

# Eastern Partnership

## Questions and Answers



**EU Neighbourhood Info Centre**  
*An ENPI project*



This publication exists only in electronic format. It has been prepared by the European Neighbourhood Info Centre, a project funded by the EU. It does not represent the official view of the EC or the EU Institutions. The EC accepts no responsibility or liability whatsoever with regard to its content.

2013 edition

[www.enpi-info.eu](http://www.enpi-info.eu)



## Table of contents

- 3** What is the Eastern Partnership?
  - What is the added value of the Eastern Partnership?
  - How does the Eastern Partnership work in practice?
- 4** What are Association Agreements and DCFTAs?
  - What is the aim of the Flagship Initiatives?
- 5** What are the main achievements of the EaP so far?
- 6** Within the Eastern Partnership, some countries advance faster, others are lagging behind. Can one envisage some kind of differentiation?
  - Is the participation of Belarus in the EaP justified?
  - What about the Russian Federation?  
Some say the EaP is anti- Russian.
- 7** What will happen after the Eastern Partnership Summit in November?
  - What is the overall financing?
  - How does the Partnership address security issues?
- 8** What role do elected representatives from partner countries play in shaping the Partnership agenda?
  - How does the Eastern Partnership correlate with regional and local self-government in partner countries?
  - What is the Eastern Partnership offering to civil society organizations in partner countries?
- 9** Does the Eastern Partnership mean that the EU will offer a membership perspective to all or some of the partner countries?
  - What about the Black Sea?  
Isn't the Eastern Partnership duplicating existing cooperation?
- 10** *Stay connected*



## 1. What is the Eastern Partnership?

The Eastern Partnership (EaP) is a policy initiative launched at the Prague Summit in May 2009 that aims to bring the 6 Eastern neighbours (Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, Republic of Moldova and Ukraine) closer to the EU.

It represents the Eastern dimension of the European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP) and strengthens bilateral relations between the EU and its partners.

## 2. What is the added value of the Eastern Partnership?

The Eastern Partnership countries are the immediate neighbours of the European Union, and their security, stability and prosperity increasingly impacts on that of the EU.

The EaP offers a framework for deepening and strengthening relations between the EU and its partner countries, for speeding up their political association, economic integration and approximation towards the EU, and for supporting their reform process.

## 3. How does the Eastern Partnership work in practice?

The Eastern Partnership works on two parallel levels: bilateral and multilateral.

**The bilateral dimension** supports closer relations between the EU and each Eastern partner country, through:

- Supporting reforms in the main areas of good governance, the rule of law and fundamental freedoms, as well as sustainable economic and social development;
- Offering partners the perspective of new contractual relations with the EU through Association Agreements (AAs) and Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Areas (DCFTAs).

**The multilateral dimension** provides a framework in which challenges common to the EU and the Eastern partners can be addressed. This framework includes:

- Thematic platforms that meet regularly to foster exchanges of best practice on issues of mutual interest: good governance, economic integration and growth, energy security and transport, contacts between people. Panels to support the work of each of the platforms meet as often as appropriate and in the format according to need.

Flagship initiatives, which are regional cooperation projects in the fields of energy, environment, response to disasters, border management and support to small businesses, are some examples of multilateral cooperation.

Other areas in which the multilateral dimension is active are transport, education, youth, culture and support to civil society.



## 4. What are Association Agreements and DCFTAs?

An Association Agreement is one that the EU concludes with a non-EU member state with the aim of setting up an all-embracing framework to conduct bilateral relations. These agreements seek to establish close economic and political cooperation, and to provide for the progressive liberalisation of trade. The Association Agreements are a blueprint for the integration of the partner countries with the European Union through developing strong and effective democratic institutions and rule of law, guaranteeing fundamental freedoms, rights and individual liberties.

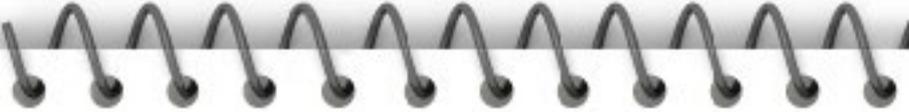
A Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Agreement (DCFTA) is more than an ordinary free trade agreement (FTA), which involves the scrapping of customs tariffs and quota restrictions on trade. The 'deep and comprehensive' part of the DCFTA sees the addition of many more obligations by both parties for the opening up of service sectors, the removal of technical barriers to trade, and convergence of regulatory regimes for internal markets (such as for financial markets, transport, the environment, etc.). The partner state commits itself to introduce into its domestic laws convergence on EU regulations and standards. In many cases, the EU standards are much the same as international standards, so the agreement of the DCFTA with the EU also opens up the economy of the partner state globally.

