



TEXTS ADOPTED

P9_TA(2020)0167

Eastern Partnership in the run-up to the June 2020 Summit

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 (2019/2209(INI))

The European Parliament,

- having regard to Articles 2, 3 and 8 and Title V, notably Articles 21, 22, 36 and 37, of the Treaty on European Union (TEU), and 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 six Eastern European Partners Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, the Republic of Moldova and Ukraine,
- having regard to the Joint Declarations of the Eastern Partnership Summits of 2009 in Prague, 2011 in Warsaw, 2013 in Vilnius, 2015 in Riga and 2017 in Brussels,
- 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 part¹, 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 part², to the Association Agreement between the European Union and its Member States, of the one part, and Ukraine, of the other part³, including Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Areas (DCFTAs), and 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 part⁴,
- having regard to the Partnership Priorities between the EU and Azerbaijan endorsed by

¹ OJ L 261, 30.8.2014, p. 4.

² OJ L 260, 30.8.2014, p. 4.

³ OJ L 161E, 29.5.2014, p. 3.

⁴ OJ L 23, 26.1.2018, p. 4.

- the Cooperation Council on 28 September 2018¹,
- having regard to the final statements and recommendations of the meetings of the Parliamentary Association Committees with Ukraine and Moldova of 19 December 2019,
 - having regard to Parliament’s annual report on the implementation of the common foreign and security policy of 18 December 2019²,
 - having regard to Regulation (EU) 2018/1806 of the European Parliament and of the Council³ listing the third countries whose nationals must be in possession of visas when crossing the external borders and those whose nationals are exempt from that requirement,
 - having regard to the Agreements between the European Union and the Republic of Armenia⁴ and the Republic of Azerbaijan⁵ on the facilitation of the issuance of visas, and to the signing of an agreement on the facilitation of the issuance of visas by the European Union and the Republic of Belarus on 8 January 2020⁶,
 - having regard to the Joint Communication of the Commission and the Vice-President/High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy of 18 March 2020 to the European Parliament, the European Council, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions, Eastern Partnership policy beyond 2020, entitled ‘Reinforcing Resilience – an Eastern Partnership that delivers for all’,
 - having regard to the conclusions of the Foreign Affairs Council on the European Neighbourhood Policy and the Eastern Partnership,
 - having regard to the recommendations by and the activities of the Euronest Parliamentary Assembly, the European Economic and Social Committee, the Eastern Partnership Civil Society Forum, the Committee of the Regions, and the Conference of Regional and Local Authorities for the Eastern Partnership (CORLEAP),
 - having regard to the resolution of the Euronest Parliamentary Assembly of 9 December 2019 on ‘The future of the Trio Plus Strategy 2030: building a future of Eastern Partnership’,
 - having regard to the EU Global Strategy and the revised European Neighbourhood Policy,

¹ Recommendation No 1/2018 of the EU-Azerbaijan Cooperation Council of 28 September 2018 on the EU-Azerbaijan Partnership Priorities (OJ L 265, 24.10.2018, p. 18).

² European Parliament resolution of 15 January 2020 on the implementation of the common foreign and security policy – annual report (Texts adopted, P9_TA(2020)0008).

³ Regulation (EU) 2018/1806 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 14 November 2018 listing the third countries whose nationals must be in possession of visas when crossing the external borders and those whose nationals are exempt from that requirement (OJ L 303, 28.11.2018, p. 39).

⁴ OJ L 289, 31.10.2013, p. 2.

⁵ OJ L 128, 30.4.2014, p. 49.

⁶ 12363/19 VISA 191 COEST 210.

- having regard to the Council of Europe Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities and the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages,
- having regard to its resolutions of 20 May 2010 on the need for an EU strategy for the South Caucasus¹, of 23 October 2013 on the European Neighbourhood Policy², of 18 September 2014 on the situation in Ukraine and state of play of EU-Russia relations³, of 15 January 2015 on the situation in Ukraine⁴, of 15 April 2015 on the centenary of the Armenian Genocide⁵, of 9 July 2015 on the review of the European Neighbourhood Policy⁶, of 21 January 2016 on Association Agreements / Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Areas with Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine⁷, of 23 November 2016 on EU strategic communication to counteract propaganda against it by third parties⁸, of 13 December 2016 on rights of women in the Eastern Partnership States⁹, of 16 March 2017 on the Ukrainian political prisoners in Russia and the situation in Crimea¹⁰, of 19 April 2018 on Belarus¹¹, of 14 June 2018 on Georgian occupied territories 10 years after the Russian invasion¹², of 4 July 2018 on the draft Council decision on the conclusion, on behalf of the Union, of 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 part¹³, of 4 October 2018 on the deterioration of media freedom in Belarus, notably the case of Charter 97¹⁴, of 14 November 2018 on the implementation of the EU Association Agreement with Moldova¹⁵, of 14 November 2018 on the implementation of the EU Association Agreement with Georgia¹⁶, and of 12 December 2018 on the implementation of the EU Association Agreement with Ukraine¹⁷,
- having regard to its previous resolutions on Russia, especially those related to Russia's actions in the territories of the EaP countries, violations of the rights of the Crimean Tatars, the occupation of parts of the territory of Georgia and related borderisation activities, and hostile propaganda and disinformation against the EU and the EaP countries,
- having regard to its recommendation of 15 November 2017 to the Council, the Commission and the EEAS on the Eastern Partnership, in the run-up to the November

¹ OJ C 161 E, 31.5.2011, p. 136.

² OJ C 208, 10.6.2016, p. 119.

³ OJ C 234, 28.6.2016, p. 14.

⁴ OJ C 300, 18.8.2016, p. 27.

⁵ OJ C 328, 6.9.2016, p. 2.

⁶ OJ C 265, 11.8.2017, p. 110.

⁷ OJ C 11, 12.1.2018, p. 82.

