

Eastern Partnership and Development Cooperation

The last rounds of EU enlargement to Central and Eastern Europe have brought new perspectives to development cooperation policies in terms of expanding the geographic focus towards the Eastern neighbourhood. The EU and its Member States are now looking more and more at how they can support building stability and prosperity in the Eastern Partnership countries: Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine.

This paper explores how the Eastern Partnership (EaP) initiative contributes to the strengthening of ties both between the constituent countries of the EaP and the European Union and the EU Member States. The emphasis is on the civil society's role as a driving force in addressing challenges in the region and building regional cooperation at the grassroots level.

What is the Eastern Partnership?

The Eastern Partnership (EaP) is a foreign policy initiative of the European Union (EU), which aims to develop links with **Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, Moldova** and **Ukraine**. It is a specific Eastern dimension of the European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP) alongside with the Black Sea Synergy.

Launched by 27 EU Member States (MSs) and the six

partner countries at the Prague Summit in May 2009¹, the EaP declared the ambitious goal of significantly strengthening the **political association and economic integration** between the EU and the six partner countries via bilateral and multilateral means. The signatories of the declaration expressed hope that a shared commitment to **stability, security and prosperity** will improve the relationship between all of the participating countries and guarantee peace.

Furthermore, it was agreed that the deep cooperation will be jointly and transparently developed, and that it will be based on mutual interests and commitments as well as on shared ownership and responsibility. The **common values** include democracy, the rule of law and the respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms, but also to, market economy, sustainable development and good governance.

The EaP is supposed to engage a wide range of actors, involving government ministries and agencies, parliaments, civil society, international organisations (such as the OSCE, Council of Europe and OECD), international financial institutions, the private sector, economic and social partners in the framework of multilateral platforms.

¹ Read the full declaration at:

http://ec.europa.eu/europeaid/where/neighbourhood/eastern_partnership/documents/prague_summit_declaration_en.pdf

How is the EaP related to development policy?

Firstly, the six countries included in the EaP are all considered developing countries by the OECD-DAC², which means that the EU and its MSs are actively giving **Official Development Assistance (ODA)** to them to advance the socio-economic status there. Similarly, the European Commission has stated that the EU has a growing responsibility to help its Eastern partners address the economic and political challenges that they face and to support their aspirations for closer ties through the EaP³.

Secondly, there are obvious **value-based links** between the European development policy and the EaP as they both emphasise the core principles such as respect for human rights, democracy and good governance. The EaP is based on a clear political message about the need to maintain and encourage reforms in the partner countries from the East, which makes it complementary to assistance provided through other development cooperation instruments.



Although **poverty eradication** has not been one of the centre topics of Eastern Partnership, there are civil society and other actors who constantly call to have more focus on combating poverty and social exclusion in EaP⁴. According to the EuroNest Parliamentary Assembly, the Commission's 2011 country reports on Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia, the Republic of Moldova, and Ukraine show that several of these countries had more than 30% of their population living

² Armenia, Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine are classified as Lower Middle Income Countries, Azerbaijan and Belarus as Upper Middle Income Countries. More info: <http://www.oecd.org/dac/stats/DAC%20List%20used%20for%202012%20and%202013%20flows.pdf>

³ COM(2008) 823 final

⁴ http://www.eap-csf.eu/assets/files/Chisinau/Resolutions/RESOLUTION_Fighting_poverty_social_exclusion.pdf

below the national poverty line.⁵

The socio-economic and political development of the EaP countries is especially close and important to many EU member states in Central and Eastern Europe. Partly because of common Soviet history and close geographical links, many EU member states that joined the community since 2004⁶ have chosen their **priority countries for official development assistance** from the EaP region. In fact, in 2011 more than 26% of the combined bilateral project ODA of most EU13 countries⁷ went to EaP countries. In comparison, the older EU member states (EU15) spend only about 0.5% of their regional bilateral ODA in EaP countries.⁸ From the newer EU member states, only Malta, Cyprus and Croatia do not have any EaP countries as their priority country or area for development cooperation. Estonia, Lithuania and Poland have all six EaP countries as their priority countries while Latvia and Bulgaria have three and Romania, Slovenia and Hungary have two.

