



EASTERN PARTNERSHIP AT 10: *RESULTS AND WAYS FORWARD*

*Non-paper
with the findings
of the expert seminar
held on June 4, 2019*



RESULTS OF THE FIRST DECADE OF THE EASTERN PARTNERSHIP

In general, the main potential of the Eastern Partnership (EaP) has been and still is the ability to remove barriers and dividing lines between the EU and the partner countries. That is, to contribute to “reducing distances» in many areas: economic, political, social, and cultural. In this regard, ***the goal of the EaP — to make the «post-Soviet six» closer to the European Union — has been achieved.*** This conclusion is especially true for countries that have signed association agreements and created deep and comprehensive free trade zones with the EU.

In some partner countries (for example, Moldova), the very fact of the EaP’s inception gave rise to the hope that the country could move away from «timelessness» and make a leap into the future through: 1) institutional development, 2) technologies and, 3) investments (including into human capacity).

Thanks to the EaP, additional layers of contacts and cooperation projects have emerged between partner countries and the EU, and partner countries and individual EU member states: both at the intergovernmental and non-governmental levels. That is, a kind of natural routine appeared in the relationship, which would hardly have appeared without the EaP. A special role in facilitating working contacts the EaP has played for Belarus, which still does not have a bilateral framework agreement with the EU and, accordingly, no other permanent platforms for communication with Brussels.

The first decade of the EaP can be divided into two periods: 2009-2014 and 2014-2019. The watershed is obviously connected with the events in Ukraine, which significantly changed the regional political context and, accordingly, complicated the work of the EaP. Many serious changes (mostly producing new challenges) have occurred both within the EU and in partner countries.

In particular, yet another territorial conflict has arisen, which has already claimed more than 10 thousand lives and remains in a hot phase (albeit, of low intensity after the conclusion of the second Minsk agreements in February 2015). ***Centrifugal tendencies in the European Union contributed to shifting the focus of attention from the problems of the eastern neighborhood.*** The events in the east of Ukraine extremely aggravated the EU’s relations with Russia and intensified the polarization in the region.

The Eastern Partnership was originally conceived as a platform of cooperation that would be beneficial for all participating states. From the point of view of the potential of project work and sectoral cooperation, it can deliver just that; and it provides numerous opportunities for mutually beneficial interaction at various levels and among various state, public and business actors.

The EaP remains the only institutional framework outside the EU for cooperation in Eastern Europe. In the institutional sense, the added value of this platform is in the presence of Ukraine and Georgia, which no longer participate in the work of integration associations on the former Soviet territory.

However, the lack of clarity about the prospects of EU membership among EaP participants has generated different expectations. The countries that were initially perceived as the most successful in the EaP started looking for opportunities to accelerate the European integration process. New suggestions started to appear to divide the EaP into two leagues: for those “advanced” and those “lagging behind”. On the other hand, such ideas became a reflection of the initial challenge of the EaP: the





heterogeneity and divisions inside the region, and the different foreign policy orientations of the participating countries.

Association agreements with Moldova, Georgia and Ukraine are considered by many in the EU and partner countries to be the achievements of the first decade of the EaP. But the mere fact of concluding agreements is not enough to assess long-term results. The key issue is their implementation and the perception of the implementation process by various political, economic and social groups in these countries. Especially in light of the fact that in some cases “only a few people in the partner countries read the agreements completely before signing them”. And the decision to sign was made on the basis of a general political message that the association agreement “is a good thing”.

Therefore, it is not surprising that in the course of implementation difficulties began to emerge. And in some cases, representatives of ruling parties attempted to seek rents from the new tools.

Deep and comprehensive free trade zones themselves did not become an incentive for economic growth in the countries that signed agreements to create them. And the financial assistance of the European Union was not enough to stabilize East European countries.

CHALLENGES OF TODAY

The EaP initially contained the problem of significant differences. The states covered by the program are not actually a single region: neither geographically nor culturally. In this regard, it should not come as a surprise that one of the problems of the EaP at the end of the first decade is the weakening of ties between the partner countries themselves. ***Over the 10 years, the level and intensity of interaction between the countries of the region have decreased.*** The EaP could reverse this trend. But for this to happen it is important to preserve the multilateral EaP-6 format without separating it into “differently-paced integration.” Moreover, these countries have a very large common denominator: deep historical and cultural ties, as well as often identical domestic and foreign policy challenges.