⁸ OJ C 224, 27.6.2018, p. 58.

⁹ OJ C 238, 6.7.2018, p. 42.

¹⁰ OJ C 263, 25.7.2018, p. 109.

¹¹ OJ C 390, 18.11.2019, p. 100.

¹² OJ C 28, 27.1.2020, p. 97.

¹³ OJ C 118, 8.4.2020, p. 43.

¹⁴ OJ C 11, 13.1.2020, p. 18.

¹⁵ Texts adopted, P8_TA(2018)0458.

¹⁶ Texts adopted, P8_TA(2018)0457.

¹⁷ Texts adopted, P8_TA(2018)0518.

2017 Summit¹ and to its recommendation of 4 July 2018 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 negotiations on the EU-Azerbaijan Comprehensive Agreement²,

- having regard to Rule 118 of its Rules of Procedure,
 - having regard to the letter from the Committee on International Trade,
 - having regard to the report of the Committee on Foreign Affairs (A9-0112/2020),
- A. whereas for the foreseeable future the EU remains the dominant political and economic power of Europe, and this generates responsibility towards its neighbours;
- B. whereas the June 2016 EU Global Strategy states that the EU's priority is fostering resilient, well-governed, prosperous and aligned states in the neighbourhood;
- C. whereas the Eastern Partnership (EaP) is inclusive by nature, is based on mutual interests and understanding, shared ownership and responsibility, differentiation and conditionality, and aims for a shared commitment between Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, the Republic of Moldova, Ukraine and the European Union to deepen their relations and adhere to international law and core values such as democracy, respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms, the rule of law, the independence and impartiality of the judiciary, a social market economy, sustainable development and good governance, with the goal of increasing stability and prosperity;
- D. whereas increased cooperation between the EU and the EaP countries is not a linear process and a fully-fledged cooperation can be achieved and maintained only insofar as the core European values and principles are respected during the constitutional and legislative process and if the fight against corruption, organised crime, money laundering, oligarchic structures and nepotism is guaranteed; stresses, however, that in serious cases of backsliding cooperation can be reversed;
- E. whereas certain EaP countries chose to pursue a closer political, human and economic integration with the EU, based on the principle of differentiation and in accordance with performance results and aspirations, and concluded ambitious Association Agreements (AAs) including Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Areas (DCFTAs), as well as visa-free regimes and Common Aviation Area Agreements; in addition, they declared the strategic goal of membership of the EU and have already proved their ability to ensure greater stability, security, prosperity and resilience in the Eastern neighbourhood; whereas public support in their societies for European integration remains at a very high level;
- F. whereas other EaP countries pursue a more nuanced level of ambition towards the EU; whereas Armenia is part of the Russian-led economic and military regional integration structures (the Eurasian Economic Union and the Collective Security Treaty Organisation) and has concluded the Comprehensive and Enhanced Partnership Agreement with the EU; whereas Azerbaijan as of 2017 is negotiating a new comprehensive agreement with the EU which will replace the Partnership and

¹ OJ C 356, 4.10.2018, p. 130.

² OJ C 118, 8.4.2020, p. 158.

Cooperation Agreement of 1999; whereas Belarus does not have any treaty-based contractual relationship with the EU, but recently visa facilitation and readmission agreements have been signed;

- G. whereas since the establishment of the EaP, partner countries have displayed a varied pace of political and economic reform, due to both internal and external factors, and have not yet reached a point where these reforms are irreversible;
- H. whereas maintaining a long-term European perspective for the interested countries in the EaP is a catalyst for democratisation and further reforms in the EaP countries;
- I. whereas there is a need to encourage the development of tailor-made strategies with all EaP countries, as well as to advance to more ambitious forms of cooperation and integration where desired by the partner countries and to support and sustain an ambitious pace of implementation of European integration reforms;
- J. whereas that goal can be achieved provided that progress in respect for the rule of law and in strengthening democracy is attained, and comprehensive reforms are implemented in a timely, authentic, sustainable and effective manner, with the support of flexible EU instruments and in accordance with international commitments and obligations, also respecting fundamental human and minority rights;
- K. whereas the achievements and the strengthened differentiation in bilateral relations between the EU and the EaP countries with which it has signed an Association Agreement are welcome, and it is now time to provide those countries with clearer guidance on specific reform priorities, alignment criteria and the next steps in the EU integration process;
- L. whereas the main goal of the AAs/DCFTAs is to create the necessary conditions to accelerate political association and further economic integration between the EU and interested partner countries;
- M. whereas the independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity of the EaP countries are still infringed by unresolved regional conflicts, external aggression and the ongoing occupation of the territories of some of those countries, which undermine the human rights situation, represent a barrier to enhancing the prosperity, stability and growth of the EaP and compromise EU action, thus endangering the whole EaP project; whereas in the majority of these conflicts Russia is playing an active role as an aggressor, through its hybrid warfare, illegal occupation and annexation policy, cyberattacks, propaganda and disinformation, which threaten European security as a whole;
- N. whereas European prosperity and security are closely linked to the situation of the neighbouring countries, and of the EaP countries in particular; whereas the Eastern Partnership pursues the common goals of good neighbourly relations and regional cooperation, and the revised European Neighbourhood Policy should foster and strengthen capacities to resolve bilateral disputes and strive for reconciliation between societies in the Eastern neighbourhood;
- O. whereas the European Parliament condemns the violation of the sovereignty and territorial integrity of the EaP countries, does not recognise forcible changes in their borders and attempted annexation of their territories, and rejects the use of force or the

threat of force, sharing the EU's commitment to supporting a peaceful conflict resolution via diplomatic means and in accordance with the norms and principles of international law, the UN Charter and the Helsinki Final Act, namely in the conflicts to which Russia is a party;

