



**Euronest Parliamentary Assembly  
Assemblée parlementaire Euronest  
Parlamentarische Versammlung Euronest  
Парламентская Ассамблея Евронест**

17.03.2015

## **RESOLUTION**

**on engaging in a stronger partnership between the EU and Eastern European partner countries through the European Neighbourhood Instrument for 2014-2020**

## **EURONEST PARLIAMENTARY ASSEMBLY - RESOLUTION**

### **on engaging in a stronger partnership between the EU and Eastern European partner countries through the European Neighbourhood Instrument for 2014-2020**

*The EURONEST Parliamentary Assembly,*

- having regard to the Constituent Act of the EURONEST Parliamentary Assembly of 3 May 2011,
  - having regard to the Joint Declaration of the Eastern Partnership Summit held in Vilnius on 28 and 29 November 2013,
  - having regard to the European Parliament resolution of 12 March 2014 on assessing and setting priorities for EU relations with the Eastern Partnership countries<sup>1</sup>,
  - having regard to the Joint Communication of the Commission and the High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy of 20 March 2013 entitled ‘European Neighbourhood Policy: working towards a stronger partnership’,
  - having regard to the European Parliament legislative resolution of 11 December 2013 on the proposal for a regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council establishing a European Neighbourhood Instrument<sup>2</sup>,
  - having regard to the European Parliament resolution of 23 October 2013 entitled ‘European Neighbourhood Policy, working towards a stronger partnership – Position of the European Parliament on the 2012 progress reports’<sup>3</sup>,
  - having regard to the European Parliament’s resolutions on the review of the European Neighbourhood Policy and its Eastern dimension, as well as on the Republic of Armenia, the Republic of Azerbaijan, the Republic of Belarus, Georgia, the Republic of Moldova and Ukraine,
  - having regard to the Joint Statement of the European Union and the Republic of Armenia as agreed on 29 November 2013 in Vilnius by the Vice-President of the Commission / High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Armenia’s Security Policy and Foreign Minister Edward Nalbandian,
- A. whereas the Eastern Partnership was established in 2009 as a common endeavour of the European Union and its Eastern European partners with the objective of accelerating their political association and economic integration, on the basis of mutual interests, commitments, responsibility and joint ownership;
- B. whereas the states participating in the Eastern Partnership have entered into a mutual commitment to fundamental values, democracy, respect for human rights, the rule of law, good governance and the principles of the market economy and sustainable development;

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<sup>1</sup> Texts adopted, P7\_TA(2014)0229.

<sup>2</sup> Texts adopted, P7\_TA(2013)0567.

<sup>3</sup> Texts adopted, P7\_TA(2013)0446.

- C. whereas the Eastern Partnership Summit held in November 2013 in Vilnius was marked by a number of achievements, new agreements and progress towards closer relations, but was also tarnished by the decisions of some partner countries not to engage in Association Agreements with the EU, despite having successfully completed the negotiations;
- D. whereas the decision of the then President of Ukraine at the Vilnius Summit triggered the mass protests in Maidan Square which were followed by a dramatic chain of events for the country over 2014 - in particular, a wave of demonstrations resulting in the deaths of hundreds of Ukrainians in February, the illegal annexation of Crimea by Russia in March and, from the spring on, the outbreak and escalation of a new conflict in eastern Ukraine, with the direct military presence of the Russian Federation and its support for separatist forces, resulting in over 6 000 deaths;
- E. whereas the EU on the one side and Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine on the other have signed and subsequently ratified bilateral Association Agreements, including Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Areas (DCFTAs), in spite of the direct political, military and economic pressure exerted by the Russian Federation;
- F. whereas the EU and Belarus have begun negotiating visa facilitation and readmission agreements, thus allowing the promotion of people-to-people contacts; whereas, however, the resumption of political and economic dialogue between the EU and Belarus will depend on the unconditional release of all remaining Belarusian political prisoners and their full rehabilitation as regards their political and civic rights;
- G. whereas all the partner countries except for Belarus are confronted with separatism and territorial disputes, in which Russia is directly involved or exerts a major influence;
- H. whereas illegal separatist regimes have been established in Georgian and Moldovan territories; whereas the Crimean peninsula in Ukraine has been annexed by Russia, and armed confrontations are continuing between separatists and official Kiev forces in south-eastern Ukraine;
- I. whereas access to the EU market as well as to those of neighbouring Eurasian countries, in particular Russia, is vital for the partner countries and their economies; whereas some industrial sectors of partner countries are still dependent on production chains inherited from the former Soviet Union, thanks to which they are economically linked to the Russian Federation; whereas the extension of the Customs Union of the Russian Federation, Kazakhstan and Belarus to other partner countries and the Eurasian Economic Union should not be seen as projects competing with the economic component of the Eastern Partnership, as long as partner countries are allowed to choose freely which of the organisations to join; whereas efforts should be made in order to improve cooperation and make the two economic areas compatible so that the Eastern Partnership countries can fully exploit their potential;
- J. whereas the EU introduced restrictive measures against Russia in April and July 2014, and reinforced them in September 2014, in order to promote a change of course in Russia's adventurist aggressive actions violating the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Ukraine and destabilising its eastern region;
- K. whereas in August 2014, in retaliation against both the EU's restrictive measures and the signing of Association Agreements, Russia decided to impose an embargo on agricultural

