



## The Eastern Partnership: an ambitious new chapter in the EU's relations with Eastern neighbours

**Summary: 3 December 2008, Brussels - The European Commission's proposal for a new Eastern Partnership represents a step change in the EU's relations with Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine. This ambitious Partnership foresees a substantial upgrading of the level of political engagement, including the prospect of a new generation of Association Agreements, far-reaching integration into the EU economy, easier travel to the EU for citizens providing that security requirements are met, enhanced energy security arrangements benefiting all concerned, and increased financial assistance.**

The EU proposes much more intensive day to day support for partners' reform efforts through a new Comprehensive Institution Building programme, and a new multilateral dimension which will bring partners together to address common challenges. The new Partnership includes new measures to support the social and economic development of the 6 countries, and five flagship initiatives that will give very concrete evidence of the EU's support.

President José Manuel Barroso stated: "Only with strong political will and commitment on both sides will the Eastern Partnership achieve its objective of political association and economic integration. We need to make an even greater investment in mutual stability and prosperity. This will be quickly compensated by important political and economic benefits and will lead to more stability and security both for the EU and for our Eastern partners."

"The time is ripe to open a new chapter in relations with our Eastern neighbours" -Commissioner for External Relations and European Neighbourhood Policy Benita Ferrero-Waldner added. "Building on the progress of the last years we have prepared an ambitious and at the same time well-balanced offer. The security and stability of the EU is affected by events taking place in Eastern Europe and in the Southern Caucasus. Our policy towards these countries should be strong, proactive and unequivocal. The EU will continue with the successful approach of tailor-made programmes on a new scale and add a strong multilateral dimension. It remains our principle though that progress must go hand in hand with reform efforts by our partners, but this new package also offers more intensive assistance to help them meet their goals."

The Eastern Partnership responds to the desire of the EU's Eastern neighbours to move closer to the European Union. Yet, it is also in the EU's vital interest to contribute to the development of stability, better governance and economic development at its Eastern borders.

Since 1989 sweeping changes have occurred on the EU's eastern flank. Successive enlargements have brought greater geographic proximity with our Eastern neighbours, while reforms supported by the European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP) have brought these countries politically and economically closer to the EU. The EU has a growing responsibility to the partners to help them address the

political and economic challenges they face and support their aspirations for closer ties, not least in the light of the conflict in Georgia last summer. Following the conflict in the Caucasus the European Council of the 1st September requested the Commission to present its proposal earlier than previously foreseen.

Following consultations with the Eastern Partners the Commission proposes to engage more deeply bilateral relations with the Eastern Partners and to launch a new multilateral framework for cooperation. The main new points of the initiative are:

New association agreements including deep and comprehensive free trade agreements 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;

Gradual integration into the EU economy (with the asymmetry appropriate to the partners' economies) including legally binding commitments on regulatory approximation;

Encourage partners to develop a free trade network between themselves which could in the longer term join up into a Neighbourhood Economic Community

The conclusion of "mobility and security pacts", allowing for easier legitimate travel to the EU while at the same time stepping up efforts to combat corruption, organized crime and illegal migration. These pacts would also cover the upgrading asylum systems to EU standards and the establishment of integrated border management structures, etc. the ultimate goal being visa-free travel with all cooperating partners;

The Commission will study possibilities for labour mobility with the aim of opening the EU labour market further;

Enhanced energy security for the EU and its Eastern Partners;

Programmes addressing economic and social development in the partner countries, particularly addressing sharp economic and social disparities in their countries

Creation of four multilateral policy platforms: on Democracy, good governance and stability; Economic integration and convergence with EU policies, Energy security; and Contacts between people to further support partners' individual reform efforts

Flagship initiatives: Integrated Border Management Programme; SME facility; promotion of Regional electricity markets, energy efficiency and renewable energy sources; development of the Southern energy corridor; and co operation on Prevention, preparedness for and response to natural and man-made disasters

More people-to-people contacts and greater involvement of civil society and other stakeholders, including the European Parliament;

Additional Financial Assistance - a substantial increase from € 450 million in 2008 to € 785 million in 2013. This means a supplementary envelope of € 350 million in addition to the planned resources for 2010-2013. Moreover we will redeploy €250 million already allocated to the ENP regional programmes.

The Commission proposes to launch this initiative in spring 2009 at a special "Eastern Partnership Summit".

More information:

Eastern Partnership documents

[http://ec.europa.eu/external\\_relations/eastern/docs/index\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/external_relations/eastern/docs/index_en.htm)

European Neighbourhood Policy

[http://ec.europa.eu/world/enp/index\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/world/enp/index_en.htm)

ENP Armenia

[http://ec.europa.eu/world/enp/partners/enp\\_armenia\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/world/enp/partners/enp_armenia_en.htm)

ENP Azerbaijan

[http://ec.europa.eu/world/enp/partners/enp\\_azerbaijan\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/world/enp/partners/enp_azerbaijan_en.htm)

ENP Belarus<sup>1</sup>

[http://ec.europa.eu/world/enp/partners/enp\\_belarus\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/world/enp/partners/enp_belarus_en.htm)

ENP Georgia

[http://ec.europa.eu/world/enp/partners/enp\\_georgia\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/world/enp/partners/enp_georgia_en.htm)

ENP Moldova

[http://ec.europa.eu/world/enp/partners/enp\\_moldova\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/world/enp/partners/enp_moldova_en.htm)

ENP Ukraine

[http://ec.europa.eu/world/enp/partners/enp\\_ukraine\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/world/enp/partners/enp_ukraine_en.htm)

<sup>1</sup> The level of Belarus' participation in the Eastern Partnership will depend on the overall development of EU - Belarus relations

---

**Ref:** EC08-254EN

**EU source:** European Commission

**UN forum:**

**Date:** 3/12/2008

---