



EURONEST PARLIAMENTARY ASSEMBLY  
ASSEMBLÉE PARLEMENTAIRE EURONEST  
PARLAMENTARISCHE VERSAMMLUNG EURONEST  
ПАРЛАМЕНТСКАЯ АССАМБЛЕЯ ЕВРОНЕСТ

*Plenary session*

21.2.2023

## RESOLUTION

on promoting governance in public institutions on the basis of political dialogue and institutional cooperation in order to increase efficiency and administrative capacity

## **Resolution by the Euronest Parliamentary Assembly on promoting governance in public institutions on the basis of political dialogue and institutional cooperation in order to increase efficiency and administrative capacity**

*The Euronest Parliamentary Assembly,*

- having regard to UN General Assembly Resolutions 68/262, 71/205, 72/190, 73/263, 74/168, 75/192, 76/179, 73/194, 74/17, 75/29 and 76/70, and to UN General Assembly Resolutions ES-11/1 of 2 March 2022, entitled ‘Aggression against Ukraine’, ES-11/2 of 24 March 2022, entitled ‘Humanitarian consequences of the aggression against Ukraine’, and ES-11/4 of 12 October 2022, entitled ‘Territorial integrity of Ukraine: defending the principles of the Charter of the United Nations’,
- having regard to the EU-Eastern Partnership foreign ministers meeting of 12 December 2022,
- having regard to the European Parliament recommendation of 23 November 2022 to the Council, the Commission and the Vice-President of the Commission / High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy concerning the new EU strategy for enlargement<sup>1</sup>,
- having regard to the European Council’s decision of 23 June 2022 to grant EU candidate status to Ukraine and Moldova and to recognise Georgia’s European perspective,
- having regard to the EU General Affairs Council conclusions of 13 December 2022 on Enlargement and Stabilisation and Association Process, which reaffirm that the future of Georgia, the Republic of Moldova and Ukraine and of their citizens lies within the European Union,
- having regard to the European Parliament resolution of 14 June 2018 on Georgian occupied territories 10 years after the Russian invasion<sup>2</sup>,
- having regard to the joint declaration of the Eastern Partnership Summit held in Brussels on 15 December 2021, as well as to the declarations from previous Eastern Partnership summits,
- having regard to the joint staff working document of the Commission and the High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy of 2 July 2021, entitled ‘Recovery, resilience and reform: post 2020 Eastern Partnership priorities’ (SWD(2021)0186), their joint communication of 18 March 2020, entitled ‘Eastern Partnership policy beyond 2020: Reinforcing Resilience – an Eastern Partnership that delivers for all’ (JOIN(2020)0007), and their joint staff working document of 9 June 2017, entitled ‘Eastern Partnership – 20 Deliverables for 2020: Focusing on key priorities and tangible results’ (SWD(2017)0300),

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<sup>1</sup> Texts adopted, P9\_TA(2022)0406.

<sup>2</sup> OJ C 28, 27.1.2020, p. 97.

- having regard to the Euronest Parliamentary Assembly resolution of 16 April 2021 on strengthening democratic processes: the role of political parties, civil society, a fair electoral environment, and free and pluralistic media<sup>3</sup>,
- having regard to the Euronest Parliamentary Assembly resolution of 9 December 2019 on Parliamentary oversight as a tool to strengthen democracy, accountability and effectiveness of state institutions in the Eastern Partner countries<sup>4</sup>,
- having regard to the European Parliament recommendation of 19 June 2020 to the Council, the Commission and the Vice-President of the Commission / High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy on the Eastern Partnership, in the run-up to the June 2020 Summit<sup>5</sup>,
- having regard to the Council conclusions of 11 May 2020 on Eastern Partnership policy beyond 2020,
- having regard to the Association Agreement between the European Union and the European Atomic Energy Community and their Member States, of the one part, and Georgia, of the other part<sup>6</sup>, to the Association Agreement between the European Union and the European Atomic Energy Community and their Member States, of the one part, and the Republic of Moldova, of the other part<sup>7</sup>, and to the Association Agreement between the European Union and its Member States, of the one part, and Ukraine, of the other part<sup>8</sup>,
- having regard to the Comprehensive and Enhanced Partnership Agreement between the European Union and the European Atomic Energy Community and their Member States, of the one part, and the Republic of Armenia, of the other part<sup>9</sup> (the CEPA),
- having regard to the Partnership and Cooperation Agreement between the European Communities and their Member States, of the one part, and the Republic of Azerbaijan, of the other part<sup>10</sup>, and to the ongoing negotiations on an enhanced agreement,
- having regard to the 12 Principles of Good Democratic Governance, as enshrined in the Strategy on Innovation and Good Governance at Local Level, endorsed by the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe in March 2008,
- having regard to the statements by the President of the European Council of 14 December 2021, 6 April 2022 and 23 May 2022, the statement by the President of the European Council and the President of France of 4 February 2022, and the statement following the quadrilateral meeting between the President of Azerbaijan, the Prime Minister of Armenia, the President of France and the President of the European Council