- P. whereas since the establishment of the EaP the EU has expanded and sustained its political, economic and security presence in the EaP countries, thus gaining increased leverage and opportunities to promote its values and principles and increasing the interdependence between the EU and EaP countries;
- Q. whereas the EaP countries can play a significant role for direct access to Central Asia and contribute to the EU's Central Asia Strategy as reliable Eastern European partners;
- R. whereas through the EaP the EU helped kick-start structural reforms, including of institutions and governance structures, as well as laying the foundations for deep socio-economic and political transformation across the Eastern neighbourhood; whereas progress has been achieved in the approximation of the EaP countries to the EU regulatory framework and its norms, standards and practices;
- S. whereas a direct consequence of the EaP has been the empowerment, increased expectations and demand for accountability and transparency from civil society towards the governments of the EaP countries, which have proved to be a major internal driver for reform; whereas the success of transformation in the EaP countries, and in particular in the three associated partner countries, can yield a positive example for other countries;
- T. whereas independent prosecutors and judges, free courts and institutions, a strong civil society and independent media, all acting as watchdogs, are key elements that the EU should continue to actively support in its Eastern neighbourhood;
- U. whereas strong and resilient institutions, the prevalence of the rule of law, the implementation of judicial reforms and the fight against corruption and money laundering are pivotal in building a fair, stable and trustworthy environment, which can then in turn attract and sustain long-term investment and growth in the EaP countries;
- V. whereas on the occasion of the 10th anniversary of the EaP the European Council emphasised the importance of the strategic partnership with the EaP countries and called on the Commission and the Vice-President of the Commission / High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy to make long-term policy proposals in order to prepare the June 2020 Summit;
- W. whereas the European Parliament is committed to adopting annual resolutions on the implementation of AAs/DCFTAs by the associated countries and at least biannual recommendations on the relations with the remaining EaP countries and the EaP policy as a whole;
- 1. Recommends that the Council, the Commission and the Vice-President of the Commission / High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy:
 - (a) acknowledge that the EaP countries have increasingly assumed more responsibility and ownership with respect to the EaP initiative; underline the

importance of striving for a continuous impetus towards effective cooperation, intense dialogue and close partnership within the EaP, enhanced by the transformational impact of the EaP policy, which supports reforms that generate positive political, social, economic and legal change in the EaP countries, taking into consideration their level of ambition towards the EU; highlight the associated countries' striving for an ever closer relationship with the EU; confirm the sovereign right of the EaP countries to freely choose their individual level of cooperation or integration with the EU and to reject any external pressure on such choice;

- (b) underline that, pursuant to Article 49 TEU, any European state may apply to become a member of the EU provided that it respects the values of human dignity, freedom, democracy, equality, the rule of law and human rights, including the rights of persons belonging to minorities, as referred to in Article 2 TEU; acknowledge that, while accession is not foreseen under the framework of the EaP, the EaP policy can facilitate a process of gradual integration into the EU; consider that for an eventual accession process both the EU and the EaP country concerned must be well prepared, taking into account the EU's future reforms process and the partner country's approximation to the EU acquis, as well as its compliance with the EU membership criteria; ensure that the full implementation of the current agreements between the EU and EaP countries will be the first step in this gradual integration process;
- (c) promptly enact a strategic and future-oriented vision for the next decade of the EaP policy beyond 2020 with the aim of providing benefits first and foremost for citizens, strengthening resilience, fostering sustainable development, ensuring irreversible achievements, and deepening the EU-EaP cooperation and integration process, which is in the EU's own security and economic interests;
- (d) ensure that the conclusions of the June 2020 Summit include a clear strategy and a long-term common vision for further engagement and development of the EaP beyond 2020, reinforced EU commitments and political incentives, as well as a pledge from the EaP countries to deliver on their own; encourage future Presidencies of the Council of the EU, in line with the European Parliament's resolutions and recommendations, to prepare detailed and ambitious agendas for cooperation with EaP countries, which would help to shape relations with EaP countries in a mutually desired direction in the decades to come;
- (e) recognise that the EaP should continue to be an attractive framework for cooperation and support this process in line with the 'more for more' principle, in order to keep the EaP countries engaged in the reform process and on their path towards the EU;
- (f) acknowledge that the Eastern partnership runs both ways as the experience of the EaP countries can be shared for the mutual benefit of the EU and its Member States and the EaP countries;
- (g) maintain a balanced approach between tailor-made differentiation within the EaP and the inclusiveness, coherence and consistency of the multilateral framework, which remains a reference point for all EaP countries; avoid splitting the EaP along the lines of the different countries' ambitions towards the EU; consider that the scope and depth of cooperation between the EU and the EaP countries is to be

determined by the ambitions of the parties, as well as by their implementation of reforms; acknowledge that the AAs/DCFTAs that have been signed with Georgia, the Republic of Moldova and Ukraine are the evidence of a differentiated approach and should lead to further enhanced bilateral relationship formats and roadmaps based on the principle of ‘more for more’;

