

Working Group on European Integration

The Enlarged EU Needs an Effective Neighbourhood Policy

Following the enlargement of 2004, the EU will have to make the integration of its new Member States a priority. As a result there is a pressing need for the EU to develop an effective neighbourhood policy.

The aim of this neighbourhood policy must be to create an area of shared values, of peace, freedom and prosperity. Once this goal has been reached, a multilateral, cooperative model of global domestic policy will have been realised at regional level, serving as an example for the world as a whole.

The architecture of this neighbourhood policy must take account of the heterogeneous nature of the subregions Southeastern Europe, Eastern Europe and the Mediterranean. In Southeastern Europe, headway needs to be made in regional cooperation. Moreover, support linked to reforms is necessary. Moreover, the EU must build up its functional cooperation with its new eastern neighbours, not just Ukraine, Belarus and Moldova, but also the Russian Federation, whereas its southern Mediterranean neighbours have to be offered better economic prospects, amongst other things - indeed specifically - with a view to bringing stability to the crisis-ridden Middle East.

The EU already has an array of instruments at its disposal for attaining the goals of its neighbourhood policy, the main ones being trade policy and financial and technical cooperation. In this endeavour, the EU should focus its limited funds on shaping and implementing reforms to do with democratisation, the justice system, safeguarding public order, and building up functioning market economies.

Financial support should only be awarded to those neighbouring countries that agree on a medium-term reform programme with the EU in the aforementioned (or similar) areas and subsequently go on to implement it. Furthermore, the parallel nature of political, economic and sociocultural transformation processes must be emphasised.

Where trade policy is concerned, free trade should only be an aim to the extent that it complements or underpins efforts to implement reforms. Free trade by itself is not a decisive element in determining the quality of neighbourly relations. When promoting investment, the European Investment Bank should concentrate more on the EU's neighbours.

The EU's political dialogue with its neighbours must be based on a common definition of goals and values. Progress in the area of integration and assistance should go hand in hand with verifiable progress in key reforms designed to boost democracy, resolve conflicts and conduct an efficient economic policy