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DRAFT REPORT

on a European Parliament recommendation to the Council, the Commission and the EEAS on the Eastern Partnership, in the run-up to the November 2017 Summit
(2017/2130(INI))

Committee on Foreign Affairs

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to the Council, the Commission and the EEAS on the Eastern Partnership, in the run-up to the November 2017 Summit (2017/2130(INI))

The European Parliament,

- having regard to Articles 2, 3 and 8 and to Title V, notably Articles 21, 22, 36 and 37, of the Treaty on European Union (TEU), as well as to Part Five of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union (TFEU),
- having regard to the launch of the Eastern Partnership in Prague on 7 May 2009 as a common endeavour of the EU and its Eastern partners Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, Moldova und Ukraine,
- having regard to the Joint Declarations of the Eastern Partnership Summits of 2011 in Warsaw, of 2013 in Vilnius and of 2015 in Riga,
- having regard to the Declaration of the leaders of 27 Member States and of the European Council, the European Parliament and the European Commission adopted on 25 March 2017 in Rome,
- having regard to the recommendations by and activities of the Euronest Parliamentary Assembly, of the Eastern Partnership Civil Society Forum, and of the Committee of the Regions and the Conference of Regional and Local Authorities for the Eastern Partnership (CORLEAP),
- having regard to the European Commission and European External Action Service (EEAS) communications on the European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP), notably the 2017 report on the implementation of the ENP review (JOIN(2017)18) and the 2017 revised working document entitled ‘Eastern Partnership – 20 Deliverables for 2020: Focusing on key priorities and tangible results’ (SWD(2017)0300), as well as the 2016 communication on the ‘Global Strategy for the European Union’s Foreign And Security Policy’,
- having regard to the conclusions of the Foreign Affairs Council on the ENP and Eastern Partnership,
- having regard to its resolutions, notably those of 5 July 2017 on the 72nd Session of the United Nations General Assembly¹, of 15 June 2017 on the case of Afgan Mukhtarli and the situation of the media in Azerbaijan², of 6 April 2017³ and 24 November 2016⁴ on the situation in Belarus, of 16 March 2017 on EU priorities for the UN Human Rights Council sessions in 2017⁵, of 13 December 2016 on rights of women in the Eastern Partnership

¹ Texts adopted, P8_TA(2017)0304.

² Texts adopted, P8_TA(2017)0267.

³ Texts adopted, P8_TA(2017)0126.

⁴ Texts adopted, P8_TA(2016)0456.

⁵ Texts adopted, P8_TA(2017)0089.

States¹, of 21 January 2016 on Association Agreements / Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Areas with Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine² and of 9 July 2015 on the review of the European Neighbourhood Policy³,

- having regard to the Joint Statement of the Parliaments of Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine of 3 July 2017,
 - having regard to Rule 113 of its Rules of Procedure,
 - having regard to the report of the Committee on Foreign Affairs (A8-0000/2017),
- A. whereas the Eastern Partnership is based on a shared commitment between Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, Moldova, Ukraine and the European Union to international law and fundamental values, including democracy, the rule of law, respect for human rights, fundamental freedoms and gender equality, as well as to the market economy, sustainable development and good governance;
- B. whereas the Eastern Partnership pursues the common goals of promoting stability, confidence-building and cooperation, supporting democratic reforms, good neighbourly relations and regional cooperation, enhancing people-to-people contacts and boosting trade, in order to increase political dialogue and association as well as economic cooperation and integration;
- C. whereas, through its Global Strategy and the revised ENP, the EU seeks to bring its partners closer via accelerated political association and economic integration with the EU, while at the same time aiming to promote political stabilisation, societal resilience and economic prosperity in its neighbourhood, and offering opportunities for privileged political and economic relations in line with the degree of ambition of each partner country;
- D. whereas, given that the EU considers cooperation to be a value in itself and strongly believes that it leads to win-win situations for all parties concerned, there is a commitment on the side of the EU to continue to work with all Eastern Partnership countries regardless of their strategic choices;
- E. whereas the participants in the 2015 Riga Summit called for progress to be made by the time of the next Summit in the areas of (1) strengthening institutions and good governance, (2) mobility and people-to-people contacts, (3) economic development and market opportunities, and (4) connectivity, energy efficiency, the environment and climate change;
- F. whereas significant progress has been made since the last Summit, notably with the conclusion and entry into force of three Association Agreements including a Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Area (DCFTA) with Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine, as well as visa-free regimes with Georgia and Ukraine since 2017 (and with Moldova since 2014), the conclusion of negotiations on a Comprehensive and Enhanced Partnership

¹ Texts adopted, P8_TA(2016)0487.

