



TEPSA Brief:

Eastern Partnership

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The plan for an Eastern Partnership was presented at the Council of Ministers' GAERC meeting in Brussels on 26 May 2008 by the Polish and Swedish Ministers for Foreign Affairs, Radoslaw Sikorski and Carl Bildt. The European Council on 20 June 2008 endorsed the initiative and asked the European Commission to present a proposal for bi- and multilateral cooperation. This proposal is expected to be brought forward on the occasion of the spring European Council in June 2009.

Content

The Eastern Partnership is designed to enhance the European Union's relation with Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine. It is a complement to the European Neighbourhood Policy, concentrating on the regional level, whereas ENP focuses on a country-specific approach.

As the initiative states, policy areas will include negotiations towards visa freedom, the creation of a Free Trade Area, support of sector reforms, people-to-people contacts and an upgrading of existing agreements. Laid down is also the commitment to use the Eastern Partnership as a tool for bringing the Eastern countries closer to the European Union and taking on the *acquis*, without mentioning the possibility of membership. Cooperation would be divided into five fields: (I) Political and Security, (II) Borders and trans-border movement, (III) Economic and Financial, (IV) Environment and (V) Social. For financing the European Neighbourhood Policy Instrument (ENPI) shall be used.

This initiative is to be seen in relation to the proposal of France with other Southern EU members for a Union for the Mediterranean. In launching the Eastern Partnership, Poland and Sweden are emphasizing that if the EU is to make a new overture to the South, it needs to be balanced by an overture to the East.

Reactions

- For the European Commission, **Benita Ferrero-Waldner** pointed to the Black Sea Synergy and warned of duplication.
- The **European Parliament** has in its Report on the Commission's 2007 enlargement strategy paper suggested to create close bonds between the economically capable and democratic Eastern countries and the EU in a number of areas and endorsed the Eastern partnership if it takes places within the EU framework.
- Among the **member states** Bulgaria and Romania are critical as they fear the Black Sea Synergy to be undermined. Spain and Italy are strongly committed to the Southern dimension of ENP.
- **Ukraine** has welcomed the plans, but wants to see a clear membership perspective included.
- **Russia** has criticised the plan, referring to the EU's ties with the individual countries in the framework of ENP.

Other proposals

Hannes Swoboda and Jan Marinus Wiersma (PES) have presented an alternative plan for a "*Union for the Black Sea*". As a main difference this plan foresees the involvement of Turkey and Russia, also with a view to Turkey's candidate status. It would also facilitate the transition from being a member state of ENP to becoming a candidate country. Elmar Brok of EPP-ED, rapporteur on the Commission's enlargement strategy, has supported the idea.

The European Parliament has proposed at the initiative of the EPP-ED Group to set up an *EU-Neighbourhood-East Parliamentary Assembly* (EURO-NEST) which would follow the model of the EuroMed, EuroLat and ACP Parliamentary Assemblies. It would include Ukraine, Azerbaijan, Armenia, Georgia, Moldova and the democratic forces of Belarus.

The ideas of a *European Economic Area "light"* in the short run or *European Economic Area "plus"* in the long run are also discussed.

Initiatives already in place with the Eastern countries:

Besides the European Neighbourhood Policy the following initiatives are in place:

- The *Black Sea Synergy* is complementary to ENP, the EU-Russia relations and membership negotiations with Turkey. Key areas include energy, trade, good governance and the resolution of frozen conflicts.
- Between Norway, Iceland, the Russian Federation and the European Union the *Northern Dimension* facilitates cooperation. Belarus may participate at expert level.

Further information:

Joint Polish-Swedish proposal, available at
http://www.tepsa.eu/docs/draft_proposal_eastern_partnership.pdf.

Speech of Benita Ferrero-Waldner, European Commissioner for External Relations and European Neighbourhood Policy Perspectives of the European Neighbourhood Policy at the Parliamentary conference on the "European Neighbourhood Policy East", Brussels, 5 June 2008, available at
<http://europa.eu/rapid/pressReleasesAction.do?reference=SPEECH/08/306&format=HTML&aged=0&language=FR&guiLanguage=en>.

Report on the Commission's 2007 enlargement strategy paper A6-0266/2008, available at
<http://www.europarl.europa.eu/sides/getDoc.do?pubRef=-//EP//NONSGML+REPORT+A6-2008-0266+0+DOC+PDF+V0//EN>.

Statement of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Ukraine regarding the development of the Eastern Dimension of the European Union Foreign Policy: <http://www.mfa.gov.ua/eu/en/news/detail/13105.htm>.

A Union for the Black Sea: steps towards multilateral partnership, proposal by Hannes Swoboda and Jan Marinus Wiersma (PSE), available at
<http://npopescu.yam.ro/wp-content/uploads/2008/06/Union%20for%20the%20Black%20Sea.pdf>.

European Parliament resolution of 15 November 2007 on strengthening the European Neighbourhood Policy, including the proposal of a EURONEST Parliamentary Assembly, A6-0414/2007, available at
<http://www.europarl.europa.eu/sides/getDoc.do?type=TA&language=EN&reference=P6-TA-2007-0538>.