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<sup>3</sup> OJ C 361, 8.9.2021, p. 1.

<sup>4</sup> OJ C 134, 24.4.2020, p. 1.

<sup>5</sup> OJ C 362, 8.9.2021, p. 114.

<sup>6</sup> OJ L 261, 30.8.2014, p. 4.

<sup>7</sup> OJ L 260, 30.8.2014, p. 4.

<sup>8</sup> OJ L 161, 29.5.2014, p. 3.

<sup>9</sup> OJ L 23, 26.1.2018, p. 4.

<sup>10</sup> OJ L 246, 17.9.1999, p. 3.

of 6 October 2022,

- A. whereas good democratic governance at all levels is essential for effective economic and social progress and for building fair, stable and prosperous societies; whereas deficiencies in governance not only hamper prosperity, but can also significantly undermine a country's resilience and security;
- B. whereas the governance situation is different in every Eastern Partnership (EaP) country, but significant improvements could be achieved in all of them, in particular by implementing reforms in public administration and the justice sector, by introducing more efficient policies to fight corruption and by enhancing transparency and democratic accountability;
- C. whereas Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine has created a new geopolitical landscape and changed the security dimension of the EaP;
- D. whereas Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine has prompted three countries with EU association agreements – Ukraine, Georgia and Moldova – to submit membership applications to the European Union; whereas on 17 June 2022, the Commission published its opinions on these countries' membership applications, recommending to the Council that all three countries be given the perspective to become members of the European Union, and recommending, in particular, that candidate status be granted to Ukraine and the Republic of Moldova, and to Georgia once the country has addressed the priorities specified in the Commission's opinion;
- E. whereas on 23 June 2022, the European Council granted candidate status to Ukraine and the Republic of Moldova, and recognised Georgia's European perspective while confirming its readiness to grant the country candidate status once the priorities specified in the Commission's opinion on Georgia's membership application had been addressed;
- F. whereas the process for the accession of Ukraine, Moldova and Georgia will by definition change the character and functional role of the Eastern Neighbourhood Policy and will have a significant influence on the necessary political and institutional restructuring of the policies constituting the Eastern Neighbourhood Policy;
- G. whereas the merit-based accession process requires these countries to undertake substantial reforms to fulfil the Copenhagen criteria, in particular on the rule of law, democratic standards, fundamental rights and freedoms, and minority rights;
- H. whereas the COVID-19 pandemic has brought additional challenges, exacerbating certain systemic deficiencies while also providing an impetus for change;
- I. whereas in its recommendation of 23 November 2022 concerning the new EU strategy for enlargement, the European Parliament advised establishing clear deadlines for concluding negotiations with the accession countries by the end of the current decade at the latest;
- J. whereas in its conclusions of 13 December 2022 on Enlargement and Stabilisation and Association Process, the Council recalled that the Commission had been invited to

report on the fulfilment of the conditions specified in the Commission's opinions on the respective membership applications as part of its regular enlargement package in 2023, and, without prejudice to this comprehensive regular reporting, took note of the Commission's intention to provide an update in spring 2023;