and food products from the EU, other Western countries and some partner countries;

- L. whereas 2014 was the first year of a renewed programmatic and financial framework for implementing the European Neighbourhood Policy of the EU, and its specific Eastern dimension, until 2020;

**Building on the first achievements of the Eastern Partnership to open new prospects for the period 2014-2020**

1. Stresses that, since its inception in 2009, the Eastern Partnership has brought a number of concrete and tangible achievements which have been mutually beneficial for the societies of the EU and partner countries and have been reflected in a variety of agreements at different levels of political, economic and cultural cooperation, which have a broad potential for improvement given sufficient support from all parties involved;
2. Welcomes the fact that the Vilnius Summit participants reaffirmed their founding commitment to the principles of the Eastern Partnership , i.e., primarily, the rule of law, respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms, and democracy; stresses that these principles must be respected;
3. Shares the view of the Vilnius Summit participants that every partner should freely exert its sovereign choice on the scope of its ambitions and the objectives that it seeks to achieve in its relations with the EU and within the Eastern Partnership, in accordance with the principle of differentiation; recalls, in this respect, that the Eastern Partnership is a voluntary project respecting sovereign choices of its participant states and intensifying their relations, and that this should bring benefits to them, and beyond that to all of Europe, in terms of stability and prosperity;
4. Welcomes the signing of Association Agreements, including DCFTAs, between the EU and Ukraine, Moldova and Georgia; calls for swift ratification of these agreements by EU Member States; stresses the importance of implementing all the parts of the agreements and adopting the relevant reforms in all the fields concerned, in order to avoid social and environmental dumping; calls on all sides to continue the task of reform in accordance with the Association Agenda, and calls on the European Commission and the EU Member States to offer assistance in tackling those reforms; encourages the EU Member States to share their rich experience in the process of establishing democratic regimes and reforms based on respect for fundamental values and the rule of law, especially those Member States which could build on both their experience of EU integration and their close relations with partner countries; calls on the governments of partner countries which have ratified Association Agreements, including DCFTAs, with the EU, to organise public debates and information campaigns, including at local level, with the active involvement of civil society organisations, including National Platforms of the Civil Society Forum, since a detailed understanding of the content and impact of the agreements is paramount for their success;
5. Condemns Russia's direct and indirect military aggression in eastern Ukraine and the illegal annexation of Crimea in reaction to the sovereign choice of Ukraine to move forward in its European perspective; calls on the Russian Federation to respect the internationally recognised sovereignty of Ukraine, to withdraw its forces, to stop supporting separatist forces in eastern Ukraine and, to respect the numerous international, multilateral and bilateral treaties, including the UN Charter, the Helsinki Final Act and the

1994 Budapest Memorandum, which call for diplomatic solutions for all crises, as well as for avoidance of all forms of armed aggression or intervention in other states; calls on Russia to end the information war aimed at inciting ethnic hatred between Russians and Ukrainians; demands full cooperation by all parties with the investigations into the shooting-down of MH17, and stresses that those responsible must be brought to justice; condemns, furthermore, the trade restrictions imposed by Russia on the EU and several partner countries; supports the EU's restrictive measures against Russia and insists that it should maintain them as long as Russia fails to comply with the Minsk Agreements or adopt a constructive position as regards reaching a peaceful settlement to the conflict in eastern Ukraine; condemns the illegal, non-constitutional and illegitimate elections held in the separatist-controlled areas of Donetsk and Luhansk and recognised by Russia, which constitute a threat to the unity of Ukraine and a hindrance to the peace process; urges the Russian authorities to immediately release Nadia Savchenko, who was abducted and is illegally detained in Russia;