- (h) in light of a tailor-made approach, consider creating for the three associated countries an enhanced cooperation strategy, which could establish a reform and investment support programme in areas such as capacity building, transport, infrastructure, connectivity, energy, justice and the digital economy, which could later foresee an extension to the remaining EaP countries on the basis of individual assessments of EU reform commitments and progress achieved, bearing in mind the need to sustain the coherence of the EaP and in line with the inclusiveness principle; this dialogue could include meetings on the margins of the European Council with leaders of the associated countries on a structured basis, and regular participation of their representatives in the meetings of the European Council working groups and committees;
- (i) embark on a process to create a common economic space, leading towards integration with the four freedoms, that would facilitate deeper economic integration and convergence of EaP countries with EU policies and a deeper economic cooperation among the EaP countries themselves, using the path trodden with the Western Balkan countries;
- (j) launch additional measures for a deeper integration and further sectoral cooperation of the EaP countries with the EU and their participation in selected EU agencies, investment framework platforms and intra-EU programmes and initiatives, in full compliance with existing conditionalities and pursuant to the EU’s incentive-based approach, in order to achieve further convergence in the spirit of the ‘more for more’ principle and taking into account the best reform support practices;
- (k) provide EaP countries with greater financial assistance, and make it subject to conditions, including in the context of ongoing legislative negotiations on the external financial instruments for the period 2021-2027; ensure that such assistance should be tailored to the specific needs of the individual EaP countries under the guidance of the European Parliament via delegated acts, and used to implement activities under the EaP programme; acknowledge that the EU’s financial assistance is also an investment in the future, since it supports reforms that increase the economic and social stability of the EaP countries and lays down the basis for a successful future cooperation;
- (l) recognise the need for an additional political, administrative and financial support framework for the three associated countries within the overall EaP, based on individual approaches, that would address their specific structural reforms, modernisation and institution-building needs; note that this access to EU funding should be linked to reform commitments and should include a set of ambitious benchmarks;
- (m) prioritise the imperative of the ‘more for more’ democracy and rule of law principle in the light of recent developments in both the EU and EaP countries, and 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;

- (n) carry out regular impact assessments of the EU support programmes in order to increase their efficiency and apply timely adjustments; react faster to the deterioration of the rule of law and democratic accountability in the EaP countries and apply smart conditionality, including by linking the provision of macrofinancial assistance to democratisation and reforms, so as to prevent the partner governments from further backsliding; create conditions to be in a position to divert assistance in a given EaP country from the central authorities, if they do not adhere to commitments, to local authorities or civil society actors;
- (o) enhance the role of the European Parliament in the scrutiny and oversight of programmes via delegated acts in the application of the EU external financial instruments;
- (p) enhance parliamentary diplomacy and review the functioning of Euronest in order to enable it to reach its full potential;

Structured dialogue, state building and democratic accountability

- (q) while keeping the inclusive nature of the Partnership and continuing to engage with all EaP countries, acknowledge the associated partnership status of advanced EaP countries, notably the signatories of AAs with DCFTAs, and establish more venues for enhanced political dialogue with them in order to advance further economic integration and legislative harmonisation; for example, include the associated countries as observers in the proceedings of the committees established pursuant to Article 291 TFEU and Regulation (EU) No 182/2011, as a means to show the EU's commitment to further integration and strengthen the countries' reform orientation and administrative know-how;
- (r) engage with the EaP countries in further assistance in state building and in strengthening institutions and their accountability by making instruments similar to the Support Group for Ukraine available to all EaP countries, with the associated partners having priority; develop existing and new EU tools in the area of rule of law and good governance to monitor and assess progress by the associated partners, in particular the EU Justice Scoreboard and the Rule of Law Mechanism; provide effective guidance and benchmarks for reforms, including by adopting roadmaps to specify association commitments; develop detailed working documents with a clear methodology and a comparative perspective drawing on the practice of the Visa Liberalisation Action Plan and accession process and in order to supplement the current Progress Reports and Association Agendas;
- (s) include multi-stakeholder monitoring in the assessment process of reforms in the EaP countries and, following the practice already established in Ukraine, make it mandatory for the EaP governments; ensure the continuation of the annual Association Implementation Reports by the Commission and the EEAS on the progress made by the three associated partners and apply a unified evaluation methodology, especially when analysing reforms in the same areas and sectors; issue regular, at least biannual, reports on relations with non-associated EaP countries; provide an implementation report on the trade and association

agreements between the Union and the EaP countries, with a focus on social, environmental and economic development in the societies of the EaP countries, including in the framework of the Paris agreement;

- (t) acknowledge that strong, independent and efficient institutions at central and local level are key to democratic accountability, deoligarchisation, and the fight against corruption and state capture; therefore seek a renewed commitment by the EaP countries to enact comprehensive reforms of the judicial and public administration aimed at ensuring the independence, competence and merit-based recruitment of judges and civil servants, as well as the prioritisation of the fight against corruption, among other means by reducing the space for corruption through increased transparency, accountability and promotion of clean behaviour among the population at large, strengthening the rule of law and promoting good governance; acknowledge that without achieving the above-mentioned goals it will be virtually impossible to achieve sustainable growth, boost economic activity and development, cut back poverty, increase Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) and improve societal trust and political stability;
- (u) advance on a broader spectrum legal and economic reforms with an experience transfer from the EU Member States through twinning projects, particularly by extending the twinning programme to local and regional governments;
- (v) develop a European quality public administration in the associated EaP countries by opening job-shadowing schemes, offering civil servants from EaP countries temporary placements in the relevant services of the EU institutions and Member States in specific areas;
- (w) encourage the work of political foundations in fostering the next generation of political leaders in the EaP countries;
- (x) acknowledge the initiatives by the governments of associated countries to boost their mutual cooperation and joint position within the EaP, and encourage their expansion to the multi-sectoral level, in particular in the areas of energy, transport, digital matters, cybersecurity, environmental protection, the maritime economy, border controls, customs cooperation, trade facilitation and justice and home affairs; a similar approach should be applied to cooperation among all EaP countries on various issues;
- (y) promote intra-regional trade among EaP countries, since increased trade with multiple partners contributes to developing the resilience of countries and their economies; encourage a greater involvement of the EaP countries in implementing EU macro-regional strategies and an efficient interregional and cross-border cooperation dialogue, so as to strengthen partners' national and regional capacities and facilitate their social and economic development;
- (z) foster electoral reforms in order to ensure free, fair, competitive and transparent elections and encourage full compliance of election processes, notably in the adoption of legislative amendments to electoral laws and party financing, with international standards, the recommendations of the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) and the opinions of the Venice Commission; urge EaP countries to ensure the non-harassment, whether judicial, physical, or institutional, of political actors not aligned with the incumbent government, and to

safeguard freedom of expression, of association and of assembly, including the right to peaceful demonstration; commend EaP states that have agreed on the implementation of democratising political reforms and support the strengthening of the electoral legislative framework through inclusive political dialogues;

