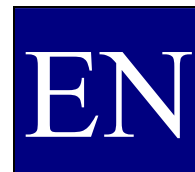




**COUNCIL OF  
THE EUROPEAN UNION**



## **Council conclusions on the Eastern Partnership**

*3222nd FOREIGN AFFAIRS Council meeting  
Brussels, 18 february 2013*

The Council adopted the following conclusions:

- "1. The Council reaffirms the importance it attaches to the Eastern Partnership, as a specific dimension of the European Neighbourhood Policy, and its objective of accelerating the political association and deepening the economic integration of the Eastern European partner countries with the EU, based on the Eastern Partnership Joint Summit Declarations of May 2009 and September 2011. The Council acknowledges the European aspirations and the European choice of some partners and their commitment to build deep and sustainable democracy. It highlights the particular role of the Eastern Partnership to support those who seek an ever closer relationship with the EU.
2. Highlighting the Eastern Partnership Roadmap as a basis for guiding and monitoring the further implementation of Eastern Partnership objectives, the Council took stock of developments and discussed the way forward to the Vilnius Eastern Partnership Summit in November 2013.
3. The Council recalls that at the heart of the Eastern Partnership lies a shared commitment to international law and fundamental values, including democracy, the rule of law, respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms, as well as to market economy, sustainable development and good governance. Looking forward to the Vilnius Summit, it emphasizes that the pace of reforms will determine the intensity of cooperation and partners most engaged in reforms will benefit most from their relationship with the EU. In this context, the Council looks forward to the elections in 2013 in Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia and underlines the importance of them being held in line with international standards and previous relevant recommendations by OSCE/ODIHR.

# **P R E S S**

4. The Council welcomes the substantial progress made in the negotiations of Association Agreements. Recalling its conclusions on Ukraine of 10 December 2012, the Council reiterates its commitment to the signing of the Association Agreement, including a Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Area (AA/DCFTA), as soon as the Ukrainian authorities demonstrate determined action and tangible progress in three key areas, possibly by the time of the Vilnius Eastern Partnership Summit: ensuring the compliance of elections with international standards and appropriate follow-up actions for the 2012 elections; addressing the issue of selective justice and preventing its recurrence; and implementing the reforms set out in the jointly agreed Association Agenda. The signature could be accompanied by opening for provisional application of parts of the Agreement. The Council recalls that the European Council has called for progress as regards the Association Agreements including DCFTAs with the Republic of Moldova, Georgia and Armenia with a view to their finalisation by the time of the Summit. It appreciates the launching of work with these partners on Association Agendas to replace the ENP Action Plans with the view to preparing for and facilitating the implementation of the Association Agreements. The Council also welcomes the progress underway in the Association Agreement negotiations with Azerbaijan.
  
5. The Council reaffirms the EU's commitment to the shared objective of visa free travel in due course provided that the conditions for well managed and secure mobility are in place and welcomes the progress made in this regard. It welcomes the progress made by the Republic of Moldova in implementing the Visa Liberalisation Action Plan and the launching of the assessment of the benchmarks set out under the second phase of the Action Plan. It encourages Ukraine to increase efforts towards fulfilment of its first phase benchmarks. The visa dialogue with Georgia has progressed swiftly and, by the time of the Summit, implementation of the future Visa Liberalisation Action Plan should be under way. Negotiations on both the Visa Facilitation and Readmission Agreements with Armenia have been swiftly concluded and the Visa Facilitation Agreement with Armenia was signed in December 2012. The Council now looks forward to their entry into force by the time of the Vilnius Summit. There has also been good progress in negotiations of Visa Facilitation and Readmission Agreements with Azerbaijan, and the Council looks forward to their conclusion by the time of the Vilnius Summit. The Council also looks forward to the early conclusion of the amended Visa Facilitation Agreements with Ukraine and the Republic of Moldova. It reiterates its readiness to launch negotiations on a visa facilitation and readmission agreement with Belarus and welcomes that Member States continue to make optimal use of the existing flexibilities offered by the Visa Code.

6. The Council welcomes the significant range of activities ongoing in the framework of the multilateral dimension of the Partnership which provide a forum for all six partners and EU Member States to exchange best practice in terms of approximation to EU standards. It also welcomes the establishment of informal Eastern Partnership Dialogues allowing for informal discussions between the EU and partner countries and enhancing dialogue on key sectors of cooperation. It stresses the importance of giving enhanced visibility to Eastern Partnership objectives, projects and activities through implementation of a visibility strategy envisaged in the Eastern Partnership Roadmap.
7. The Council stresses the importance it attaches to the engagement of broader society in contributing to and monitoring the implementation of Eastern Partnership objectives. The Council underlines the particular importance of civil society in this regard and welcomes the development of the Civil Society Forum, the establishment of its National Platforms and the creation of a Secretariat. It also stresses the importance of the Euronest Parliamentary Assembly and the Conference of the Regional and Local Authorities for the Eastern Partnership in furthering cooperation with the parliaments and local and regional authorities of the partner countries. The Council takes good note of the important contributions of these stakeholders to the development of the Eastern Partnership and looks forward to continued close cooperation in the run-up to the Vilnius Eastern Partnership Summit. It encourages the business communities in the EU and partner countries to develop further the Business Forum. It attaches great importance to people to people contacts and support for youth and student exchanges and scholarship programmes.
8. It recalls the significant EU financial support provided for partner countries' reform efforts in the period from 2010 to 2013 amounting to €1.9 billion. It also recalls that the Eastern Partnership Integration and Cooperation Programme (EaPIC) has provided additional financial support to the reform efforts of the Republic of Moldova, Armenia and Georgia, according to the principle of "more for more". It stresses the importance of the continuing implementation of the €173 million Comprehensive Institution Building Programmes agreed with five partner countries to strengthen their administrative capacity to push forward key reforms. The Council encourages partner countries to advance sector reform and to take full advantage of the opportunities offered by the participation in EU programmes and in the work of EU agencies. It welcomes the intention of the Commission to develop a second generation of Eastern Partnership flagship initiatives. The EIB is invited to continue to step up its support for investment in the region.
9. With the view to preparing the Vilnius Summit of November 2013, the Council looks forward to the Eastern Partnership Foreign Ministers meeting in July of this year. It underlines the importance of fully engaging partner countries in the preparation of the Vilnius Eastern Partnership Summit."