² Texts adopted, P8_TA(2016)0018.

³ Texts adopted, P8_TA(2015)0272.

Agreement with Armenia, the launching of negotiations on a new comprehensive agreement with Azerbaijan, and the adoption of major reforms in a number of these countries with the political, technical and financial support of the European Union;

- G. whereas increased mobility between the partner countries and the EU remains an indispensable instrument for the promotion of European values;
- H. whereas a new strategic work plan proposed by the European Commission and the EEAS that combines both bilateral and regional cooperation aims to guide the future work of the EU and the six partner countries by focusing on twenty deliverables by 2020;
- I. whereas the independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity of the EU's eastern partners remains under threat from unresolved regional conflicts, including some that are sustained by the Russian Federation in contradiction with its international commitments to uphold the international legal order;
- J. whereas the Eastern Partnership policy is based on the sovereign right of each partner to choose the level of ambition and the goals to which it aspires in its relations with the EU;
- 1. Recommends the following to the Council, the Commission and the European External Action Service:

On the future of the Eastern Partnership

- (a) to ensure that the outcomes of the November 2017 Summit will, as a first priority, provide the basis for upholding the **core values** of the European Union, in particular respect for democracy, fundamental freedoms, human rights, the rule of law and non-discrimination, on which the Eastern Partnership is based, underlining that these values are at the heart of the Association Agreements and recognising the commitment of the partners concerned to implement and promote these values;
- (b) to live up to the high expectations of citizens in all the partner countries as regards eradicating corruption and bolstering the rule of law and good governance; to therefore seek a renewed commitment by the partners to adopt and fully implement reforms related to the judiciary, public administration and the fight against corruption;
- (c) to strengthen civil society in the partner countries and its role within the Eastern Partnership by uncompromisingly opposing all legislation that seeks to curtail its legitimate activities and by encouraging its deeper involvement in scrutinising and monitoring the implementation of reforms related to the Partnership as well as by promoting the transparency and accountability of public institutions;
- (d) to encourage electoral reforms that are in line with international standards, that implement recommendations by OSCE-led international observation missions and Venice Commission opinions and that are the subject of broad consultation and, as far as possible, consensus with opposition and civil society, in order to improve electoral frameworks without any bias towards ruling parties;

- (e) to ensure that the outcomes of the November 2017 Summit will provide for the delivery of **tangible results** for citizens, notably in terms of employment, transport and connectivity, energy independence, mobility and education, noting that a new European External Investment Plan (EEIP) is an important instrument in this regard;
- (f) to ask the Commission together with the European Investment Bank to propose arrangements for the implementation of a new European Investment Plan for Ukraine and other Eastern Partnership countries that have made the most progress on reforms towards gradual economic and political integration with the European Union, by increasing the lending capacity of the European Investment Bank from the current EaP levels of EUR 1.6 billion per year and by taking into account EEIP provisions in carrying out its investment mandate; to request as a first step in this regard the establishment of a separate investment window in the form of a trust fund for Ukraine based on the best practices of multi-donor instruments, stressing that this trust fund should focus on private and public investments, in particular on social and economic infrastructure and those aimed at boosting investment absorption capacity, and on the coordination of IFIs and international donor support on the ground;
- (g) to pursue efforts aimed at tackling unemployment, especially youth unemployment, including through a package of support measures for young people such as the EU4Youth programme, and developing skills needed in the labour market, including through vocational training, fostering entrepreneurship, supporting sustainable agriculture and developing the digital economy;
- (h) to ensure gender equality mainstreaming in public policies and support for the employability and entrepreneurship of women, with policy continuity being guaranteed beyond the 2020 target date;
- (i) to commit to working jointly on increased mobility between the EU and partner countries; to support Moldova, Georgia and Ukraine in implementing the visa liberalisation agreement and to ensure that suspension mechanisms are not triggered in the future, notably through close cooperation in the areas of police and customs to safeguard against security threats, criminality and overstays; to open visa dialogues with Armenia, to encourage progress by Azerbaijan in the implementation of Visa Facilitation and Readmission Agreements (VFA/RA) with a view to opening a visa dialogue in the future, and to finalise negotiations on VFA/RA with Belarus for the benefit of its citizens, should these countries make significant progress in the area of fundamental values and meet the precise conditions defined in visa liberalisation roadmaps;
- (j) to further increase opportunities for closer cooperation in the fields of education, research and innovation, notably through programmes such as Erasmus+ and EU4Innovation as well as the provision of loan guarantees by the European Investment Bank Group as part of its InnovFin programme;
- (k) to ensure that the outcomes of the November 2017 Summit will also provide a renewed impetus to boost **sustainable economic growth, trade and investment** opportunities, including intra-regional opportunities and with a particular