- (aa) ensure that during the amending process of their electoral legislation the EaP countries create equal possibilities for the representation of all ethnic and national minorities;
- (ab) ensure regular European election observation missions to EaP countries in order to support the process of strengthening institutions, election processes and democratic accountability;
- (ac) contribute to preventing third-party interference in the political, electoral, and other democratic processes of the EaP states, whether designed to sway an election towards a favoured candidate or party, or to undermine trust in the democratic system, notably through disinformation, illicit political financing, cyberattacks on political and media actors, or any other illegal means;
- (ad) adopt an EU human rights violations sanctions mechanism or EU 'Magnitsky Act', to be applicable to individuals or entities found in breach of human rights or essential freedoms, particularly by engaging in arrests, kidnappings and beatings of civil society or opposition activists and journalists and in violent repression of peaceful protests, as well as those involved in high-level corruption cases in the EaP countries;

Sectoral cooperation towards a common economic space

- (ae) encourage continuous and effective implementation of the DCFTAs in order to gradually create the conditions for the opening up of the EU single market; consider the creation of a special legal approximation facility aimed at helping associated partners in harmonising their legislation with the EU acquis and assisting them in their efforts to implement it; acknowledge that the implementation of the DCFTAs has delivered numerous positive results, but there are still some issues that need to be adequately addressed;
- (af) note the importance of deepening economic cooperation and market integration with the EaP countries through a gradual opening of the EU single market, including the full implementation of DCFTAs and compliance with legal, economic and technical regulations and standards, as well as by establishing a common economic space;
- (ag) aim to explore and secure the cooperation and gradually differentiated sectoral integration of eligible and willing EaP countries in the Energy Union, the Transport Community and the Digital Single Market, among other areas; focus on telecommunications and prioritise the creation of a roaming fees-free regime between the EU and EaP countries and an intra-EaP one as soon as possible; build trust services, including cyber capacities to protect critical infrastructure and personal data, and achieve greater cooperation on customs, banking and financial services, which would help the EaP countries' fight against money laundering and bolster financial surveillance, while leading to the possible expansion of the Single Euro Payments Area (SEPA) to the EaP countries;

- (ah) introduce instruments such as legal screening and sectoral roadmaps to determine the EaP countries' readiness to comply with the EU acquis and to confirm their readiness for differentiated sectoral integration;
- (ai) promote the development of e-services, both commercial and public, and of the e-economy as well as of a wide range of telework capabilities, in order to strengthen resilience and resistance in case of crisis, as experienced with pandemics;
- (aj) ensure the EaP countries' strong involvement in and contribution to the fight against climate change, including through participation in the new European Green Deal and by ensuring that the DCFTAs do not contradict the climate objectives and initiatives set out therein; such engagement should take place through EU investment support, including from the EBRD and EIB, and should be conditional on a sound assessment of the environmental impact and of the effects on local communities, with a special focus on the sectors that might be affected and would be in need of extra support;
- (ak) make sure that adequate actions and funding are dedicated to improving waste water management in line with the absorption capacity of the partner countries and for the improvement of energy security and interconnectivity, particularly reverse flow of gas, energy efficiency and use of renewables in the EaP countries; recognise the important role of Azerbaijan in the diversification of energy supply towards the EU, as well as the success of Ukraine in the unbundling of the gas transmission system, and support energy independence and supply diversification efforts in other EaP countries; encourage the EaP countries to complete their reforms in the energy sector in compliance with EU law, including on environmental and safety policy;
- (al) provide continuous support to the upgrading of the EaP countries' solid waste management system to EU standards, by establishing recycling targets and recycling systems to meet the targets; address the negative impact on the environment and public health of outdated and unauthorised solid waste facilities; identify financial instruments to support the financing of waste management projects by the EU and national/local funds;
- (am) ensure that existing and new nuclear installations in the EaP countries comply with the highest environmental and nuclear safety standards, according to the international conventions; ensure that unsafe energy projects such as the Ostrovets nuclear plant will not be part of the European electricity network;
- (an) adopt a comprehensive infrastructure building plan, including border crossings, and support the implementation of the priority projects as identified in the Indicative TEN-T and other Investment Action Plans with the aim of improving transport, energy and digital connectivity between the EU and the EaP countries, and among the EaP countries themselves, while ensuring environmental sustainability during the implementation process; encourage regulatory convergence in the transport sector;
- (ao) urge the EaP countries, in cooperation with the Commission, to fully use the opportunities provided by the trans-European Transport Network (TEN-T) Investment Action Plan; underline the need to better exploit the connectivity

potential of the Black Sea and support infrastructure projects, which are crucial for increasing connectivity with the region and with Central Asia; in this regard, acknowledge the strategic geographical location of EaP countries as a link between the European Union, Asia and the wider neighbourhood, which could bring increased value for EU foreign policy engagements;