6. Condemns the signing of a treaty between the Russian Federation and Abkhazia on 24 November 2014 on alliance and strategic partnership, as well as Russia's intention to sign a treaty on closer relations with the breakaway region of Tskhinvali in 2015; stresses that these actions constitute a serious threat to stability and security in the region, generate serious risks affecting the efforts in the direction of normalisation of relations between Georgia and the Russian Federation, and undermine the Geneva International Discussions; calls on the Russian Federation to respect the fundamental principles of international law and the territorial integrity of Georgia and comply with the 2008 Ceasefire Agreement between Georgia and Russia;
7. Emphasises that the EU bears the responsibility of clearly defining the prospects that it wants to offer in response to the ambitions and European perspective of partner countries; deplores the fact that Russia has so far only perceived these ambitions and the Eastern Partnership as a threat to its geopolitical sphere of influence; notes that the Customs Union and the Eurasian Economic Union treaty which entered into force in January 2015 entail a project of economic integration between their members which is not compatible with Association Agreements and their trade components (the DCFTAs); calls on the Russian Federation to refrain from economic pressure and threats over security and energy supply, and to respect the right of its neighbours to freely choose their political and economic destiny; reiterates its call on the Russian Federation to reach a peaceful resolution of the conflicts at the negotiating table;
8. Considers that the creation of the Customs Union and the Eurasian Economic Union treaty, inspired by the ideals of the European Union and entering into force in January 2015, can only have beneficial effects for the participant countries as long as the Russian Federation refrains from coercing countries to join via economic pressure and threats over security and energy, supply and allows its neighbours to freely choose their political and economic destiny; notes that the new structures are not compatible with the Association Agreements and DCFTAs, and underlines the need to find lines of cooperation and communication in the future, as either way, trade and good relations between countries on both sides will have to be ensured;
9. Notes the potential of the ENI as an incentive for greater cooperation with those countries which still have to sign Association Agreements with the EU, and calls for renewed efforts to address them;

10. Believes that the Eastern Partnership Summit to be held in May 2015 in Riga should mark a reinforcement of the Eastern Partnership, characterised by strengthened political and economic ties between the EU and partner countries and deepened and improved bilateral as well as multilateral relations among all partners; calls on the EU and partner countries to remain consistent in pursuing the original vision of the Eastern Partnership, while focusing on implementing reforms which produce changes in societies and reinforce ties between their peoples;
11. Identifies political association, democratic reforms, human rights and fundamental freedoms, the strengthening of public institutional capacity and the independence of the judiciary, the fight against corruption, the reinforcement of energy security and people-to-people contacts, and cooperation on education as key priority areas on which the EU and its partners should expend more effort and ensure results at the Riga Summit;
12. Calls on the EU to establish, without delay, visa-free regimes for short-term travel with those partner countries which have committed to and completed Visa Liberalisation Action Plans, provided the conditions are fulfilled; stresses the importance of launching Visa Liberalisation Action Plans with those partner countries which have registered progress in implementing Visa Facilitation and Readmission Agreements with the EU; underlines the importance of cooperating on visa regimes and mobility partnerships, as a vector to bring the societies closer and to spread among citizens a sense of belonging to the same community of values;
13. Stresses that closer relations between the EU and partner countries will be conditional on tangible results of democratic reforms and the quality of the rule of law, as well as positive developments in the governance of state institutions and the spheres of political life and the judiciary; notes in this respect that there are deplorable tendencies to confrontation between government and opposition in some of the partner countries; urges the governments to refrain from political retribution and selective justice and to duly address the particular concerns that have been expressed by the European Parliament, by the OSCE's Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODHIR), and by other international institutions;
14. Recommends that the EU and partner countries develop a more strategic and results-oriented approach in the programmes that they jointly design and implement; considers that ministerial meetings should be the place where sector cooperation strategies are discussed, and that the Eastern Partnership Platforms and their expert panels should be more active in proposing, devising and reviewing those strategies;
15. Stresses the importance of stepping up cooperation programmes and exchange schemes targeted on young people, students, scientists and researchers within the Eastern Partnership; notes with satisfaction that the new EU programmes in those areas, namely the Erasmus+ programme and the 'Marie Skłodowska-Curie' actions within the Horizon 2020 Research Framework Programme, offer more opportunities for strengthening researcher mobility and scholarships for young people in partner countries; welcomes the successes of the first-ever sessions of the Euronest Scola and Eastern Partnership-Young Leaders Forum held in 2013 and 2014, and recommends that sessions of this type be organised on a regular basis; encourages, furthermore, the introduction of joint grant schemes for cultural development and joint cultural events, and suggests that there should be a monthly joint brochure, published in English and in the languages of the partner countries, which would directly inform residents of partner countries about the European

Union and European thought, and would provide clear information on the relations of those partner countries with the EU;

### **Achieving the Eastern Partnership's objectives through implementing the new European Neighbourhood Instrument for 2014-2020**