emphasis on Small and Medium-sized Enterprises (SMEs);

- (l) to call for recalibrated EU support to the Association agendas and to the related structural reforms, notably those allowing for improved competitiveness, a more favourable business environment and adequate access to sources of financing, including through the EU4Business initiative;
- (m) to support the development of the necessary transport and connectivity infrastructure, including through an ambitious investment plan for the TEN-T core network, and to also promote intra-regional trade;
- (n) to improve both energy independence and efficiency through specific investments, strengthened cooperation in all priority areas covered by the EU Energy Union and by closer integration of the partners' energy markets with the European energy market with a particular focus on interconnectivity and infrastructure, whilst scrutinising closely the consequences of the Nord Stream 2 pipeline;
- (o) to also increase prioritisation of the highest levels of nuclear safety standards and environmental protection and the fulfilment of climate change commitments, including through raising public awareness;
- (p) to ensure that the outcomes of the November 2017 Summit also address, where possible, the **security** threats that affect the sovereignty, unity, territorial integrity and political, social and economic development of the partners and of the region as a whole;
- (q) to commit to sustaining the unity of action among EU Member States in maintaining collective pressure on Russia, in particular through strengthened targeted restrictive measures, to solving the conflict in Ukraine through genuine implementation of the Minsk agreements, to re-establishing Ukraine's full sovereignty in Crimea, and that of Georgia in South Ossetia and Abkhazia and of Moldova in Transnistria, and to putting an end to the additional threats of state-sponsored assassinations, cyber warfare, disinformation and other types of destabilisation;
- (r) to call for an immediate end to military hostilities between Armenia and Azerbaijan which unnecessarily claim the lives of civilians and soldiers whilst hampering socioeconomic development; to reaffirm support to the independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity of both countries as well as to the OSCE Minsk Group co-Chairs' efforts to solve the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict and to their 2009 Basic Principles; to call on Armenia and Azerbaijan to re-launch negotiations in good faith with a view to implementing these principles to solve the conflict; to make the ratification of new agreements between the EU and each of the parties conditional on meaningful commitments to solving the conflict through maintaining the ceasefire and supporting the implementation of the 2009 Basic Principles;
- (s) to call for continued support to the work carried out by the EU and OSCE missions in Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine as essential operations to ensure peace and security first and foremost for the benefit of the citizens on the ground; to

reflect, jointly with the partner countries, on the prospect of an enhanced role for the EU in solving these conflicts, including by launching ambitious fully-fledged Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP) missions tasked with enhancing security and stability;

- (t) to consider an attractive ‘**EaP+**’ **model** for associated countries, based on the highest possible common denominator, that would include joining the customs union and Schengen area, further EU internal market access, participation in other EU programmes, increased involvement in the CSDP, as well as more immediate measures such as additional unilateral tariff preferences, the abolition of roaming tariffs between the partners and the EU and the development of high-capacity broadband; to open the ‘EaP+’ model to other EaP countries once they are ready for such enhanced commitments;
- (u) to consider, for non-associated countries, new means of supporting civil society, the academic and independent media communities and young people, including through additional funding and mobility partnerships;
- (v) to ensure that, in both cases, the common goals are both medium and long-term when necessary, encouraging some of the partner countries to move beyond the logic of electoral cycles to more strategic visions;