- (ap) implement the EU's ambitious Central Asia Strategy with the active engagement of EaP countries, as reliable partners enjoying a direct access to this region;
- (aq) ensure that the MFF confirms the EU's financial support for the infrastructure and investment projects of EaP countries, increasing their resilience to cyberthreats and improving and modernising their education systems; take active measures to improve the absorption capacity of the EaP countries; apply the experience of the Western Balkans Investment Framework to attract and coordinate financial and technical assistance and to increase efficiency of infrastructure projects;
- (ar) prioritise the need for sustainable and credible investments in EaP countries by devising a strategy for long-term engagement, focusing not only on stabilisation alone but also on democratisation;
- (as) extend to other associated partners the approach employed by the EU in its efforts to support the recovery of the Ukrainian economy, including by means of tailored and flexible macrofinancial assistance and instruments and engagement and coordination of international financial institutions and donors, and by improving the environment for foreign direct investment (FDI), taking into account social, labour and environmental rights; make the promotion of FDI from the EU a key aspect of the EaP policy and develop an action plan for this purpose, with the aim of further improving the business environment and guaranteeing legal certainty;
- (at) support greater diversification and competitiveness of the economies of EaP countries, through reinforced support for SMEs as well as demonopolisation, deoligarchisation and privatisation, by strengthening and widening the scope, geographical coverage and relevance to the recipients' needs of programmes such as EU4Business; in particular, lend to SMEs in local currencies, develop new initiatives designed to attract venture capital into the EaP countries, and provide continuous support for the development of export-oriented industries;
- (au) address the rural-urban divide in the EaP countries through effective financial and technical incentives for micro-, small and medium-sized enterprises (MSMEs), small-scale farmers and family enterprises in rural and suburban areas, and through the improvement of human connectivity and infrastructure between cities and countryside with a view to fostering social cohesion;

Boosting human capital

- (av) support increased labour mobility between the EU and EaP countries, as well as among the EaP countries, with a strong focus on the legality and sustainability of the process, allowing for exchange of skills and experience and avoiding brain drain and local labour shortages; in this regard, take full stock of the successful implementation of visa-free regimes with the three associated countries;
- (aw) take into account the challenges posed to EaP countries by brain drain and address

them by promoting quality and inclusive education, vocational training and other training programmes, and creating job opportunities with a view to providing socio-economic perspectives for young people and families in their local communities;

- (ax) cope with the effects of depopulation and migration in EaP countries by involving them in the European Agenda on Migration;
- (ay) support and launch country-based action plans to combat unemployment and tackle social and regional inequalities; invest in youth, foster entrepreneurship and create new programmes and incentives for young professionals to return to the labour markets of the EaP countries;
- (az) encourage EaP countries to pursue comprehensive labour policy reforms in order to improve working conditions and workers' rights; develop an action plan to fight undeclared work, support the creation of fully-fledged trade unions, and call for ILO conventions to be transposed into national law and implemented;
- (ba) address the shortcomings in the implementation of the commitments with regard to social policies and labour rights and protect the EU labour market from social dumping; control not only the transposition of relevant EU directives and norms into national law, but also their actual implementation; together with the EaP countries, create a monitoring scheme for fundamental labour rights involving trade unions and civil society organisations; use the disbursement of macrofinancial assistance as a leverage or conditionality to force EaP countries to improve labour conditions;
- (bb) support educational reforms in those EaP countries that are willing, since this is key for their future, with the aim of addressing shortfalls between the reform of education systems and labour market demand, and promote vocational training, among other measures; acknowledge the importance of cross-border mobility in strengthening people-to-people contacts, expand funding for and the participation of the EaP countries in educational and professional skills-boosting and exchange programmes such as Erasmus+ and Creative Europe, and strengthen the capacity of EaP countries to participate in Horizon Europe;
- (bc) strengthen academic and educational cooperation among the EU and EaP countries, including intra-EaP cooperation, by: (i) launching a regional programme supporting centres of academic and research excellence in the region; (ii) establishing the Eastern Partnership University in Ukraine; (iii) creating targeted EaP programmes in specialised universities and an electronic educational platform for online training courses focused on European values and the rule of law, good governance, public administration and eradication of corruption in the EaP countries; and (iv) providing a venue for joint training for EaP countries' public officials, including at the level of local and regional authorities;
- (bd) launch a pilot project aimed at establishing the Eastern Partnership Open Science and Innovation Centre, a network of thematic centres of competence located in each EaP country to provide R&I support and services;
- (be) ensure that all EU support programmes include a consistent gender equality and human rights dimension, address and target the most disadvantaged and

vulnerable groups in society, including ethnic and other minorities, such as Roma, refugees and internally displaced persons from areas experiencing violent conflicts; reinforce initiatives for those groups' political and socio-economic empowerment and improving their access to education, healthcare and decent housing;

- (bf) ensure that the EU assistance and programmes reach the local level, including in the remote parts of the EaP countries, in particular rural areas, so as to enable the inhabitants to push for positive changes in their communities, in particular those more vulnerable to post-Soviet sentiments and Russian manipulation;
- (bg) insist strongly on non-discrimination with regard to all LGBTI+ people, their protection against discrimination in law and the prosecution of all acts of abuse, hate speech and physical violence perpetrated against them; acknowledge the associated EaP countries that have aligned their legal framework accordingly;
- (bh) support freedom of belief, opinion and expression and the right to information in the native language of all citizens; condemn and counter hate speech and discrimination based on ethnicity or language, as well as fake news and misinformation targeting ethnic and national minorities;
- (bi) ensure the fundamental right of freedom of religion or belief by protecting and promoting the rights of all religious components present in the region, on the basis of the concept of full and equal citizenship;
- (bj) strengthen dialogue and cooperation with churches and religious communities and organisations in areas such as peace-building and reconciliation, thus reinforcing trust in a just and free society, as well as in education, healthcare and basic social services;

Security, stability, territorial integrity and conflict resolution

- (bk) recognise that through its political, cultural and economic investment in the EaP countries the EU invests in the security and stability of the region;
- (bl) acknowledge the increased security interdependence between the EU and EaP countries, as well as the importance of security, stability and peace for the future development of the EaP countries, considering that in recent years they have been subject to the interest and ambition of third countries, such as China, Turkey or some Gulf states, which do not necessarily share the values and interests of the EU; therefore, boost EU-EaP cooperation in security and defence by devoting particular attention to the peaceful resolution of regional conflicts and the prevention and resolution of the new types of challenges, such as hybrid threats, cyberattacks, including election cyber-meddling, disinformation and propaganda campaigns, and third-party interference in the political, electoral, and other democratic processes; strengthen cooperation and support in respect of the EaP countries' resilience against corruption, money laundering, terrorism and organised crime in general, and underline the need to strengthen the resilience of individuals, communities and state institutions;
- (bm) reiterate the EU's commitment to the sovereignty, territorial integrity and political

independence of the EaP countries within their internationally recognised borders, and support their efforts to fully enforce those principles; underline the importance of the unity and solidarity of the Member States in this regard;

