



EURONEST PARLIAMENTARY ASSEMBLY

The Bureau

- On the occasion of the Eastern Partnership Summit to be held on 15 December 2021 in Brussels, Belgium;

- Addresses the following message to the Heads of State and Government, in accordance with Article 18 of the Rules of Procedure of the Euronest Parliamentary Assembly.

Accelerated integration of the Eastern Partnership countries into the EU Single Market

- 1) We reaffirm our strong commitment to the Eastern Partnership based on mutual interests, which facilitates development and stability in this region; the only way to achieve this objective is a clear integration perspective with the EU, as closer integration towards the EU has proven to be a factor for increased stability and prosperity for countries in the EU's neighbourhood.
- 2) In the context of the Eastern Partnership Summit preparations, we have thoroughly discussed many concrete and technical proposals, prepared by EU institutions, especially the ones related to the EU plans to increase economic assistance to partner countries, while stressing the unequal and unbalanced allocation of the EU's proposed support packages to the partners; as there is a strong need for adjusting those plans based on the outcomes of the discussions with respective partner countries; on the other hand, we consider, that after having long years of technical discussions on the EU-Eastern Partnership policy implementation, there is a need of an additional geopolitical impulse to the EU enlargement and European integration debate with interested partners in order to inspire and keep motivation for reforms; we are convinced that this can be achieved if post-2020 Eastern Partnership priorities will provide for a clear vision on how to push forward our cooperation agenda in the Eastern Partnership region.
- 3) We acknowledge that the strategic goal is to accelerate political association and further economic integration between the EU and interested partner countries and deepen our relationship in conformity with international law and core common values as the only way leading to the stability and prosperity of the entire region, while not excluding future the

EU Membership for those Partners who – in line with Article 49 of the TEU – are ready to join.

- 4) We welcome the fact that the same request for a more ambitious EU integration policy was voiced on 17 May 2021 by the ministers of foreign affairs of Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine, who established enhanced cooperation on European integration as the “Association Trio” in order to voice their wish for further European integration, starting with the integration into the EU Single Market.
- 5) The lack of a clearer perspective from the EU side could erode the **partner countries’ aspiration for integration** and motivation for reforms even among the “Association Trio”, and political polarization in those countries could increase; at the same time, partner countries must show that they are serious about reforms, in particular on good governance and the rule of law, as **conditionality** must remain one of the EU’s guiding principles, and that the implementation of existing agreements (in particular the Association Agreements and DCFTAs) must come before other integration steps.
- 6) That is why when we are talking about post-2020 Eastern Partnership policy, we need to see that not only the Eastern Partner countries should speed up their reforms, but also the EU should have a more ambitious reformed policy towards the Eastern Partnership region, based on clear incentives that benefit the countries most engaged in reforms.
- 7) We reiterate, that the European Parliament, in its recommendations *on* the Eastern Partnership in the run-up to the June 2020 Summit urged EU institutions, first of all, to design a more ambitious and strategic Eastern Partnership policy, including a process leading to **integration into the EU Single Market**.
- 8) We consider that a much clearer definition of such an economic integration (at least for the Associated Trio countries) into the EU Single Market, which requires the implementation of approximately 70 percent of the EU *acquis communautaire*, together with the basic requirements of functioning democracy and the rule of law, could be a new EU flagship objective, which would bring a new dynamism into the European integration process; such an integration process could go along the lines of implementation of the Association Agreements, but with an introduction of accelerated EU integration process and clearly defined intermediate status of integration into the EU Single Market; the integration into the EU Single Market would bring the majority of EU membership benefits, at least to the Associated Trio countries; such an integration would follow the Romano Prodi formula proposed in 2002 regarding ‘everything, but institutions’ integration method (as it was done with the integration towards the European Economic Area), and for the time being such a model would help to avoid raising questions on how the EU should reform its decision-making before the next wave of enlargement (which is the major obstacle for the EU to push for a more ambitious enlargement agenda); the goal of such an intermediate status for the Associated Trio countries would not preclude their further perspectives to achieve a full EU membership status, as were also the cases of Sweden, Finland and Austria.
- 9) In this context, we underline the strategic importance of prudent **differentiation principle**, which has a major motivational power and creates a proper level playing field of natural competition for the best progress results among partner countries; furthermore, the significance of differentiation principle was repeatedly underlined by the European Parliament and the Euronest Parliamentary Assembly (PA) in their recommendations and

resolutions, emphasising the “more for more” and “less for less” principles; we point to the need to ensure that functioning and resilient democratic institutions, the rule of law, good governance, the fight against corruption and nepotism, media freedom and respect for human rights remain the key criteria and conditions for closer political partnership and financial assistance.