- K. whereas the digital transformation offers many opportunities to improve governance and democratic participation;
  - L. whereas the EU and its Member States have engaged in political dialogue and institutional cooperation with, and provided support and technical assistance to, the EaP countries with a view to building capacity and helping them carry out necessary reforms; whereas such support remains important for the future and is closely linked to the EaP countries' commitment to core EU values such as democracy, the rule of law and respect for fundamental rights and freedoms;
  - M. whereas the Russian Federation continues to blatantly violate the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Georgia, undermining the security, humanitarian and human rights situation and violating fundamental principles and norms of international law in Georgia's occupied regions;
  - N. whereas an environment of peace and stability is crucial for maintaining effective democratic governance; whereas greater EU involvement in conflict resolution and peacebuilding in the EaP region is highly desirable and recommended;
1. Recognises that Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine has created a new geopolitical landscape and an increasingly difficult security environment, affecting the stability and governance of the EaP countries; notes that the Russian military began a brutal assault on the people of Ukraine without provocation, without justification and without necessity, and that these aggressive actions undermine security and harm stability in the whole EaP region; acknowledges that this security threat is an unprecedented danger to the further successful development of the EaP initiative;
  2. Condemns, in the strongest possible terms, Russia's unprovoked and unjustifiable war of aggression against Ukraine, its illegal occupation of Ukrainian territory and its involvement in both military action and cyberwarfare in the EaP region; reiterates the EU's commitment to, and underlines its unequivocal support for, the sovereignty, territorial integrity and political independence of the EaP countries within their internationally recognised borders, and their efforts to fully enforce those principles;
  3. Strongly condemns Russia's missile attacks on Ukraine's critical infrastructure, which have caused enormous suffering and destruction and therefore cannot be tolerated;
  4. Underlines that the EU Strategic Compass, which was approved in March 2022 with a view to strengthening the EU's security and defence policy by 2030, should be extended to the EaP region; stresses that further tailored bilateral partnerships should be implemented with like-minded countries and strategic partners, including by enhancing dialogue and cooperation, promoting participation in Common Security Defence Policy missions and operations, and supporting capacity-building;
  5. Calls on the Russian Federation to fulfil its international obligations under the

EU-mediated ceasefire agreement of 12 August 2008, to withdraw all its military and security personnel from Georgia's occupied territories and to allow the EU monitoring mission unhindered access to the whole territory of Georgia pursuant to its mandate;

6. Welcomes the European Council's decision of 23 June 2022 to grant Ukraine and the Republic of Moldova the status of EU candidate country and its recognition of the European perspective for Georgia; recalls that enlargement is a merit-based process and that the three countries will be evaluated on the basis of their progress on fulfilling the Copenhagen criteria, requiring their authorities to carry out substantial reforms to this end, in particular on the rule of law, democratic standards, fundamental rights and freedoms, and minority rights; welcomes, in this context, the effective and immediate steps taken by these countries to address their respective priorities; welcomes this renewed impetus for reforms in the area of governance; underlines that the enlargement policy, as a geostrategic investment of the EU, remains a strong anchor for peace, democracy, prosperity, security and stability in Europe; stresses that the peaceful resolution, on the basis of international law and good neighbourly relations, of ongoing or unresolved conflicts in the region is key to building and strengthening resilient and sustainable democracies in the EaP countries; recalls that peace and security require strong, honest and publicly accountable institutions, good governance and respect for the rule of law; strongly encourages the EaP countries to continue engaging in the relevant reforms, as only internal resilience rooted in strong and democratic institutions will allow them to develop the necessary resistance to external threats;
7. Calls on the EU institutions and the governments of the EaP countries to shape the accession process, from the very outset, in a way that ensures that it is transparent and inclusive for all citizens of the EaP countries applying for EU membership, guaranteeing them the right to participate in both parliamentary and participatory decision-making processes;
8. Reaffirms the central role played by the legislature in state systems; calls for strong and efficient parliaments to remain a basis of democracy and the rule of law; insists that parliaments' powers of scrutiny must be strengthened and that the authority of parliaments and the ability of their members to exercise their mandates must not be limited;
9. Welcomes the fact that one of the pillars of the new agenda for the EaP, as endorsed at the December 2021 Eastern Partnership Summit, places a strong emphasis on good governance, the rule of law, security and resilient societies, underpinning the agenda's other, investment-focused, pillar; stresses that efficient and accountable institutions are a fundamental precondition for the effective use of financial support to address all other priorities;
10. Urges the EaP countries to continue resolutely on the path of reforms to improve democratic governance and the rule of law; highlights the importance of sustained EU support for reforms to improve governance and the rule of law in the EaP countries, in particular in the context of the implementation of the association agreements and the CEPA, and encourages the continued application of the 'more for more' principle to stimulate progress on reforms;