- (bn) strongly condemn the continued violations of fundamental principles and norms of international law in the EaP region, notably destabilisation, invasion, the occupation and annexation of territories of several EaP countries by the Russian Federation and its refusal to comply with the decisions of international tribunals and courts; 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;
- (bo) call for the immediate withdrawal of foreign troops from all occupied territories and for an end to military hostilities, which unnecessarily claim the lives of civilians and soldiers while hampering socio-economic development, thus enabling hundreds of thousands of internally displaced people (IDPs) to return to their homelands;
- (bp) develop a more active role for the EU, represented by the Vice-President of the European Commission / High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, in the peaceful resolution of the ongoing conflicts and in the prevention of any future conflicts in its Eastern neighbourhood, while acknowledging the agreed negotiating formats and processes, such as the Geneva International Discussions, the OSCE Minsk Group, the Normandy Format and the 5 + 2 Talks; appoint an EU Special Envoy for Crimea and the Donbas region;
- (bq) continue promoting an environment conducive to the settlement of conflicts and supporting activities that promote confidence and people-to-people contacts across conflict-divided communities; prioritise efforts and expand funding for pre-emptive peace-building, including preventive diplomacy, as well as early warning and action mechanisms;
- (br) reaffirm its support for the efforts of the co-Chairs of the OSCE Minsk Group to resolve the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict and for their 2009 Basic Principles, with a view to achieving a solution based on the norms and principles of international law, the UN Charter and the OSCE 1975 Helsinki Final Act; encourage all sides to intensify dialogue and to refrain from inflammatory rhetoric that would further jeopardise any prospects for settlement;
- (bs) take action to ensure effective activities and the execution of a full mandate for the following existing EU missions in the EaP region, including coordination of their activities: the EU Monitoring Mission in Georgia, the EU Advisory Mission in Ukraine, the EU Border Assistance Mission to Moldova and Ukraine, and the mission of the EU Special Representative for the South Caucasus and the crisis in Georgia;
- (bt) take into consideration the calls made by the Ukrainian Government for an extended international peacekeeping force to be stationed along the Ukraine-Russia border and in the Luhansk and Donetsk districts; once the situation permits and as part of the full implementation of the Minsk Agreements, an EU-led CSDP mission should be offered for deployment to the parties to the conflict, to assist in tasks such as demining, preparations for local elections and securing free access

for humanitarian aid organisations;

- (bu) support freedom of navigation and strongly oppose the blockade of the Azov Sea and the continued creeping annexation of the Black Sea by the Russian Federation;
- (bv) acknowledge the unique experience and expertise of EaP countries; recognise the contribution of the EaP countries to the EU common security and defence policy (CSDP) missions, battlegroups and operations; continue supporting the Security Sector Reform (SSR); deepen cooperation in EU-related defence policies, including participation in PESCO once the issue of participation of third countries is resolved;
- (bw) acknowledge that cybersecurity is one of the areas where the EU and the EaP countries can work together more effectively and the EU can take advantage of the experience of EaP countries in combating hybrid or cybersecurity threats; establish a formal cyber dialogue with the interested EaP countries and promote cooperation platforms between the countries in the EaP region in order to address hybrid threats more effectively with a view to strengthening the resilience of those countries, especially following the large-scale cyberattack of the Russian Federation against Georgia in October 2019;
- (bx) condemn the influence of third countries in undermining the democratic order of the EaP countries, as well as influencing elections, disseminating disinformation and operating targeted disinformation campaigns;
- (by) enhance cooperation in building the societal and institutional resilience of the EaP countries with a stronger focus on countering disinformation, propaganda, manipulation and hostile influencing carried out by external forces aiming at dividing and destabilising the EaP countries, as well as undermining the integrity of their political processes and their relations with the EU; assist interested EaP countries in the activities carried out at the EU level to tackle the above-mentioned hostilities, including the implementation of good practices and solutions, such as the Action Plan against Disinformation and the EU Code of Practice on Disinformation, and by using the expertise of the Helsinki European Centre of Excellence for Countering Hybrid Threats, the Riga NATO StratCom Centre of Excellence and the EU East StratCom Task Force;
- (bz) promote integrated border management and cooperation between the EU and associated countries, and advance law enforcement cooperation;
- (ca) welcome further cooperation between the EU and EaP countries with the aim of promoting international stability and security, in line with the EU's Global Strategy, and propose new forms of voluntary cooperation in the field of security and defence, considering it an area of ambition in the coming future as the EU will aim gradually to create the European Defence Union;
- (cb) promote R&D and industrial cooperation in the development of armaments and military technologies and capabilities among the EU Member States and the EaP countries;

- (cc) acknowledge that any lack of EU presence or inaction vis-a-vis its EaP partners will create space for other global players to step in; increase cooperation or create a forum with like-minded democratic allies and international actors to mitigate and counteract the negative influence of third-country powers in the EaP region;

