Eastern Partnership: 2017 Brussels summit
Taking stock and new objectives

SUMMARY

On 24 November 2017, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, Moldova, and Ukraine meet with the European Union (EU) in Brussels for the fifth Eastern Partnership (EaP) summit. A lot has been achieved since the Riga summit in 2015: association agreements (AA) and deep and comprehensive free trade agreements (DCFTAs) have been in force with Georgia and Moldova since 2014, and with Ukraine since 2016. From 2017 onwards, Georgians and Ukrainians can travel to the EU without a visa, which highlights the EU's commitment to the region.

The EU is about to sign an association agreement with Armenia and is negotiating a new framework for relationships with Azerbaijan. In June 2017, the European External Action Service and the European Commission jointly proposed to streamline the institutional architecture of the EaP, as well as putting forward a series of 20 deliverables for 2020, to benefit citizens of the region.

Ahead of the summit, the Euronest Parliamentary Assembly, bringing together members of both the Eastern Partnership countries' parliaments and the European Parliament, and the European Parliament itself, have defined their positions. The European Parliament called, in November 2017, for the EaP summit to inject new dynamism into the partnership and to set a clear political vision for its future in the long term.

In this briefing:

- Origins of the Eastern Partnership
- Progress since 2015
- Eastern Partnership institutions: focusing on the ownership
- 20 deliverables for 2020
- EP position

Origins of the Eastern Partnership

Following a proposal from Sweden and Poland in 2008, the European Union launched the Eastern Partnership – with Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine – in 2009. At that time, the European Neighbourhood Policy tended to promote a one-size-fits-all policy towards the neighbours, promoting comparable objectives and using similar instruments for the 16 partners to the east and south of the EU. The Eastern Partnership had the ambition to create a regional dimension to the European Neighbourhood Policy, comparable to that created in 2008 with the southern partners (Union for the Mediterranean).

The European Union (EU) agreed on a review of the European Neighbourhood Policy in 2015, in order to better address the specific needs and challenges of each partner country, as well as differences regarding their interest in closer integration with the EU. In 2016, the European Union published its new global strategy, stating that it will help neighbouring countries to implement association agreements and deep and comprehensive free trade areas (DCFTAs), as well as deepening tailor-made partnerships further. The EU also needs to ensure coherence with other EU priorities, such as the EU policies to fight climate change, the EU framework for gender equality and women's empowerment and the UN 2030 agenda for sustainable development.

Therefore, the 2017 Eastern Partnership summit is a landmark in the adaptation of the EaP in this direction: cooperating with each EaP partner and among partners themselves; implementing existing agreements as well as tailor-made agreements. This direction has recently been supported by Poland and Sweden, co-initiators of the EaP. In order to streamline these priorities, the EU is proposing to European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP) countries (and therefore EaP countries) new partnership priorities/revised association agendas, as well as new single support frameworks and multiannual indicative programmes.

Chronology of the Eastern Partnership
• 2008: Eastern Partnership: Commission communication to Parliament and the Council.
• 2008 (summer): Russia– Georgia war.
• 2009: Eastern Partnership summit in Prague.
• 2011: Eastern Partnership summit in Warsaw.
• 2011: Constituent meeting of Euronest PA.
• 2013 (spring): Armenia abandons the planed association agreement with the EU to join the Eurasian Economic Union.
• 2013: Eastern Partnership summit in Vilnius.
• 2013/2014 (winter): Euromaidan in Ukraine.
• 2014 (spring): illegal annexation of Crimea by Russia and start of the war in eastern Ukraine.
• 2015: Eastern Partnership summit in Riga.
• 2017: Eastern Partnership summit in Brussels.

Progress since 2015

In 2013, the Vilnius summit was marked by the refusal of the Ukrainian delegation to sign the planed association agreement with the EU. The same year, Armenia decided to prefer accession to the Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU) over the planned association agreement with the EU. In 2015, the Riga summit nevertheless inaugurated a series of priorities in four fields: strengthening institutions and good governance; mobility and people-to-people contacts; market opportunities; and interconnections.

In the past two years, some progress has been made in cooperation between the partners, embodied in new agreements such as association agreements with Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine, which have now entered into force, and the negotiation of a new agreement (Comprehensive and Enhanced Partnership Agreement: CEPA) with Armenia

(less complete than an association agreement, but compatible with Armenia's membership of the Eurasian Economic Union) and the ongoing negotiation of a new agreement with Azerbaijan. Visa liberalisation for Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine in 2017 was also an important milestone from the past two years.

