

# Eastern Partnership

<http://www.eu-nato.gov.ge/en/eu/eastern-partnership>

In 2008 Poland and Sweden initiated a proposal to create *the Eastern Partnership (EaP)* as a new format for cooperation with the EU's Eastern neighbors (Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, Moldova, Ukraine).

Due to the Russian military intervention in Georgia in August 2008, this initiative was accelerated and resulted in a positive EU response. Therefore in December 2008, the European Commission presented the proposal on the Eastern Partnership.

The *Communication from the European Commission on the Eastern Partnership* was adopted on 3 December 2008, and was approved at the meeting of the European Council on 19 March 2009.

The Eastern Partnership does not represent an alternative to EU membership. Rather, it facilitates further integration of the partner countries into the EU, promotion of common values, and strengthens regional security and economic development through bilateral and multilateral formats.

Eastern Partnership Summits are organised biennially and provide a forum for making political decisions among the participating countries. The first Summit (27+6) took place on 7 May 2009 in Prague during the EU presidency of the Czech Republic, and the second Summit on 29-30 September 2011 in Warsaw, Poland. The third Summit will be held on 28-29 November 2013 in Vilnius, Lithuania.

## **Aim of the Communication from the European Commission on the Eastern Partnership and Prospects for Cooperation**

As per the *Communication from the European Commission on the Eastern Partnership*, the objective of the initiative is to facilitate the implementation of the *European Neighborhood Policy (ENP)*. Yet, the initiative goes further beyond by offering concrete prospects to the partner countries to come closer to the EU for the cooperation on the EU integration related issues.

Taking into consideration the intensification and the level of reforms, as well as the current political and economic situation in the partner countries, the Eastern Partnership offers maximum opportunities.

Cooperation in the framework of the Eastern Partnership follows two parallel dimensions: **Bilateral** and **Multilateral**. The goal of the **Bilateral Dimension** is to create broader political and legal frameworks and to enhance cooperation between the EU and each partner country. The Multilateral dimension provides a new format in which common challenges can be addressed. This dimension is designed to contribute to the development of regional cooperation in the spheres of security, migration, trade, as well as to implement joint projects in transport, energy and the environment.

The Bilateral format is designed to create a closer relationship between the EU and each partner country by:

- Establishing new and broader contractual relations by replacing the *Partnership and Cooperation Agreements (PCAs)* with **Association Agreements** in order to address the aspirations of each partner country. These Agreements will be concluded with partner countries that are willing and able to take on far-reaching commitments with the EU;

- Creating **Free Trade Areas** between the EU and the partner countries on the basis of the Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Area Agreements, as an integral part of the Association Agreements;
- **Promoting citizen mobility** in a secure environment. The EU offers partner countries an opportunity to sign the Visa Facilitation and Readmission Agreements. Further, gradual steps will be taken to introduce a visa-free regime with the EU;
- **Strengthening the energy security** of the EU and partners countries in regard to long-term energy supply, transit, the efficiency of energy resources and the use of renewable energy sources.

The Communication on Eastern Partnership underlines the importance of establishing cooperation on the principle of joint ownership, which facilitates the sharing of responsibility among all partners.

For the period of 2010-2013, The European Commission allocated 600 million Euros for the implementation of the Eastern Partnership, which is a part of the *European Neighborhood Partnership Instrument (ENPI)*.

These resources were focused on three main priority areas:

1. Assisting partner countries in the framework of the Comprehensive Institution Building Programmes (€175 million);
2. Regional Development Programmes aimed at reducing economic and social disparities among the partner countries (€75 million);
3. Development of the Eastern Partnership Multilateral Dimension (€350 million).

Within the Eastern Partnership Integration and Cooperation Programme (**EaPIC**) additional €22 million (based on the “**more for more**” approach) was allocated for Georgia to support the reforms in the areas of the rule of law, border and migration management.

The **Multilateral Dimension** is comprised of flagship initiatives, panels and four thematic platforms. The Office of State Minister of Georgia on European and Euro-Atlantic Integration implements the overall coordination of the Eastern Partnership Multilateral Framework.