Local and regional authorities and civil society

- (cd) acknowledge the contribution of EaP civil society actors and organisations to democratisation and reform processes in their countries and the whole EaP region, and call for greater openness and engagement towards them from the governments of the EaP countries, and particularly a more meaningful and effective involvement in the policymaking processes;
- (ce) continue a wide-ranging dialogue with the EaP civil society actors and enhance the EU's support for the activities of democratically oriented civil society organisations by promoting their activities and safety and by safeguarding their working environment;
- (cf) increase the EU's efforts to strengthen its engagement and support for grassroots initiatives in regions and rural areas in order to develop civil society's organisational and monitoring capacities and local democratic practices;
- (cg) strengthen EaP civil society's ability to act as a watchdog for reform and to hold the respective state institutions to account, by cutting red tape and securing its presence in trilateral meetings, including in all Human Rights Dialogues and Association and Cooperation Council meetings;
- (ch) foster cooperation among the EaP countries' civil societies by establishing a regional centre to increase competences and exchange best practices and working approaches, as part of the new project of the Eastern Partnership University in Ukraine;
- (ci) continue providing structural, financial and capacity development support to organisations that assist independent pro-democracy civil society actors; insist that EU, Member State, and independent programmes in support of democracy, human rights and the rule of law, including the European Endowment for Democracy, must continue to operate freely and without harassment or judicial limitations; take all possible measures to prevent independent NGOs from being crowded out through the imposition of judicial limitations and financial barriers, the selective application of legal provisions, or the enhanced presence of government-organised NGOs (GONGOs);
- (cj) raise awareness about attacks on civil activists in EaP countries by extremist forces and also by state authorities, which undermine EU values, international human rights standards and joint obligations to the ECHR;
- (ck) scale up the EU's support and initiatives to strengthen and enable the local authorities and their associations to implement national reforms at a local level; promote the role of local authorities as policymakers and decision-makers, and encourage regular exchanges between central and local governments on reform agendas with the active and inclusive participation of civil society and other relevant stakeholders;

- (cl) develop country roadmaps and indicators for engagement with local and regional governments, following the examples of similar engagement with civil society;
- (cm) extend the representation in EaP policy formulation and implementation of the Conference of Regional and Local Authorities for the Eastern Partnership (CORLEAP), and increase its capacities to support local and regional authorities in substantial actions; develop, in cooperation with CORLEAP and the European Committee of the Regions, a capacity-building programme for local and regional governance in the EaP countries, which would include taking systematic steps to strengthen the role of local and regional authorities;
- (cn) encourage the substantial participation of EaP citizens in EU-financed projects and their ownership, in accordance with a bottom-up approach based on EU values and standards;

Better media, communication and policy management

- (co) acknowledge that the lack of a proper communication and information campaign in the midst of the disinformation wave to which the EaP countries are exposed might result in a loss of the EaP's decade-long effort, investment and achievements; therefore step up strategic communication efforts and, in an open dialogue with citizens, increase the visibility of the support provided by the EU in the EaP countries, at both national and local level; to this end, reach out to people in small communities and rural areas, business and community leaders, diasporas and national minorities, beyond already EU-minded cohorts;
- (cp) counteract anti-EU disinformation and propaganda by boosting EU and EaP citizens' information resilience and awareness about the EaP and the opportunities and benefits it provides, particularly those deriving from a close political and economic cooperation between the EU and the EaP countries, and from the AA/DCFTA implementation, linking them to economic growth and increased trade;
- (cq) use more efficiently the existing EU structures, such as the EEAS East StratCom task force, to identify and respond to disinformation and propaganda campaigns undermining the EU-EaP countries' relationship and its goals;
- (cr) strengthen the EU Delegations in the EaP countries and enable them to assist the EaP countries in completing the reforms and to more effectively communicate how the EU is helping citizens there; develop more horizontal links and foster cooperation among the EU Delegations, and encourage regular exchanges of information and expertise and other successful working approaches;
- (cs) ensure a more active role for EU liaison offices in Member States in promoting the importance of EaP countries for the European project;
- (ct) improve information-sharing among the EU institutions, especially the Commission and the EEAS, and preserve institutional memory, particularly about the support provided and the technical assistance projects implemented, in order to build on their results when launching new projects and programmes;
- (cu) capitalise on the Young Ambassadors programme and the Eastern Partnership

Civil Society fellowships, by establishing an active alumni network on the basis of existing successful models;

- (cv) promote free media and freedom of expression as a fundamental principle, and therefore support a democratic, independent, pluralistic and balanced media landscape in the EaP countries which ensures protection of local journalists, opinion makers and dissident voices from harassment and intimidation, allows non-discriminatory access to online and offline information and meaningful civic participation, and safeguards and guarantees human and civil rights;
 - (cw) step up the support in the local fight against fake news, hybrid warfare in communication and degradation of media programmes, which can undermine the fight against corruption, and against the dissemination of false information in order to obtain economic or political advantages; sustain the development of actions to ensure full transparency of media ownership; constantly help and monitor the local official regulatory agency in every EaP country;
 - (cx) support programmes and reforms concerning media and information literacy to reflect the current digital age;
 - (cy) promote the broadcasting of European media productions in the EaP countries as well as EaP countries' productions in the EU, in order to bridge the differences provoked by history and by the fake information delivered in the last decades; support local media outlets in obtaining access to European media programmes and initiatives for close collaboration between media outlets from the EU and EaP;
 - (cz) denounce the misuse of pandemic-related measures by the authorities as a means to silence the political opposition, civil society and the media by restricting their legitimate rights;
 - (da) reinforce and, where possible, increase the EU's and EaP countries' common efforts in the field of people-to-people contacts and exchanges in order to build mutually positive images among the population and make good use of the pro-European sentiment among the EaP citizenry;
 - (db) promote inclusive and participatory platforms for dialogue and cooperation bringing together stakeholders across different sectors and levels, including policymakers, economic actors, academics and civil society, as well as churches, religious communities and citizens with fewer opportunities, with the goal of countering polarising and extremist tendencies in politics and society, as well as the impact of disinformation and propaganda campaigns;
2. Instructs its President to forward this recommendation to the Council, the Commission and the Vice-President of the Commission / High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy.