deep and comprehensive free trade agreements (DCFTAs), for those willing and ready to take on the far-reaching commitments with the EU that these entail.
- Comprehensive programmes funded by the EU to improve partners' administrative capacity so that they are in a position to take up our offer.
- "Mobility and security pacts", allowing for easier legitimate travel to the EU while at the same time stepping up efforts to combat corruption, organised crime and illegal migration. These pacts would also cover the upgrading of asylum systems to EU standards and the establishment of integrated border management structures, etc. The ultimate long-term goal would be full visa liberalisation, on a case-by-case basis, provided that conditions for well-managed and secure mobility are in place.
- The Commission is studying options for labour mobility with the aim of further opening up the EU labour market.
- Enhanced energy security in the partner countries themselves and with the European Union, including through support to investment in infrastructure, better regulation, energy efficiency and more efficient early warning systems to prevent disruption of supply.
- Multilateral track – platforms – support individual countries' efforts by providing a framework in which common challenges can be addressed. Four policy platforms exist on: democracy, good governance and stability; economic integration and convergence with EU policies; energy security and transport; and contacts between people. They serve as forums for open discussion

and include representatives from government ministries and agencies, parliaments, civil society, international organisations, international financial institutions, the private sector, as well as economic and social partners. Each Platform has established expert panels in various areas to guide the implementation of its work programmes.

- Enhanced cooperation on environment and climate issues;
- Increased people-to-people contacts and greater involvement of civil society and other stakeholders.

Within the framework of the multilateral track, five high profile initiatives (flagship initiatives) serve the countries' interests at the same time as our own:

- improved border management: focusing on improving security, reducing smuggling and human trafficking and facilitating mobility of people across non-EU borders;
- support to small and medium business: supporting the needs of SMEs to promote growth and employment;
- support to reforms in the energy sector: focusing on improving the integration of the electricity net and encouraging sustainable energy as a way to address security of energy suppliers;
- support to environment governance: promoting environmental protection and climate change adaptation by strengthening environmental governance in the partner countries;
- disaster response: developing and reinforcing the capacity of partner countries in disaster prevention and preparedness at local, national and regional level.

The 3rd Eastern Partnership Summit in Vilnius in November 2013 marked an important step forward in the advancement of the Eastern Partnership. It was the first Summit where concrete deliverables were registered, notably:

- the initialling of the AA/DCFTAs with Georgia and Moldova;
- signature of the Visa Facilitation Agreement with Azerbaijan;
- signature of the Framework Participation Agreement with Georgia, for participation in EU-led crisis management operations;
- initialling of the Civil Aviation Agreement with Ukraine.

What is the current EU financial support for the Eastern partner countries?

The European Union already provides funding to the Eastern Partner countries for bilateral programmes under the European Neighbourhood Policy Instrument (ENPI). In total, €2.5 billion was made available for bilateral and regional programmes in support of the Partnership's objectives in 2010-13. Between 2011 and 2013 the funding was as follows:

- Armenia: €182 million
- Azerbaijan: €75.5 million
- Belarus: €41.5 million
- Georgia: €208 million
- Moldova: €308 million
- Ukraine: €389 million

In addition to the ENPI, partner countries can profit from funds from:

- [Erasmus](#) supporting the mobility of individual students and staff from partner countries to the EU with over 2 300 scholarships for students/staff to study in the EU;
- Neighbourhood Investment Facility (NIF) a financial mechanism aimed at mobilising additional funding to cover the investment needs of Partner countries for infrastructure in sectors such as transport, energy, the environment and social issues;
- the European Instrument for Democracy and Human Rights ([EIDHR](#)) providing support for the promotion of democracy and human rights in non-EU countries;
- cross-border cooperation aimed at strengthening cooperation between the EU's border regions and partners to foster the economic/social development of border regions;
- [Horizon 2020](#) is the European grant and subsidy framework for innovation and research and development with a €70 billion budget for 2014-2020;
- the Eastern Partnership [Culture Programme](#) strengthens regional cultural links and dialogue between the EU and partners cultural networks and actors.

Is there new financing involved?