11. Stresses the importance of constructive political dialogue and cooperative working relations between national political parties and insists that existing differences must be overcome in order to pursue democratic reforms, particularly in partner countries aspiring to EU accession;
12. Welcomes the positive contribution made by initiatives and instruments that provide technical assistance and support capacity-building, such as the joint EU and Council of Europe programme 'Partnership for Good Governance', and in particular institution-building tools such as Twinning, the Technical Assistance and Information Exchange and the Support for Improvement in Governance and Management initiative, all of which give targeted support to public administrations in partner countries; supports the continuation of such initiatives and instruments; underscores that facilitating the sharing of experiences and best practices is important for the process of democratic transition;
13. Recalls that the cornerstone of good governance is an independent judiciary, which is crucial for safeguarding citizens' rights regardless of their nationality, gender and religion, for upholding the rule of law and a democratic form of government, and for ensuring a functioning business environment, which is vital for economic development; is concerned at the slow progress and negative tendencies in this area and stresses, in particular, the need to guarantee that all appointments, promotions and dismissals in the judiciary are entirely merit-based and made in line with international norms, without any political interference; recalls, in addition, the need to ensure the independence and autonomy of the prosecution services, which must be able to function free from political pressure; encourages Ukraine, Moldova and Georgia to work resolutely towards delivering on the recommendations on judicial reform set out in the Commission's opinions;
14. Notes that polarisation continues to define the political environment in several EaP countries and calls on all political stakeholders to unite around the key goal of ambitious democratic, judicial and anti-corruption reforms;
15. Welcomes the determination of the authorities of the Republic of Moldova to address the priorities identified in the Commission's opinion and encourages them to continue working towards consolidating the independence and integrity of the justice sector; points out that sustained support from the EU institutions for the reform of the judiciary is essential for all EaP countries;
16. Insists that the fight against corruption and state capture must be made a priority, including by better enforcing anti-corruption legislation, ending impunity and reducing the space for corruption by means of increased transparency on matters such as public procurement and beneficial ownership; welcomes the launch of the EU4Integrity programme and the establishment of electronic asset declaration systems in Armenia, Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine; welcomes the establishment of specialised anti-corruption bodies, particularly the High Anti-Corruption Court in Ukraine, the independent Anti-Corruption Bureau in Georgia and the system of anti-corruption institutions in Armenia; commends the steps taken by the Georgian authorities to fight corruption and notes that Georgia ranks 45th out of 180 countries on the Corruption Perceptions Index;



17. Welcomes Georgia's positive step of establishing a new, independent Anti-Corruption Bureau accountable to the Georgian Parliament and the Anti-Corruption Interagency Council, and notes that the Anti-Corruption Bureau's main task will be to promote the fight against corruption and prevent corruption;
18. Welcomes the adoption in the Republic of Moldova of a law allowing the creation of a mechanism for the prosecution, trial and conviction *in absentia* of persons who are evading prosecution, as it will lead to final court sentences in a number of high-profile cases related to corruption, money laundering and other serious crimes; encourages the authorities to improve the legal framework on whistleblowers and to accelerate their work towards demonstrating progress and a solid track record on stepping up the fight against corruption; notes that in recent years, Georgia has made significant improvements to its anti-money laundering and counter-terrorist financing system and has demonstrated a strong political commitment to fighting money laundering and terrorist financing;
19. Is seriously concerned that corruption and state capture by elites and oligarchs not only hamper economic and social development, but may also represent channels for external interference pursuing geopolitical objectives contrary to the democratic will and interests of the population; underlines the importance of curbing the influence of oligarchs and patronage networks; encourages Ukraine, Moldova and Georgia to work resolutely towards delivering on the recommendations on 'de-oligarchisation' set out in the Commission's opinions; acknowledges that this is a challenging process owing to the need to identify proper legal instruments to deal effectively with vested interests and oligarchic influence; nonetheless encourages the EaP countries to prioritise this issue, which is of fundamental importance to their citizens;
20. Insists that a genuine civil society is crucial for ensuring proper public scrutiny of decision-making and for promoting the social acceptability of reforms; calls for increased support for civil society organisations and the independent media, including through sustainable financing, and presses for the lifting of any restrictions on their work, including on their registration and their receipt of foreign funding; is concerned about the attacks on critical voices in the media and about politically motivated court cases against media managers; points out the vital role of independent media in every democratic society and calls on the EaP countries to intensify their efforts to safeguard media pluralism and independence, including by ensuring ownership transparency in the media market; stresses the crucial importance of maintaining the freedom of the press and freedom of speech, which are the cornerstone of European Union values and a precondition for further European integration; urges all EU and EaP states to reduce state regulation of the media and abstain from any interference in public or independent media editorials; underlines, at the same time, that Russia's ongoing aggression has a hybrid nature and uses democratic values such as media freedom to counter democracy and spread propaganda containing false information, and stresses that the information security policies of EU and EaP countries should take this into account for the development of security strategies;
21. Reaffirms that holding free and fair elections, based on democratic principles, creates the main conditions for good and effective governance; reiterates the need to ensure that election processes comply fully with international standards, the recommendations of



