THE EUROPEAN NEIGHBOURHOOD POLICY

The European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP) applies to Algeria, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Egypt, Georgia, Israel, Jordan, Lebanon, Libya, Moldova, Morocco, Palestine, Syria, Tunisia and Ukraine. It aims to strengthen the prosperity, stability and security of all. It is based on democracy, the rule of law and respect for human rights and is a bilateral policy between the EU and each partner country, with regional cooperation initiatives: the Eastern Partnership and the Union for the Mediterranean[1].

LEGAL BASIS

— Article 8 of the Treaty on European Union;
— Title V of the Treaty on European Union (external action);
— Articles 206-207 (trade) and 216-219 (international agreements) of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union (TFEU).

GENERAL OBJECTIVES

Through the European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP), the EU offers its neighbours a privileged relationship, building upon a mutual commitment to common values (democracy and human rights, the rule of law, good governance, market economy principles and sustainable development). The ENP includes political coordination and deeper economic integration, increased mobility and people-to-people contacts. The level of ambition of the relationship depends on the extent to which these values are shared. The ENP remains distinct from the process of enlargement, although this does not prejudge how relations between neighbouring countries and the Union may develop in the future. In 2011, the EU reviewed the ENP and, responding to developments in Arab countries, strengthened its focus on promoting deep and sustainable democracy and inclusive economic development. Deep and sustainable democracy includes in particular free and fair elections, efforts to combat corruption, judicial independence, democratic control over the armed forces, and the freedoms of expression, of assembly and of association. The EU also stressed the role that civil society plays in the process and introduced the ‘more for more’ principle, according to which the Union develops stronger partnerships with those neighbours that make greater progress towards democratic reform. In March 2015, the Commission and the European External Action Service (EEAS) launched a consultation process for a new review of the ENP. One of its main aims is to adapt the ENP tools to take better account of the specific aspirations of partner countries. In this context, the European Parliament adopted a resolution on 9 July 2015 underlining the need for a more strategic, focused, flexible and coherent ENP. A communication from the EEAS and the Commission along these lines and based on the results of the consultation was presented on 11 November 2015.

[1]For information about bilateral relations between the EU and the Eastern Partners and Mediterranean partners, please refer to the fact sheets on those topics (6.5.5; 6.5.6 and 6.5.7).
INSTRUMENTS

Central to the ENP are the bilateral action plans that have been drawn up between the EU and 12 ENP partner countries (Belarus, Libya and Syria have not agreed on action plans, and negotiations with Algeria are in progress). These establish political and economic reform agendas with short- and medium-term priorities (three to five years). ENP action plans reflect the needs, interests and capacities of the EU and each partner. They seek to develop democratic, socially equitable and inclusive societies, to promote economic integration and to improve the movement of people across borders. The ENP builds upon the legal agreements in place between the EU and its partners — Partnership and Cooperation Agreements (PCAs) and, more recently, Association Agreements (AAs).

The EU supports the fulfilment of the ENP objectives through financial support as well as political and technical cooperation. Funds are mostly delivered through the European Neighbourhood Instrument (ENI), with an allocation for 2014-2020 of EUR 15.4 billion. Other instruments and programmes, such as the Civil Society Facility, are used to finance the ENP. The Commission also provides financial support in the form of grants to partners, and the European Investment Bank and the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development complement this support through loans. In addition, new tools have been developed under the ENP to advance market access, in particular through the negotiation of Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Agreements (DCFTAs), as well as to enhance mobility and the management of migration. Mobility partnerships and visa facilitation/liberalisation have thus been offered and concluded with some partners.

Every year, the EEAS and the Commission publish ENP progress reports. While the ENP is thus designed as a common policy toolbox, it also allows the EU to adapt and ‘differentiate’ its policy according to the specificities of each partner.

REGIONAL DIMENSIONS

A. Eastern Partnership (EaP)

The Eastern Partnership (EaP) was formed to ‘upgrade’ the EU’s relations with most of its eastern neighbours: Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine. The EaP was agreed in 2008 and inaugurated in 2009, and builds on the ENP.

1. Objectives

The main goal of the EaP is to ‘accelerate political association and deepen economic integration’ between the EU and its eastern neighbours. The level of integration and cooperation reflects each partner country’s commitment to European values, standards and structures and its progress. The EaP aims to promote democracy and good governance, strengthen energy security, encourage sectoral reforms (including environmental protection), encourage people-to-people contacts, support economic and social development and offer additional funding for projects to reduce socio-economic imbalances and increase stability[2].

2. Structures

EaP summits are held biannually, with the participation of EU and partner countries’ Heads of State or Government and representatives of the European Parliament, the European Commission and the European External Action Service. The most recent EaP Ministerial Meeting was held on 23 May 2016 in Brussels. Ahead of the next EaP Summit scheduled for November 2017,

[2]For more information, please refer to the section of the EEAS website on the EaP.

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the European Commission has put forward a joint staff working document entitled ‘Eastern Partnership-Focusing on key priorities and deliverables’[3] which is seen as a step towards a revised communication on ENP strategic priorities to be issued before the summit takes place. The document proposes a more focused approach for delivering results under each of the four priorities set out in the Joint Declaration of the EaP Summit in Riga on 22 May 2015:

— economic development and market opportunities;
— strengthening of institutions and good governance;
— connectivity, energy efficiency, environment and climate change;
— mobility and people-to-people contacts.