How is the EaP different from other regional initiatives?

In addition to the EaP, the **Black Sea Synergy** also focuses on cooperation in the Eastern Neighbourhood of the EU. The EaP and the Black Sea Synergy are complementary initiatives and have many similarities. However, while the EaP is an institutionalised forum for discussions, aiming at improving the political and economic relations and building stable relationship with the EU, the Black Sea Synergy focuses on encouraging regional cooperation and stability between all the countries surrounding the Black Sea, including Turkey and Russia⁹.

Bilateral elements of the EaP

The bilateral cooperation on EaP between the EU and each partner country is focused on four main

⁵ http://www.euronest.europarl.europa.eu/euronest/webdav/site/mySite/shared/general_documents/third_ordinary_session_2013/Resolutions/resolution_soc_28052013_en.pdf

⁶ Czech Republic, Cyprus, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Hungary, Malta, Poland, Slovenia and Slovakia joined the EU in 2004, Bulgaria and Romania in 2007 and Croatia in 2013.

⁷ Source of the data is the database of OECD.Stat. The data does not include Bulgaria, Croatia, Latvia and Malta. Administrative costs are not included in the regional disbursement but in the sectoral aggregate official and private flows.

<http://stats.oecd.org/Index.aspx?datasetcode=TABLE2A>

⁸ In total numbers the EU15 countries spent three times more resources on bilateral project aid in EaP countries than the nine countries from EU12. Source of the data: OECD.Stat.

⁹ The Black Sea Synergy, <http://eeas.europa.eu/blacksea/>

areas. First, in terms of economic integration, the main emphasis is on establishing bilateral **deep and comprehensive free trade areas** between the EU and partner countries, where the trade and investment liberalisation and regulatory approximation of the partner country to EU laws and standards becomes a reality after signing and implementing the Association Agreements.

Second, the EaP emphasises the importance of **institution-building** in partner countries to improve their administrative capacity, including through training, technical assistance and other innovative measures.

Third, **mobility of citizens** and visa liberalisation in a secure environment is also a central aspect of the EaP.

Fourth, the bilateral aspect of the EaP aims to strengthen **energy security** through cooperation with regard to long-term stable and secure energy supply and transit, including through better regulation, energy efficiency and more use of renewable energy sources.

Multilateral structure of the EaP

The multilateral cooperation operates on a basis of joint decisions of the EU and the partner countries. It serves as a forum to share information and experience on the partner countries' steps towards transition, reform and modernisation and is an additional instrument for the EU to accompany these processes.

The most important decisions regarding the EaP are made at the **biennial meetings of heads of state or government**. The ministers of foreign affairs meet every year.

More detailed discussions take place at the **four thematic platforms** currently organised by the European Commission. These platforms are designed as a space for open and free discussions on the main areas of cooperation, namely (1) democracy, good governance and stability; (2) economic integration and convergence with EU sectoral policies; (3) energy security; and (4) contacts between people. The platforms meet at least twice a year at the level of senior officials. Participation in them is voluntary and based on the countries' interests.

The multilateral track of the EaP is advanced through a number of **flagship initiatives**¹⁰, which give additional momentum, concrete substance and more visibility to the Partnership. The initiatives seek to

¹⁰Read more about the flagship initiatives from: <http://eeas.europa.eu/eastern/initiatives/>

mobilise multi-donor support, funding from different international financial institutions and investment from the private sector. So far, six flagship initiatives have been announced.

How is the Eastern Partnership funded?