On the implementation of the Eastern Partnership

- (w) to reiterate the **principle of differentiation** and that the scope and depth of cooperation with the European Union is determined by the EU’s ambitions and those of the partners, as well as by the pace and quality of reforms;
- (x) to underline that the Eastern Partnership aims to create the necessary conditions for close political association and economic integration, including participation in EU programmes; points out that, pursuant to Article 49 of the TEU, any European state may apply to become a member of the European Union, provided it adheres to the Copenhagen criteria and the principles of democracy, that it respects fundamental freedoms and human and minority rights and that it upholds the rule of law;
- (y) to invite Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine to focus on the **implementation of the Association agendas** in order to unlock all the opportunities available through the Association Agreements, engaging also in the joint discussions on the progress, opportunities and challenges relating to the AA/DCFTA-related reforms; reiterates the importance of genuine implementation of the abovementioned reforms for the future stability and development of the countries and the wellbeing of their societies; to reaffirm that the prospect of EU membership requires significant progress in terms of the implementation of these reforms, notably as regards the rule of law, respect for human rights and good governance;
- (z) to ensure that strict **conditionality** is always attached to current and further levels of cooperation and support for the partners, and that it is also observed; to underline that EU financial support to its partners will be conditional on concrete reform steps and that the EU’s incentive-based approach will continue to benefit

those partners most engaged in ambitious reforms; to emphasise in particular that no comprehensive agreement will be ratified with a country that grossly violates EU values, notably through the non-implementation of ECHR decisions; to also highlight that clear benchmarks need to be met before any new dialogue on visa-free regimes is launched and concluded; to reiterate that backsliding on prior achievements will systematically lead to the suspension of agreements, including in the area of visa-free regimes and EU funding;

- (aa) to support the **multilateral dimension** of the Eastern Partnership as a means of increasing multilateral confidence-building, creating opportunities for regional cooperation and providing additional added-value, including in the sectoral policies;
- (ab) to highlight the importance of **communicating policies** related to the Eastern Partnership coherently and effectively, internally as well as externally, and of providing communication activities tailored to specific regions; to address the challenge of better information about the concrete benefits and goals of the Eastern Partnership, as well as to target disinformation through fact-based and accessible quality information in all languages of the partner countries and ensuring full respect for the freedom of expression;
- (ac) to maintain that **EU support** should be tailor-made to match the level of shared ambition regarding cooperation with each partner following the principles of both ‘more for more’ and ‘less for less’; to call in particular for the EU to align budgetary instruments such as the European Neighbourhood Instrument and the European Fund for Sustainable Development to political ambitions, notably within its annual and multiannual budgetary procedures;
- (ad) to welcome the Commission proposals to provide the partners with macro-financial assistance while insisting on strict and effective conditionality attached to the proposals, notably in terms of upholding the rule of law (including an independent judiciary), ensuring good governance (including combating corruption effectively) and defending human rights; to call on the Commission to make systematic provision for this conditionality in future proposals for such assistance; to provide Parliament and the Council with a detailed written report every six months on the progress made in these three areas for partners already benefiting from such assistance;
- (ae) to reiterate its strong support for **parliamentary input** to and **scrutiny** of the Eastern Partnership policy; in this respect, to enhance the role of the Euronest Parliamentary Assembly within the new multilateral architecture of the Eastern Partnership, as well as of the Parliamentary Association or Cooperation Committees (PAC/PCC) within the Association or Cooperation Councils; to welcome the Comprehensive Democracy Support Approach (CDSA) programmes that are being implemented; to invite parliamentarians from the partner countries to work together to scrutinise implementation and exchange best practices;
- (af) to take note of Parliament’s resolve to increase its monitoring of the implementation of international agreements with the eastern partners and to increase its scrutiny of EU support provided in this respect; to respond to

Parliament's call on the partners and on the Commission to increase the transparency of all EU funding beneficiaries; to call on the Commission and the EEAS to transmit to Parliament and the Council a detailed written report on the implementation of these agreements every six months;

- (ag) to take note of Parliament's resolve to increase its scrutiny of the negotiation of future international agreements with the eastern partners; to call on the Council to provide Parliament without delay with all relevant negotiating directives in line with the relevant Interinstitutional Agreement (2014/C 95/01); to welcome the good cooperation by the Commission and the EEAS with Parliament in providing information on these negotiations, but to call on them to also provide, without delay, the draft negotiating texts and initialled agreements, in line with the relevant Framework Agreement (2010/L 304/47);
2. Instructs its President to forward this recommendation to the Council, the European Commission, the European External Action Service and, for information, the EU Special Representative for the South Caucasus and the crisis in Georgia, the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly, the Council of Europe Parliamentary Assembly and the governments and parliaments of the Eastern Partner countries.