The Eastern Partnership’s multilateral track is based on four thematic platforms: democracy, good governance and stability; economic integration and convergence with EU policies; energy security; and contacts between people. Senior officials meet at least twice a year, and Ministers of Foreign Affairs annually. The work of the platforms is sometimes promoted through sector-specific ministerial meetings.

Flagship initiatives have also been launched and include: an integrated border management programme; a facility for small and medium-sized enterprises; regional electricity markets; and efforts to improve energy efficiency, increase the use of renewable energy sources, promote good environmental governance and prevent, prepare for and respond to natural and man-made disasters.

The Euronest Parliamentary Assembly[4], the parliamentary component of the EaP, is responsible for the partnership’s ‘consultation, supervision and monitoring’. It was inaugurated in May 2011 and has held four sessions to date, most recently in March 2016, in Brussels. It comprises 60 Members of the European Parliament and 10 members from each partner country’s parliament. However, as the European Parliament does not recognise the Belarusian National Assembly as a democratically elected institution, no Belarusian ‘parliamentarians’ currently form part of Euronest. On 15 September 2015, the National Assembly of Azerbaijan passed a resolution ending its participation in Euronest, as a protest against a European Parliament resolution condemning repression against civil society in Azerbaijan. This decision was however reversed by the Milli Majlis on 30 September 2016, following an EU-Azerbaijan PCC meeting held in September 2016. The Euronest PA has four standing committees, namely the Committee on Political Affairs, Human Rights and Democracy, the Committee on Economic Integration, Legal Approximation and Convergence with EU Policies, the Committee on Energy Security and the Committee on Social Affairs, Education, Culture and Civil Society. The next such committee meetings are expected to take place in autumn 2016.

In addition, an EaP Civil Society Forum[5] issues recommendations ‘to influence EU institutions and EaP national governments’.

B. Union for the Mediterranean (UfM)

The Union for the Mediterranean (UfM) includes the 28 EU Member States, the European Union and 15 Mediterranean countries (Albania, Algeria, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Egypt, Israel, Jordan, Lebanon, Mauritania, Montenegro, Monaco, Morocco, Palestine, Syria (whose membership is suspended because of the civil war), Tunisia and Turkey). The League of Arab States has participated in all meetings since 2008 and Libya has observer status.

[4]For more information about Euronest and its activities, please refer to the Assembly’s website.
[5]For more information about the civil society forum, please refer to the CSF website.
1. Objectives

The UfM constitutes a multilateral framework for political, economic and social relations between the European Union and the southern and eastern Mediterranean countries. It was launched in 2008 at the Paris Summit as a continuation of the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership (Euro-Med), also known as the Barcelona Process. The UfM is inspired by the goals set out in the Barcelona Declaration (1995), namely to create an area of peace, stability, security and shared economic prosperity, with full respect of democratic principles, human rights and fundamental freedoms, while promoting understanding between cultures and civilisations in the Euro-Mediterranean region.

2. Structures

The UfM is chaired by a co-presidency, highlighting the co-ownership that characterises the group. In 2012, the European Union assumed the northern co-presidency and Jordan the southern co-presidency. Although the Paris Declaration provides for regular summits, the Arab-Israeli conflict and political upheavals in the southern Mediterranean have prevented this from happening. The main governing body of the UfM is the Senior Officials’ Meeting, which oversees and coordinates the UfM’s work. The Senior Officials’ Meeting also approves the budget and the work programme of the Secretariat, prepares meetings of Foreign Ministers and other ministerial configurations, and appoints the Secretary-General and the six Deputy Secretaries-General. The meeting also discusses the project proposals submitted by the Secretariat for approval and endorsement. The UfM Secretariat’s role consists, above all, in identifying, processing, promoting and coordinating technical projects in sectors such as transport, energy, water, environmental protection, higher education and mobility, research, social affairs, empowerment of women, employment and business development, all of which enhance cooperation and directly affect the livelihoods of citizens. The EU is the largest contributor to the UfM Secretariat’s budget.

The Parliamentary Assembly of the UfM builds on the work of the Euro-Mediterranean Parliamentary Assembly and comprises 280 members: 132 EU members (83 members from the 28 EU national parliaments and 49 members from the European Parliament), 8 members from European Mediterranean partner countries (Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Monaco and Montenegro), 130 members from the ten countries on the southern and eastern shores of the Mediterranean (Algeria, Egypt, Jordan, Israel, Lebanon, Morocco, Palestine, Syria (currently suspended as a result of the civil war in the country), Tunisia and Turkey), and 10 members from Mauritania. The Parliamentary Assembly of the UfM holds at least one plenary session per year; the most recent was in Rome in May 2017. It adopts resolutions or recommendations on all aspects of Euro-Mediterranean cooperation that concern the executive organs of the UfM, the Council of the EU, the European Commission and the national governments of partner countries. The European Parliament held the rotating presidency of the Parliamentary Assembly from March 2012 until April 2013. The presidency is currently held by Italy (2016-2017), which will be succeeded by Egypt. The Assembly has five committees: Political Affairs, Economic Affairs, Culture, Women and Energy. On the initiative of then-EP President, Martin Schulz, a summit of the presidents of the parliaments of the UfM countries was convened for the first time in April 2013. Other summits were held in Lisbon in May 2015, in Tangier in May 2016 and in Rome in May 2017. The Euro-Mediterranean Local and Regional Assembly (ARLEM) was established in 2010 and is a consultative assembly that aims to increase the involvement of local and regional actors in the UfM. It comprises 84 members — all representatives of regions or local bodies with a regional or local mandate — from the 43 UfM partners.

Krzysztof Bartczak / Kirsten Jongberg

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