At the launch on EaP in 2009, the EU assigned €600m to it, increasing the overall amount of **European Neighbourhood and Partnership Instrument (ENPI)** funds for the Eastern partners to **€1,9bn during 2010-2013**¹¹. The EaP funds are incorporated into the ENPI and are dispensed by the Commission in accordance with usual ENPI procedures. The financial responsibility for tendering and contracting the activities financed through the ENPI is with the European Commission. Depending on the nature of specific projects it disburses funds to various beneficiaries:

- **Comprehensive Institution Building projects** – administrations of partner states, EU Member States, and EU institutions involved in training and other institutional reform programmes (e.g. twinning, TAIEX, EU advisory missions) (€175m);
- **Pilot Regional Development Programmes** – public administrations of partner states, local authorities, SMEs and NGOs (€75m);
- **Multilateral dimension** – commercial companies, which won in public tenders, as well as NGOs and other organisations, which received grants through public calls for proposals, and public administrations of partner and member states (€350m).¹²

The multilateral dimension is funded through the above-mentioned flagship initiatives amounted to more than 166.6 million euros.

Another important financial support for the EaP countries comes from the **Neighborhood Investment Facility**¹³ which pools funds from the European Commission, MSs and loans from European public Finance Institutions to support capital intensive infrastructure projects.

The ENPI also has a special programme for the support of civil society in the EaP countries – the **Eastern Neighbourhood Civil Society Facility**. More than 37 million euros were distributed to CSOs

¹¹ Funding details from <http://www.easternpartnership.org/content/eastern-partnership-funds>

¹² Funding details from <http://www.easternpartnership.org/content/eastern-partnership-funds>

¹³ http://ec.europa.eu/europeaid/where/neighbourhood/regional-cooperation/irc/investment_en.htm

between 2011 and 2013 through this programme.

As of 2014 the ENPI will be replaced by **European Neighbourhood Instrument** (ENI). The proposed ENI budget for 2014-2020 was €18.2 billion which is a significant increase from the previous period's budget¹⁴ and would also increase funding for EaP.

In May 2011, after the Arab Spring, a new approach to European Neighbourhood policy¹⁵ was proposed, which also has effects to the Eastern Partnership. In the new financial instrument ENI, the allocation of funds will be more policy-driven and include some new principles, such as the **'more for more' principle**, which entails that partners that are genuinely implementing a comprehensive democratisation process, will receive significantly increased support from the EU compared to countries that are not implementing meaningful reforms.

What are some of the main challenges?

While the goals set by the EaP seem clear and understandable, their implementation has faced numerous problems. First, some partner countries, like Ukraine, are **lacking the political will** to fully cooperate for the common goals and the European integration has been highly bureaucracy-led, quite sporadic and slow¹⁶. Second, the EaP is seen as strikingly **ambiguous**, and the words and actions of EaP and the ENP contradict, suggesting that the EU is putting the partner countries off with double standards¹⁷. Third, the EU's unwillingness to offer **membership perspective**, not differentiating between the countries and not giving enough support to including the civil society in the reform process have made the initiative less successful in some countries¹⁸. Fourth, the EaP faces challenges concerning EU's and the EaP countries' **relationships with Russia** as a result of the EaP initiative. Russian effort to create the Eurasian Union is a clear example of this.

¹⁴http://www.enpi-info.eu/main.php?id=27348&id_type=1, as of October 2013 the final agreement about the amounts allocated for ENI for 2014-2020 are not agreed yet.

¹⁵http://ec.europa.eu/world/enp/pdf/com_11_303_en.pdf

¹⁶ Wolczuk, Katarzyna. (2009): Implementation without Coordination: The Impacts of EU Conditionality on Ukraine under the European Neighbourhood Policy. In *Europe-Asia Studies*, 61: 2, pp. 187-211

¹⁷ Korosteleva, Elena A. (2011): Change or Continuity: Is the Eastern Partnership an Adequate Tool for the European Neighbourhood. In *International Relations*, 25: 2, pp. 243-262.

¹⁸ Solonenko, Iryna (2011): Added Value? Eastern Partnership and EU-Ukraine Bilateral Relations. In: *Internationale Politik und Gesellschaft* (3), S. 120-133.

What is the role of civil society in the EaP?

The signatories of the EaP have recognised civil society organisations (CSOs) as important actors in the society in all participating countries. The role of the CSOs is to participate in policy-making, suggest new initiatives, hold governments accountable and promote the common values of the EaP.