When creating the Eastern Partnership in 2009, the EU assigned €600 million, increasing the overall ENPI funding envelope for eastern partners to €2.5 billion for the period 2011-2013.

This €600 million includes a top-up of €350 million of fresh funds, and €250 million that was redirected from the ENPI Regional Programme East to multilateral projects in the years 2010-2013.

Financial support contributes to the deepening of bilateral relations with the EU and is based on joint priorities identified in the multi-annual ‘National Indicative Programmes’.

How will the Eastern Partnership address security issues?

By effectively bringing Eastern partners closer to the EU, like the ENP, the Eastern Partnership will contribute to the stability and security on the EU’s borders while enhancing good neighbourly relations and effective cooperation among partners. The Eastern Partnership will also seek to promote confidence in the region by increasing political contacts between partners (including among administrations, members of parliaments, NGOs and citizens) as well as reducing trade barriers. The Eastern Partnership foresees in addition more cooperation on specific issues within the EU’s Common Foreign Security Policy and European Security Defense Policy, including the participation of partner countries in EU missions and exercises and the coordination of diplomatic activities. Security-related early-warning systems will be enhanced, with particular focus on conflict areas. Closer cooperation on arms-export practices and non-proliferation is also envisaged.

What is the Eastern Partnership offering to the civil society organisations in partner countries?

The development and involvement of civil society is a key factor for the success of the democratic and market-oriented reforms. The Commission supports civil society actors and engages them in the initiative through the Eastern Partnership Civil Society Forum (CSF). The Prague Summit of 2009 endorsed the idea of establishing a forum which would promote contacts among civil society organisations of the EaP and facilitate dialogue with public authorities. The Forum facilitates the sharing of information and experience on the partner countries' steps towards transition, reform and modernisation. The mandate of the CSF is to influence EU

institutions and national governments by presenting the recommendations of the CSF during their decision-making process.

Does the Eastern Partnership mean that the EU will offer an enlargement perspective to all/some of its Eastern neighbours?

Participation in the Eastern Partnership does not contain an accession perspective but it will go ahead without prejudice to individual participating countries' aspirations for their future relationship with the European Union.

How does the Eastern Partnership work in practice?

The success of this initiative depends on strong political will from EU Member States and partner countries alike – joint ownership is essential.

The Commission plays a crucial role in making the multilateral framework an effective tool for cooperation and in developing the Comprehensive Institution Building Programmes with individual countries to offer more intensive support for reforms.

- There are biannual meetings of Heads of States or Governments involving the 28 EU Member States and the partner countries of the Eastern Partnership.
- Annual meetings of Ministers of Foreign Affairs review progress and provide more detailed political guidance.
- Platform meetings are held at least twice a year at the level of senior officials engaged in the reform work in relevant policy areas. These meetings, prepared and chaired by the Commission, take place within the framework of the four thematic platforms (democracy, good governance and stability; economic integration and convergence with EU policies; energy security and transport; and contacts between people). The platforms report to the annual Ministers of Foreign Affairs meetings.
- The work of the platforms may occasionally be promoted through sector-specific ministerial meetings. Each platform establishes expert panels in order to support its work in specific areas. Panels meet as often as appropriate and in a format fitting with the need.

Bilateral cooperation continues through the structures of the European Neighbourhood Policy.

What about the Black Sea? Isn't the Eastern Partnership duplicating existing cooperation?

NO. The EaP complements the [Black Sea Synergy](#) (covering five Eastern ENP countries, Russia and Turkey, but not Belarus) and other regional cooperation initiatives. The Black Sea Synergy aims to solve problems which require region-wide efforts and attention. Its centre of gravity is the Black Sea. The Eastern Partnership will pursue alignment of partner countries with the EU. Its centre of gravity will be Brussels.

In March 2009 the European Council underlined the EU's commitment to strengthening the Black Sea Synergy and supporting its implementation in several sectors, such as: environment (Environment partnership launched in March 2010), maritime affairs and fisheries, civil society (Black Sea Civil Society Forum), cross border cooperation (Black Sea basin CBC Programme), research and innovation, education, and tourism.