In this case, the Eastern Partnership would help to reduce regional risks and increase resilience. ***That is, through facilitating project and sectoral cooperation and maintaining constant communication between stakeholders in the countries of the region and in the EU states and institutions, the EaP can play a stabilizing role in the field of regional security.*** However, for this to happen, the EaP must overcome the problem of being perceived as a geopolitical initiative.

This perception is found not only in third countries — above all, Russia, whose representatives often call the EaP an anti-Russian project — but also in the partner countries themselves.

It is critical that the work of the EaP should take into account the key interests, constraints and capabilities in the field of security of each partner state.

Due to fears that the EaP could lead to geopolitical problems, elites in some countries in the region are especially wary of their participation in partnerships. They fear that the EaP may become a factor for further



destabilizing the regional situation and, as a result, may push them towards having to choose in favor of one of the centers of geopolitical gravity. The very idea of such a choice is considered in these countries as artificial and not in line with their interests. However, other partner countries, on the contrary, strive to use the EaP to strengthen the

geopolitical narrative of “breaking away from Russia”. Both these approaches limit the possibilities of the EaP to serve as the stabilizing regional platform of cooperation.

In any case, it is important to stop perceiving the EaP as a “zero-sum game.» The example of Armenia, which, while being an EAEU member, was able to conclude the Comprehensive and Enhanced Partnership Agreement with the EU (CEPA), shows that this is possible. The political section of the document completely repeats the Association Agreement with the EU, and the economic section is as harmonized as possible with the DCFTA.

EASTERN PARTNERSHIP AND BELARUS

All these years, for Belarus the EaP has been the only formalized platform for regular contacts and cooperation with the EU in the absence of a basic agreement and extremely slow movement towards the conclusion of other bilateral agreements. Also, to some extent, the EaP is an addition to the bilateral format of interaction with other countries in the region, especially with Ukraine, Moldova, and Georgia.



Therefore, it is not surprising that back in 2009, out of all 6 partner countries, Belarus was most supportive of the creation of the Eastern Partnership.

Regarding this initiative, the official Minsk articulates the following key interests:

- To maintain the EaP as a holistic program with a unified approach and institutional framework for all participants, without identifying a group of “advanced” countries;
- To keep the EaP among the priorities of the EU foreign policy (as there is fear that, against the background of internal problems, as well as global challenges, Brussels may lose interest both in the program and in the region as a whole);
- It is important to stimulate and maintain interest and readiness for active work on the part of all partner countries;
- The EaP should be as practical as possible and meet the interests of citizens of partner countries;
- To have possibilities for at least minimal links and cooperation between the EaP and the Eurasian Economic Union, as well as with Chinese projects (above all, the Belt and Road Initiative).

In terms of more concrete ideas on the development of the EaP, the Belarusian leadership propose to promote the connectivity and furnishing of border infrastructure, and to simplify logistics both for commercial projects and to facilitate the movement of people.

WHAT SHOULD THE EASTERN PARTNERSHIP LOOK LIKE?

It is important that, after the Agenda 2020, a most concrete agenda with focused priorities for more distant future be developed and implemented. It can be a common framework for all six partner countries together with individual priorities.

At the same time, it is important to conduct a frank and critical monitoring of progress in the framework of the Agenda 2020 in order to fix implementation problems and understand what would be realistic to include in the next program. This will provide important empirical data to inform the proposed structured dialogue on the future of the Eastern Partnership.

As part of this process, a number of specific projects can be identified and, subject to their successful implementation, publicized, thereby increasing the visibility of the EaP. The official Minsk proposes to call such a package of projects 30 ideas for 2030. It would be important to include the youth dimension, cooperation between local authorities, as well as projects at the local level with clear results for citizens.

The priorities should still include the fight against corruption, improving the efficiency of public administration, ensuring the rule of law, strengthening media freedom.