- 10) We reiterate the need to implement the principle of **inclusiveness**, as the Eastern Partnership provides a prime platform for regional cooperation and good neighbourly relations, and any attempts to undermine these principles would lead to a weakening of the whole Partnership and its objectives.
- 11) Therefore, we urge the EU institutions to adopt regular annual comprehensive progress assessment and **evaluation** reports for our Eastern Partners on their implementation of reforms and agreements with the EU, based on clear benchmarks and a common methodology, as it was also demanded by the European Parliament in its recommendations; such an assessment will also contribute to a more precise evaluation of the backsliding in some of the countries on their commitments and to a more effective implementation of the differentiation principle.
- 12) We remain deeply concerned that the independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity of the EU’s Eastern Partners remain undermined by unresolved conflicts; we demand complete and unconditional withdrawal of foreign military forces from the territories of the Eastern Partnership countries, and for an end to military hostilities, which unnecessarily claim the lives of civilians and soldiers, hamper hundreds of thousands of internally displaced people to return to their homelands, and threaten European security as a whole. In addition, the unresolved conflicts and military hostilities undermine the socio-economic development of the Eastern Partnership countries, stand in the way of good neighbourly relations and therefore contradict the principles and undermine the objectives of the Partnership. We therefore call to increase the political dialogue about security challenges for the region and we call on the EU to support its Eastern partners more actively in their efforts for lasting peace and stability.
- 13) We emphasise the utmost need to develop a more active role and enhanced engagement of the EU in the peaceful resolution of the unresolved conflicts in the EaP region; to boost EU-Eastern Partnership (EaP) cooperation in security and defence by devoting particular attention to the peaceful resolution of the unresolved conflicts; as well as to establish a more coordinated policy towards the Russian Federation among the EU Member States, in particular in terms of engagement on issues concerning the EaP countries, while acknowledging the increased security interdependence between the EU and EaP countries.
- 14) Overall, we wish that the recommendations of the European Parliament and previous Euronest PA Bureau Messages addressed to the EU institutions in their preparation for the Eastern Partnership Summits up until now would truly be taken into account by the EU institutions in order to show their commitment to the EP and the Euronest PA as important stakeholders and strong allies in building a stable Eastern Partnership.
- 15) Therefore, we urge the participants of the Eastern Partnership Summit in their Joint Statement to emphasise the following five principles for the future of the Eastern Partnership policy:

a) Aspiration – the EU should offer a model of a realistic vision for closer cooperation and integration to the Eastern Partners, in order to avoid further erosion of aspirations among the Eastern Partners.

b) Differentiation – the EU should acknowledge the need of more effective differentiation, with clear instruments of positive ‘more for more’ and negative ‘less for less’ differentiation, which is a basic prerequisite to keep motivation for reforms and adherence to basic EU values by our Eastern Partners.

c) Inclusiveness - the EU should continue to foster an Eastern Partnership based on a strong multilateral dimension that contributes to good neighbourly relations, regional cooperation and enhanced trade and people-to-people contacts in the entire region.

d) Integration – in order to foster progress and stability in the Eastern Partnership, the EU needs to deliver on its promise of gradual integration into the EU Single Market and increase sectoral cooperation, as it was demanded before by the European Parliament and the Euronest PA.

e) Evaluation – the Eastern Partnership Summit should introduce regular and comprehensive evaluation process of the Eastern Partner countries, which will be instrumental to the implementation of objectives and agreements, proper differentiation and a positive competition of the Eastern Partner countries in their closer integration towards the EU.

16) We emphasise that the Euronest PA Bureau is ready and willing to participate actively in the future debates on implementation of the Eastern Partnership policy, including on the implementation of the European Parliament and Euronest PA recommendations and resolutions regarding the future of the Eastern Partnership policy; we invite the EU Member States, in particular those who have a different or more sceptical view towards a more ambitious Eastern Partnership policy, to an open and constructive dialogue on this matter; it is our common responsibility to find the proper way to overcome current EU’s geopolitical impasse in the Eastern Partnership.

03.12.2021