16. Welcomes the adoption of the European Neighbourhood Instrument (ENI) for the period 2014-2020, taking fully into account the Eastern dimension of the European Neighbourhood Policy, which should result in concrete and visible improvements for the populations concerned;
17. Regrets the substantial cuts made to the ENI budget compared to the original proposal from the Commission; calls for a close dialogue with the Commissioner responsible for the European Neighbourhood Policy in order to ensure the best use of scarce resources; considers that the balance between the Eastern and Southern parts of the ENI, with 40 % of total cooperation allocations going to the Eastern region, should be maintained; calls on the Commission to assist partner countries in strengthening their administrative capacities in order to take full advantage of the funding possibilities under the ENI;
18. Notes the need for a more balanced distribution of funds between partner countries, while acknowledging the need for better project proposals from the Eastern partners; considers it vital that the Commission and partner governments encourage and support more local actors as regards applying for and receiving ENI support for their projects;
19. Underlines the importance of the principles of ownership and mutual accountability in programming and implementing country programmes under the ENI; considers that success is partly bound up with agreed and mutually binding commitments between the EU and partner countries;
20. Recommends that, by contrast with the period 2007-2013, greater efforts be made to help partner countries to actually implement newly introduced legislation and to consolidate reforms needed for strengthening democracy and the rule of law in line with EU law and standards; recalls the need to establish a credible track record of such implementation before EU assistance is stepped up;
21. Calls on the Commission and partner countries to establish a limited number of priorities under national action plans and multi-country regional programmes for 2014-2015, in order to maximise their impact and deliver tangible and measurable results;
22. Urges the Commission to prepare a comprehensive strategy for relations with Belarus, aimed at fostering mutual understanding and the country's modernisation and democratisation; considers that such a strategy should include priority areas for reforms in Belarus for the improvement of relations and effective cooperation within the framework of the ENP, and should be based on the 'more for more' principle;
23. Positively identifies the provisions applying to ENI implementation, which rely on an incentive-based and tailor-made approach; considers that they are properly inspired by the 'more for more' principle, which had hitherto materialised only to a limited extent; stresses that the 'more for more' principle implies also a 'less for less' principle, which should be duly applied should the countries concerned not be willing to undertake the necessary reforms; is of the view, however, that the regional perspective should be

preserved, notably by enhancing multilateral contacts as well as cross-border cooperation projects and platforms; welcomes, in this regard, the fact that 10 % of the ENI budget is to be allocated, through ‘multi-country umbrella programmes’, to those partner countries showing progress towards the establishment and consolidation of deep and sustainable democracy and in the implementation of agreed reforms contributing to that goal;

24. Notes with satisfaction that ENI financial allocations for individual national action plans will be subject to a variation of up to 20 %, which also leaves room for applying greater differentiation in implementing the ENI;
25. Recommends that partner countries’ efforts towards approximation to EU legislation and standards be accompanied by a proportionate technical assistance on the part of the EU, in order to ensure the smooth and gradual absorption of all relevant parts of the EU acquis and bring concrete and visible benefits for economies and populations;
26. Stresses the need for EU assistance also to be targeted on addressing regional economic and social disparities within partner countries, as projects are too often concentrated in one region or the capital while people in more remote locations do not enjoy the benefits of such projects and remain largely unfamiliar with the merits of the EU integration process;
27. Calls for the EU and its Member States to implement cooperation and support policies towards partner countries in a coherent and efficient fashion and in coordination with other international and national donors; strongly encourages them to jointly programme actions and projects in partner countries; calls for a strengthened coordination and fostered synergies between ENI-funded projects and other EU-funded instruments and EU programmes open to participation by Eastern Partner countries, while stressing that established formats such as donors/investors’ conferences, working groups, communication between EU delegations and Member States’ embassies on the ground, etc., should not lose sight of the agreed policy objectives;
28. Emphasises the significant role that civil society plays in contributing to political dialogue and democratic reform processes in partner countries; recommends that the EU’s political commitment to civil society in partner countries be reflected throughout the ENI programming;
29. Calls on the parliaments of the Eastern Partnership countries to contribute to the discussion and raise public awareness of the ongoing processes and main achievements in the framework of the new European Neighbourhood Instrument for 2014-2020, in relation to enhancing the visibility of the EU programmes in their respective countries;
30. Instructs its Co-Presidents to forward this resolution to the President of the European Parliament, the Council, the Commission, the Vice-President of the Commission / High Representative of the EU for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, the Commissioner for European Neighbourhood Policy and Enlargement Negotiations, the European External Action Service, the governments and parliaments of the EU Member States and the Eastern European partners.