## 5. What is the aim of the Flagship Initiatives?

The Flagship Initiatives are part of the multilateral track of the Eastern Partnership; they provide additional visibility to the regional cooperation programmes in the EaP. They also mobilise funding from different International Financial Institutions (IFIs) and investment from the private sector.

The ongoing initiatives are:

- ▶ Integrated Border Management (management of borders between the EaP countries aligned to EU standards, one of the prerequisites for progress on the mobility of persons).
- ▶ Support to SMEs (small and medium sized enterprises receive external stimulus for growth and employment through technical assistance, financial intermediaries, risk capital and loans).
- ▶ Regional electricity markets, improved energy efficiency and increased use of renewable energy sources (appropriate regulatory framework and financing mechanisms).
- ▶ Environment (strengthening environmental governance in the partner countries to better protect the environment and respond to climate change challenges).
- ▶ Prevention of, preparedness for, and response to natural and man-made disasters (strengthening disaster management capacities and establishing effective cooperation between the EU and the partner countries – and also among themselves).



## 6. What are the main achievements of the EaP so far?

The EaP has gone a long way in shaping the agenda of cooperation between the EU and its Eastern neighbours since its launch in 2009.

Under the EaP, the EU has negotiated Association Agreements (AAs), including DCFTAs, with Armenia, Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine, which will benefit the populations of these countries and be the key driver of their transformation.

The EU has been supporting institutions involved in the preparation, negotiation and implementation of the agreements through various EU programmes, including the Comprehensive Institution Building (CIB) programme.

The EU has been encouraging and accompanying key sector reforms in partner countries. It provides financial assistance and shares know-how mainly through EU budget support programmes, complemented by infrastructure projects via the [Neighbourhood Investment Facility](#) (NIF).

An innovative approach to differentiation was brought about by the review of the European Neighbourhood Policy in 2011, through the new principle of “more for more”. It means that more support can be offered to those partners that deliver on reforms.

The [Eastern Partnership Integration and Cooperation programme](#) (EaPIC) was launched in 2012 to fast-track funds in line with the principle of “more for more”. Thanks to the EaPIC programme, in 2012 and 2013 the EU mobilised significant extra resources (€150 million) for those EaP countries that made progress in democracy and respect of human rights (Georgia, Moldova and Armenia).

Since the launch of the EaP, EU support to civil society in the region has more than doubled for the six countries concerned. The Civil Society Forum and its national platforms have been established. A new programme, the Neighbourhood Civil Society Facility, was created.

Multilateral cooperation has been strengthened through various regional programmes and policy cooperation. These programmes have resulted, for example, in an Eastern Partnership transport network, which will in the future link the EU and its Eastern neighbours.



## 7. Within the Eastern Partnership, some countries advance faster, others are lagging behind. Can one envisage some kind of differentiation?

The Eastern partners do not have identical objectives in their relationship with the EU, but all of them, to varying degrees, are carrying out political, social and economic reforms.

The Eastern Partnership is the reply of the EU to these different ambitions, as the EU has a vital interest in seeing further economic development, greater democratic governance and increased stability in the Eastern neighbourhood.

The partner countries will come closer to the EU depending on their individual capabilities and time-frame.

## 8. Is the participation of Belarus in the EaP justified?

At the moment, Belarus participates only in the multilateral dimension of the Eastern Partnership with regional projects, mainly in the areas of cross border cooperation, environment, and education.

Belarus is an important Eastern neighbour of the Union, interested in deepening its relations with the EU. Depending on its own choices and decisions, Belarus would be able to benefit from the Eastern Partnership to intensify its bilateral relations with the EU.

Belarus has a real opportunity to become an active partner of the EU provided that the country embarks on fundamental democratic and economic reforms and brings itself closer to European common values. Therefore the level of Belarus' participation in the Eastern Partnership continues to depend on the overall development of EU-Belarus relations.

## 9. What about the Russian Federation? Some say the EaP is anti-Russian.

The EaP is not an anti-Russian initiative. The EU is responding to a desire expressed by the countries in its Eastern neighbourhood who want to substantially deepen and broaden their relations with the EU. At the same time they are also neighbours of Russia, which is advancing its Customs Union and Eurasian Union projects, which are open to all the EU's Eastern partners.

It is crucial to define a vision for the coexistence and mutual enrichment of the two regional initiatives so as not to end up with two different sets of rules in the European Union economic space and in the Russian-led Customs Union.

Russia is also expected to benefit from the integration of the EaP countries into the wider European economy. Better access of EaP companies to the EU will boost competitiveness and economic growth. Increased legal certainty in the EaP countries can help in setting better conditions for Russian investments and businesses in these countries.



## 10. What will happen after the Eastern Partnership Summit in November?

The main focus of relations after the EaP Summit in Vilnius will be on the implementation of the Association Agreements (AAs) for those countries that have signed them. For countries really committed to political association and economic integration, the EU will step up and broaden its support, offering both expertise and funding to help partners in the approximation effort. The EU will continue to support national reforms in line with EU legislation and standards, and will continue to facilitate the exchange of experiences at the multi-lateral level.