In its Communication of December 2008¹⁹, the European Commission proposed establishing an **Eastern Partnership Civil Society Forum** (CSF)²⁰ to promote contacts among CSOs and facilitate their dialogue with public authorities.

The CSF was endorsed by the Prague Summit in May 2009 and the first Forum took place in Brussels in November 2009 and gathered more than 200 CSOs. The 5th meeting of the CSF took place in Chisinau, Moldova on 4-5 October 2013 where numerous CSO positions concerning EaP and related issues were adopted²¹.

The role of the CSF is to influence EU institutions and national governments by presenting the recommendations of the CSF during their decision-making process. The following five Working Groups have been established, to follow the work of the four EaP thematic platforms and to enrich their agenda:

- WG 1. Democracy, human rights, good governance and stability
- WG 2. Economic integration and convergence with EU policies
- WG 3. Environment, climate change and energy security
- WG 4. Contacts between people
- WG 5. Social & Labour Policies and Social Dialogue

The EU's and the MSs' support to the development of local NGOs is vital and has to be kept in focus and increased. The partner countries in the EU can contribute so that the NGOs in the EaP region become more relevant to their public authorities, as this process is already regarded as a good practice in the EU countries. The EaP CSF is also monitoring the involvement of civil society in decision-making processes in the EaP countries and has recently published an assessment on this issue²².

¹⁹ COM(2008) 823 final

²⁰ More information at www.eap-csf.eu

²¹ Read resolutions from the Forum here: <http://www.eap-csf.eu/en/resources/eap-csf-2013-documents/>

²² Read more from: <http://pasos.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/10/EaP-CSF-roadmap-report-overview-16-Oct-2013.pdf>

Another initiative with a geographic priority similar to the EaP CSF is the **Black Sea NGO Forum**, which was launched in 2008 by the Romanian NGDO Platform – FOND in the context of the Black Sea Synergy. The NGO Forum aims to create an open space for debate, sharing of mutual knowledge and understanding, communication and cooperation among civil society representatives, but also including Governments and international organisations active in the wider Black Sea region. The Forum has been the impetus for two important regional initiatives by creating a regional coalition for child protection and a youth network.

What can your organisation do?

The next critical step in the EaP will be the **high level summit of the Eastern Partnership** countries' leaders which will take place in Vilnius on 28-29 November 2013 under the Lithuanian presidency of the EU. There, association agreements with Moldova and Georgia could be initialled and an EU-Ukraine association agreement is expected to be signed. These agreements are to be accompanied by Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Agreements (DCFTA) with the EU. Also, the Eastern Partnership roadmap to the 2015 Riga Summit will be agreed upon in the Vilnius summit.

Now is the time for your organisation to **familiarise yourself with the status of the agreements** with the countries you work with. Then, you can lobby your national and EU politicians to support approaches that are best for the development of your partner country.

The summit is the time to draw the attention of policy makers to the fact that the EaP directly influences whether or not our development cooperation in the partner countries can have meaningful and long-lasting results.

Once agreements have been signed, it is crucial for civil society to be aware of them and look for ways to effectively **be part of the implementation process**.

Your organisation can also strengthen communication and **collaboration with the NGOs from the region**, be their voice and represent their interests in relation with your national Government and at the EU level.



What can I do?

- Familiarise yourself with the EaP negotiation status of your partner country. Is there anything you find problematic?
- Send a letter to your head of state or government to suggest the best policy options regarding the EaP negotiations.
- Encourage your Government and other key stakeholders to support the cooperation among civil society from the EaP countries.
- Check out the EaP Civil Society Forum materials and see if you could participate in any of its working groups.
- Contact CONCORD working group Enlargement, Pre-accession and Neighbourhood (EPAN) to join their work and advocacy initiatives towards the EaP.
- Connect with other NGOs working with CSOs from the EaP countries and share your experiences and best practices through the Black Sea NGO Forum.

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TRIALOG Partners: EU13 Development CSO Platforms



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