It is necessary to improve communication between the participating states, as well as to inform societies about the EaP itself. At the same time, one should not get involved



in advertising only, which in itself becomes an essential expenditure item of budgets. There is no better advertising than the tangible deliverables of successfully implemented projects.

The EaP can be both inclusive and more differentiated. The dichotomy of these two principles is a false dilemma, since there is no logical contradiction between them. Combining the two principles will maximize cooperation in all formats: multilateral (both between partner countries and the EU, and within the EaP-6) and bilateral (taking into account the significant differences in goals and ambitions of the partner countries in relations with the EU).

The principles of inclusivity and “common ownership” are no less relevant. There is a problem with them in the EaP: in the sense of partner countries’ access to decision-making regarding the principles and rules of the initiative. They should be implemented in practice both in communication between the EU and partner countries, and in building the work within each individual state (from among both partner countries and the EU members).

A strong new impetus to the EaP could be given by the EU decision to revise quotas within the framework of the DCFTA and other types of agreements that exist



or may appear in the partner countries. This would be a tangible result for both the population and, accordingly, the governments.

ATTACHMENT

Eastern Partnership at 10: *Results and ways forward*

Policy seminar
June 4, 2019 – Minsk, Belarus

- Organisers:** Minsk Dialogue Council on International Relations, the Romanian Presidency of the Council of the European Union
- Partner:** Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung
- Languages:** Russian and English (with simultaneous interpretation)
- Format:** Expert seminar followed by a public evening discussion
- Participants:** Acting and former diplomats, academics and policy experts (by invitation only)

May 2019 marks the 10th anniversary of the Eastern Partnership (EaP) initiative, which was launched to deepen and strengthen relations between the European Union, its Member States and six Eastern neighbour countries: Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine. Proclaimed as a “more ambitious partnership” in the Prague Declaration, the EaP’s evolution has taken place against the background of dramatic developments in some Eastern Partner states and within the EU. Moreover, the state of regional security and global strategic stability has also deteriorated since 2009 and confronted the EaP with multiple new challenges.

Consecutive biennial Eastern Partnership summits tried to respond to those challenges by stressing cooperation and adopting innovative approaches. For example, the latest

summit in Brussels approved the results-oriented framework of the 20 Deliverables for 2020 and a streamlined architecture for the multilateral cooperation. Yet, many stakeholders argue that the EaP needs further reforms. And at times, reform ideas differ fundamentally. Whereas some stakeholders suggest that the EaP should be split into two tracks, others promote more inclusivity and oppose any dividing lines.

The seminar will take stock of the Eastern Partnership’s first decade by assessing its successes and failures, mapping the progress and efficiency of the 2020 agenda, and discussing its potential in a new geopolitical environment. It will gather a group of diplomats and leading experts from the EU and partner countries.

The first part of the seminar will be on-the-record and open to media representatives, whereas the second part will be held under the Chatham House Rule. In the evening, a public panel discussion will take place with a view to reaching out to a broader foreign policy community in Minsk (MPs, university professors and students, journalists, and NGO representatives). The discussion will be followed by a networking reception.

PROGRAMME

10.00-10.30	<p>Welcome remarks Open to the media</p> <p>Viorel Mosanu <i>Ambassador of Romania to the Republic of Belarus</i></p> <p>Andrea Wiktorin <i>Head of Delegation, Ambassador, Delegation of the EU to the Republic of Belarus</i></p> <p>Jakob Wöllenstein <i>Director Country Office Belarus, Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung, Germany</i></p> <p>Yauheni Preiherman <i>Director, Minsk Dialogue Council on International Relations, Belarus</i></p>
10.30-11.00	<p>Opening statements Open to the media</p> <p>Vladimir Makei <i>Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Belarus</i></p> <p>Adriana Stanescu <i>Ambassador for the Eastern Partnership, Director General for the Eastern Neighbourhood, Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Romania</i></p>
11.00-12.30	<p>Session 1. Prague-Warsaw-Vilnius-Riga-Brussels: Assessing the evolution of the Eastern Partnership.</p> <p>Open to the media</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> How different is the EaP-2019 from the EaP-2009?