the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe's Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (OSCE/ODIHR) and the opinions of the Venice Commission, in particular with regard to the adoption of legislative amendments concerning electoral laws and party financing; welcomes, in this regard, the adoption, with multi-party support, of amendments to the Election Code of Georgia dealing with electronic voting and party financing, in accordance with the recommendations of the OSCE/ODIHR and the Venice Commission;

22. Encourages further public administration reforms aimed at ensuring accountable, transparent and efficient public administration at all levels, in particular in the area of public finance management; highlights the role of EU public sector expertise, provided through peer-to-peer knowledge exchange and institutional partnerships, in building capacity in the public sector; welcomes the intention to establish an Eastern Partnership Academy for Public Administration, as set out in the joint declaration of the Eastern Partnership Summit of 15 December 2021, and calls for the Academy to become operational quickly;
23. Stresses the far-reaching benefits of digitalisation in terms of enhancing good governance, transparency and the fight against corruption; notes that digital technologies can significantly facilitate citizens' participation in and scrutiny of decision-making processes; supports the new EaP agenda's focus on stimulating the digital transformation and e-governance in particular;
24. Regrets the decision of the Belarusian authorities to suspend their participation in the EaP; looks forward to resuming cooperation with Belarus as soon as the necessary conditions for peaceful democratic transition are in place, with a view to building on a joint agenda based on common values and shared interests; continues its engagement with and support for the citizens, civil society and independent media of Belarus;
25. Appeals to all European political families to help their sister parties in the Belarusian opposition to remain viable entities in the light of the change made by the unrecognised Lukashenka regime to the law on political parties in Belarus, and urges them to sustain active cooperation with them, regardless of whether they are registered;
26. Emphasises the need for non-discrimination against vulnerable groups, including minority groups, LGBTIQ+ persons and persons with disabilities, and for gender equality, in order to improve the representation of different groups and their socio-economic conditions and thereby foster stable and more equal societies and good governance;
27. Welcomes the fact that Armenia and Azerbaijan have confirmed their commitment to working towards a peace treaty, reasserted their commitment to the Charter of the United Nations and the 1991 Alma-Ata Declaration, through which they recognise each other's territorial integrity and sovereignty, and confirmed that this will be a basis for the work of the border delimitation commissions; welcomes the successful implementation of the civilian EU monitoring mission in Armenia along the border with Azerbaijan; welcomes the establishment of a civilian EU mission in Armenia, the ultimate goal of which is to contribute to sustainable peace in the region by reducing the number of incidents in conflict-affected and border areas in Armenia, to reduce the risk

level for the population living in such areas and thereby to contribute to the normalisation of relations between Armenia and Azerbaijan; echoes the President of the European Council's assertion that ensuring the appropriate distancing of forces is essential for incident prevention; welcomes the agreement on the need to proceed with unblocking transport links in the region, without extraterritorial claims;

28. Calls for a full and speedy resolution of all outstanding humanitarian issues, including the release of all Armenian detainees, the clarification of the fate of all persons who went missing or were victims of enforced disappearances during the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict, and the implementation of a UNESCO mission aimed at protecting the region's cultural heritage; welcomes the EU's support in humanitarian demining efforts; stresses that the rights and security of the Armenians in Nagorno-Karabakh need to be addressed in order to ensure lasting peace in the region;
29. Instructs its Co-Presidents to forward this resolution to the European Parliament, the Council, the Vice-President of the Commission / High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, the Commissioner for Neighbourhood and Enlargement, and the governments and parliaments of the EU Member States and the Eastern Partnership countries.