The following ministries are responsible for each platform:

- Platform I - **Democracy, good governance and stability** – Office of State Minister of Georgia on European and Euro-Atlantic Integration;
- Platform II - **Economic integration and convergence with EU policies** – Ministry of Economy and Sustainable Development of Georgia;
- Platform III - **Energy Security** – Ministry of Energy of Georgia;
- Platform IV - **Contacts between people** – Ministry of Culture and Monument Protection of Georgia.

The flagship initiatives by implementation of joint projects provide visibility and focus to the Multilateral Dimension and promote the objectives of the EaP namely through:

- *Prevention of, preparedness for, and response to natural and man-made disasters;*
- *Integrated Border Management Programme;*
- *Small and Medium-size Enterprise (SME);*
- *Environmental Governance;*
- *Regional Electricity Markets, Improved Energy Efficiency and Increased use of Renewable Resources.*

The following **panels** were established:

- *Integrated Border Management (IBM);*
- *Fight against Corruption;*
- *Public Administration Reform;*

- *Improved Functioning of the Judiciary;*
- *Migration and Asylum;*
- *Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP)*
- *Environment and Climate Change;*
- *Trade and Trade Related Regulatory Approximation Linked to DCFTAs;*
- *Small and Medium Enterprise (SME) policy;*
- *Transport;*
- *Agriculture and Rural Development;*
- *Research and Innovation.*

The Government of Georgia actively supports the increased **visibility of the EaP** and of various EaP events in Georgia and in the other partner countries. Georgia became one of the attractive meeting spots for the events organised within the EaP framework and was honored to host the following events:

- **2011:**
  - 14 April - In the framework of the EaP Platform IV, the Ministry of Culture and Monument Protection of Georgia hosted the Eastern Partnership Cultural Regional Seminar (Tbilisi);
  - 20 May - In the framework of the EaP Platform I, the third meeting of the Panel on Fight Against Corruption (Tbilisi);
  - 27-28 July - In the framework of the EaP Platform I, the seminar on the Implementation of Customs Priorities (Tbilisi);
  - 4-6 October - In the framework of the EaP Platform I, the fifth meeting on the Panel on Integrated Border Management (Tbilisi).
- **2012:**
  - 29 March - In the framework of the EaP Platform I, the Panel on Public Administration Reform, at the seminar on the Transparency of Asset Declarations of Public Officials (Tbilisi);
  - 23 April - In the framework of the EaP Platform I, the Panel on Public Administration Reform, at the seminar on the Data Exchange Infrastructure (Tbilisi);
  - 3-4 May - In the framework of the EaP Platform I, the second meeting of the Panel on Migration and Asylum (Tbilisi);
  - 14 June - In the framework of the EaP Platform I, the second meeting of the Panel on Public Administrative Reform (Tbilisi);
  - 22 June - In the framework of the EaP Platform I, the first meeting of the Panel on Improved Functioning of the Judiciary (Tbilisi);
  - 1 September - The Ministry of Culture and Monument Protection of Georgia hosted a Concert with the *Eastern Partnership Orchestra* (Tbilisi);
  - 8-9 October - In the framework of the EaP Culture Programme, the Ministry of Culture and Monument Protection of Georgia hosted the first Regional Conference (Tbilisi);
  - 30-31 October - In the framework of the EaP Platform II, the Ministry of Economy and Sustainable Development of Georgia hosted the third meeting of the Panel on SME Policy (Batumi).
- **2013:**