	Armenia	Azerbaijan	Belarus	Georgia	Moldova	Ukraine
Type of agreement with the EU	Armenia refused in 2013 to sign its negotiated AA, but an alternative agreement, concluded in February 2017 is to be signed at the EaP Brussels summit	In November 2016, the Council adopted a mandate for the Commission to negotiate a new agreement	Dialogue has been maintained or resumed in the field of human rights	Association Agreement (June 2014) in force since July 2016	Association Agreement (June 2014) in force since July 2016	Association Agreement (June 2014) in force since September 2017
Free trade agreement				DCFTA in force since September 2014	DCFTA in force since September 2014	DCFTA in force since January 2016
Visa liberalisation	Possible discussions to be announced at the Brussels EaP summit	Azerbaijan has expressed its interest in visa liberalisation		In force since April 2017	In force since April 2014	In force since June 2017
Cooperation CFSP/CSDP				Participates in EU CSDP missions	Participates in EU CSDP missions	Participates in EU CSDP missions

Eastern Partnership institutions: focusing on the ownership

The Eastern Partnership institutions have been crafted to maximise ownership by the partners. In June 2017, the European External Action Service (EEAS) and the European Commission proposed to streamline the organisation of existing institutions:

- The summit brings together heads of state or government every two years in order to take stock of progress and decide over new common objectives. Foreign Affairs ministers meet more often to streamline the process between the summits.
- Sector-specific ministerial as well as informal partnership dialogues are organised year-round to foster cooperation in specific domains.
- The work of EaP is organised over four platforms:
    1. Strengthening institutions and good governance;
    2. Economic development and market opportunities;
    3. Connectivity, energy efficiency, environment and climate change;
    4. Mobility and people-to-people contacts.

    Each of the platforms aims to create emulation, cooperation and peer review between the partners on very concrete issues such as reforming the justice sector, fighting corruption and strengthening security cooperation.
- Together with the platforms, 12 specific panels focus on delivery of results in targeted sectors, like rule of law, harmonisation of digital markets and research and innovation.

In addition to inter-governmental cooperation, the EaP architecture also involves other key structures:

- [Euronest Parliamentary Assembly](#) provides a platform for parliamentary oversight of the EaP, through regular meetings between members of EaP national parliaments and Members of the European Parliament;
- [Eastern Partnership civil society forum](#), which is a platform of EaP NGOs; and
- [Conference of local & regional authorities for the Eastern Partnership](#) (CORLEAP), which ensures the participation of local authorities.

20 deliverables for 2020

In June 2017, the EEAS and Commission published [20 deliverables for 2020](#), which could improve the daily life of citizens, in order to focus the work of the EaP institutions on medium-term objectives. The document sets out a number of deliverables under the four EaP platforms, such as commitments on helping 1 000 small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), improving services to businesses, digital markets regulation, energy connections and supporting individual mobility for 10 000 persons in the higher education sector. The document provides a clear timetable up to 2020, and lists the partners and institutions involved for each of them.

> **Most recent Euronest meeting**
> 30 October-1 November 2017, Kyiv, Ukraine
> Before the plenary, the Bureau of the Euronest PA, composed of the chairs of the European Parliament and Eastern Partners' delegations, unanimously adopted a [message](#) for the EaP summit. For the first time, all members agreed on an ambitious text on the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict, calling for an immediate end to military hostilities and a re-launch of substantive negotiations.
>
> It also called for additional opportunities for EaP partners, referring to the EaP+ (see box below) proposal of the European Parliament, as well as a trust fund for Ukraine, Georgia and Moldova.

European Parliament position ahead of the summit and the proposal for EaP+

In [November 2017](#), the European Parliament called for the Brussels EaP summit to inject new dynamism into the EaP, and to set a clear political vision for its future as a long-term policy. It recalled its support for civil society, the territorial integrity of EaP countries, and new impetus for delivery of tangible results for citizens, notably in terms of employment, reducing socio-economic disparities, transport, connectivity, energy independence, mobility and education, and promoting anti-discrimination policies. Parliament considered an attractive longer-term 'EaP+' model for associated countries that have made substantial progress in implementing AA/DCFTA-related reforms that could eventually lead to joining the customs union, energy union, digital union and Schengen area. The European Parliament called for increased mobility between the EU and the six EaP partners, as well as for the continuation of collective EU pressure on Russia. In addition, the EP acknowledged the European aspirations of Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine, and called for the creation of a trust fund for these three partners.

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