After the Vilnius Summit, we will see even more differentiation in the Eastern dimension of the Neighbourhood policy. The “more for more” principle will be as relevant as ever before. The relationship with Eastern partners will be adjusted to their own aspirations.

The multilateral track will continue to involve all six partner countries in those areas where they want to cooperate with the EU. Regional programmes and policy dialogue will continue, to improve democracy and human rights, socio-economic development, energy cooperation and contacts between people.

## 11. What is the overall financing?

The overall budget available for the EaP countries is €2.5 billion for the period 2010-13. The funding comes from the EU Budget (ENPI – European Neighbourhood and Partnership Instrument).

In addition to that, a further €4.1 billion has been leveraged from European Financial Institutions through the Neighbourhood Investment Facility (NIF).

## 12. How does the Partnership address security issues?

By effectively bringing Eastern partners closer to the EU, the Eastern Partnership seeks to contribute to stability and security on the EU's borders while enhancing good neighbourly relations and effective cooperation among partners. The Eastern Partnership also strives to promote confidence in the region by increasing political contacts between partners (including among administrations, members of parliament, civil society organisations and citizens) as well as reducing trade barriers.

The Eastern Partnership foresees in addition more cooperation on specific issues within the EU's Common Foreign Security Policy and European Security and Defence Policy, including the participation of partner countries in EU missions and exercises and the coordination of diplomatic activities. Security-related early-warning systems will be enhanced, with particular focus on conflict areas. Closer cooperation on arms-export practices and non-proliferation is also envisaged.



## 13. What role do elected representatives from partner countries play in shaping the Partnership agenda?

Their voices are heard through the [EURONEST Parliamentary Assembly](#), is the parliamentary component of the Eastern Partnership. It is a forum to help further promote democracy and to exchange best practice among parliamentarians from partner countries and EU member states. EURONEST consists of members of the European Parliament and the parliaments of Ukraine, Moldova, Belarus, Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia. After the 2010 elections in Belarus were declared flawed by international observers, its membership of EURONEST was automatically suspended.

## 14. How does the Eastern Partnership correlate with regional and local self-government in partner countries?

Through the Conference of the Regional and Local Authorities for the Eastern Partnership ([CORLEAP](#)). This is a platform for dialogue between local and regional authorities from the partner countries and the EU. It aims to ensure that future bilateral agreements between the EU and partner countries contain provisions on strengthening local and regional self-government, and that funding is made available for projects that support local democracy, human rights at local and regional level and citizens' participation.

## 15. What is the Eastern Partnership offering to civil society organizations in partner countries?

The development and involvement of civil society is a key factor for the success of democratic and market-oriented reforms. The Eastern Partnership supports civil society actors and engages them through the [Eastern Partnership Civil Society Forum](#) (CSF). The Forum promotes contacts between civil society actors, and facilitates their dialogue with public authorities.

The voice of civil society is heard through the Forum's recommendations presented to Foreign Ministers and senior officials from Partner countries and EU Member States.

In addition, the EaP helps build the expertise of civil society organizations in partner countries in addressing specific issues.

The EU has also developed a special programme to provide financial support to civil society-led projects relevant to the [Eastern Partnership, the Eastern Neighbourhood Civil Society Facility](#). This programme, to the tune of €37 million over 2011-2013, is part of the Neighbourhood Civil Society Facility, which also covers the EU's neighbours in the South.



**16.** Does the Eastern Partnership mean that the EU will offer a membership perspective to all or some of the partner countries?

The participation in the Eastern Partnership does not contain an accession perspective but at the same time it does not prejudge the nature of the future relations between the EU and each of the partner countries.

**17.** What about the Black Sea? Isn't the Eastern Partnership duplicating existing cooperation?

No. The Black Sea Synergy (covering five Eastern ENP countries, Russia and Turkey, but not Belarus) and other regional cooperation initiatives are complementary to the Eastern Partnership. The Black Sea Synergy aims at solving problems which require region-wide efforts and attention of countries sharing this Sea. Its centre of gravity is the Black Sea. The Eastern Partnership pursues alignment of partner countries with the EU. Its centre of gravity is Brussels.

Other Info Centre Handbooks for EU-funded projects are available online:

[Writing to Grab Attention](#)

[A Journalists Handbook](#)

[A Photographers Handbook](#)

[EU Funding for the Neighbourhood and Russia](#)

[Neighbourhood Glossary South](#)

[Eastern Partnership and Russia Glossary](#)



Stay connected  
Stay connected  
**Stay connected**



[www.enpi-info.eu](http://www.enpi-info.eu)

A project implemented by  
**Actionglobalcommunications**

**EU Neighbourhood Info Centre**  
An ENPI project