- 31 January - 1 February - In the framework of the EaP Platform I, the Panel on Public Administration Reform, at the seminar on the Information Security and Protection (Tbilisi);
  - 12-13 February - Informal Eastern Partnership Dialogue (Tbilisi);
  - 20-21 March - In the framework of the EaP Platform I, the fourth meeting of the Panel on Migration and Asylum regarding the Readmission, Return and Reintegration (Tbilisi).
  - 17 June - In the framework of the EaP Platform III, the second Workshop on *Regulatory convergence*, organised in cooperation with *EU Energy Regulators* (Tbilisi);
  - 27-28 June - High Level Ministerial Conference on Culture (Tbilisi);
  - 20-22 August - Eastern Partnership Youth Regional Unit (EPYRU Training Programme on Youth Policy Development (Tbilisi)
  - 12-13 September - EaP Platform II - Laboratory on Self-employment and Entrepreneurship (Batumi)
  - 26-28 September - In the framework of Eastern Partnership Culture Programme's project "Strengthening Creative Industries in Armenia, Azerbaijan, and Georgia: Heritage Crafts – Common Platform for Development" - An international conference around the "Notion of Culture as a Force for Economic Growth, New Approach for South Caucasus" (Tbilisi).
- **2014:**
    - 1-2 April – Plenary meeting of the Eastern Partnership Network of regulators for electronic communications (Tbilisi);
    - 29 September – 4<sup>th</sup> CORLEAP Plenary Session (Tbilisi);
    - 16 October – 7<sup>th</sup> meeting of the Panel on Public Administration Reform (Tbilisi);
    - 21-22 October – EaP Platform II – Trade Panel (Tbilisi);
    - 23-24 October – EaP Platform II – SME Panel – Meeting V (Kvareli).

**EuroNest**, a parliamentary component of the Eastern Partnership, was created in Brussels on 2-3 May 2011, with the aim to strengthen cooperation between the European Parliament and the parliaments of the Eastern Partnership countries. Tbilisi hosted a meeting of the *Committee on Political Affairs, Human Rights and Democracy* of the EuroNest Parliamentary Assembly on 13-15 February 2013.

#### **Eastern Partnership Civil Society Forum**

In order to further promote contacts among non-governmental organisations of the EU and the Eastern European Partners, the Civil Society Forum (CSF) was launched in Brussels on 17 November 2009 in the framework of the Eastern Partnership.

Currently, five working groups of the Civil Society Forum have been set up, four of which are functioning in parallel to the Eastern Partnership Thematic Platforms. The establishment of the fifth

working group on Social Partnership and Solidarity was agreed at the third meeting of the CSF in Poznan, Poland on 28-30 November 2011.

The working groups of the CSF are facilitated by the Steering Committee comprised of 18 members, with its headquarters in Brussels. The members of the Committee consist of the Working Group Coordinators, National Facilitators from the partner countries, representatives of the EU and international non-governmental organisations.

The annual CSF Assembly provides recommendations to the EU and the Partner Countries. The Assembly elects the National Facilitators from each partner country, two coordinators from each working group and three EU coordinators.

With the aim to achieve CSF goals, the National Platforms are launched in every partner country. Currently, the Georgian National Platform, which was launched on 13 November 2010, consists of 126 local and international non-governmental organisations and is divided into four working groups. The Coordination Council, which is composed of two co-coordinators from each working group, implements the proposals of the Georgian National platform. Chairman of the Georgian National Platform of the Eastern Partnership Civil Society Forum is Mr. Lasha Tugushi, Director, "Liberal Academy – Tbilisi".

The overall coordinator of the Eastern Partnership Multilateral Dimension, the Office of State Minister of Georgia on European and Euro-Atlantic Integration actively cooperates with representatives of the Georgian National Platform.

This year, on the 20-21 November, the Eastern Partnership Civil Society Forum (EaP CSF) is holding its 6th annual meeting in Batumi, Georgia. In the five years since its establishment, the platform has been able to transform itself from a meeting of civil society representatives into an institutionalised policy forum, where an exchange of ideas and best practices brings together the Eastern Partnership countries – Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, Moldova, Ukraine and the EU with the common goal of expanding the European integration processes towards the Eastern Neighbourhood.

[1] 2nd meeting - Berlin (Germany) on 18-19 November 2010; 3rd meeting - Poznan (Poland) on 28-30 November 2011;

4th meeting - Stockholm (Sweden) on 29-30 November 2012; 5th meeting - Chisinau (Moldova) on 4-5 October 2013.