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lessons learned: what have been the main successes and failures of the EaP? Does the EaP-6 framework remain relevant? <p>Signe Burgstaller <i>Ambassador at Large, Department for Eastern Europe and Central Asia, Ministry for Foreign Affairs of Sweden</i></p> <p>Jacek Multanowski <i>Ambassador at Large, Eastern Partnership Division, Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Poland</i></p> <p>Vlad Kulminski <i>Executive Director, Institute for Strategic Initiatives; former Political Advisor to the Prime Minister of Moldova, Moldova</i></p> <p>Dzianis Melyantsou <i>Programme Coordinator, Minsk Dialogue Council on International Relations, Belarus</i></p> <p>Moderator Yauheni Preiherman <i>Director, Minsk Dialogue Council on International Relations, Belarus</i></p>
13.30-15.00	<p>Session 2. Towards 2020: are we delivering on the deliverables?</p> <p><i>Under the Chatham House Rule</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Mapping the progress on the 2020 agenda: what has been achieved and what needs to be done? Has the new streamlined architecture for multilateral cooperation improved the efficiency and results of the EaP? <p>Victor Boikov <i>Directorate General for Neighbourhood and Enlargement Negotiations, European Commission</i></p>

	<p>Andrei Bushilo <i>Director-General for Europe and Northern America, Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Belarus</i></p> <p>Hennadiy Maksak <i>Head, Ukrainian Prism Foreign Policy Council; Head, Ukrainian National Civil Society Platform, Ukraine</i></p> <p>Farhad Mammadov <i>Consultant, Successful Strategies; Director, Centre for Strategic Studies under the President of Azerbaijan (2012-2019), Azerbaijan</i></p> <p>Yauheni Zadrutski <i>Advisor, Belarusian Institute for Strategic Research, Belarus</i></p> <p>Moderator Viktar Shadurski <i>Dean, Faculty of International Relations, Belarusian State University</i></p>
15.30-17.00	<p>Session 3. Another 10 years? What role for the Eastern Partnership in a turbulent Europe?</p> <p><i>Under the Chatham House Rule</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Will the EaP remain relevant post-2020? If so, what objectives, cooperation principles and modus operandi should it prioritise? • Can the EaP contribute to regional security by managing geopolitical competition and promoting confidence-building and security cooperation beyond dividing lines? • How ambitious can the EaP realistically be?

	<p>Radoslav Darski <i>Deputy Head of the Division for the Eastern Partnership, Regional Cooperation and the OSCE, European External Action Service</i></p> <p>Tevan Poghosyan <i>Advisor to the President of Armenia; Director, International Center for Human Development, Armenia</i></p> <p>Gheorghe Magheru <i>Ambassador (ret), Member of the Scientific Council, New Strategy Center, Romania</i></p> <p>Andrei Kazakevich <i>Director, Institute of Political Studies “Political Sphere”, Belarus</i></p> <p>Moderator Jakob Wöllenstein <i>Director Country Office Belarus, Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung, Germany</i></p>
17.00-17.15	Concluding remarks
18.30-20.00	<p>Evening public discussion. Brexit, EU Parliament elections, a new European Commission ... : What do political developments in the EU imply for the future of the Eastern Partnership?</p> <p>Introductory remarks Viorel Mosanu <i>Ambassador of Romania to the Republic of Belarus</i></p> <p>Yauheni Preiherman <i>Director, Minsk Dialogue Council on International Relations, Belarus</i></p>

<p>Special address Valeriya Gubich <i>Student, Belarusian State University; winner of the essay competition on the future of the Eastern Partnership</i></p> <p>Speakers Hannes Hanso <i>Member of the European Parliament, Estonia</i></p> <p>Jakov Devcic <i>Coordinator for European Policy, Konrad Adenauer Foundation, Germany</i></p> <p>Vlad Kulminski <i>Executive Director, Institute for Strategic Initiatives; former Political Advisor to the Prime Minister of Moldova, Moldova</i></p> <p>Moderator Jakob Wöllenstein <i>Director Country Office Belarus, Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung, Germany</i></p>
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