



10 Theses on the European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP)

Introductory Remark: The political debate on European Neighbourhood Policy in Germany in essence concerns how this relatively new EU policy towards Eastern Europe should be developed and consolidated. This ongoing process will be given aims and direction by the ENP Plus strategy presented during the German Council presidency in 2007. The majority of the following theses, as well as their scope, therefore relate to the Eastern dimension of the ENP.

1. The ENP needs more political and public attention. Four years after its introduction the European Neighbourhood Policy has an image problem. Neither in the EU-27 nor in the 16 ENP partner states themselves is it given the attention it deserves. Neglect of the ENP is also reflected in the merely sporadic and sketchy reporting by the media. In order to be successful the ENP therefore needs more ›visibility‹. A more intensive public debate than hitherto with the relevant actors within the EU, as well as between the EU and partner states, could contribute to this.

2. The EU must gradually overcome the existing implementation deficit in neighbourhood policy by means of more dialogue and cooperation. A provisional appraisal of the ENP

In its recent work, the Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung's Division for International Dialogue has focused on the prospects of European Economic and Social Policy, European Foreign and Security Policy, European Neighbourhood Policy and International Security Policy. These theses are a contribution to the political positioning within the above-mentioned fields. They also seek to outline future challenges and topics.

so far shows that what the EU has offered within the framework of the ENP has not been taken up by all 16 partner countries to the same extent (exceptions are the ›model countries‹ Ukraine and Morocco). In fact, in the majority of partner states the ENP suffers from an implementation deficit, which requires a review of ENP instruments and provisions. In particular, alongside intensified efforts on the part of the partner states themselves, the common political will of the EU-27 is needed in order to offer the partner states greater incentives and to extend the dialogue with them to important areas, especially economic and trade relations (in accordance with the notion of a ›far-reaching free trade agreement‹) and greater freedom of movement and control of migration, for more direct contact between people (›people-to-people‹), as well as to extend political cooperation.

3. The EU's Neighbourhood Policy needs more differentiation in terms of its instruments and towards the ENP partner states. An extension of the areas of cooperation between the EU and the partner states will not remove the ENP's implementation problem, however, but rather increase or, at best, shift it. Further development of the Neighbourhood Policy therefore needs above all more instrumental and political differentiation: an individual fine-tuning of action plans (no one-size-fits-all solutions), stricter application of the principle of political conditionality in the provision of financial aid, with more monitoring (in addition to the EU through the national parliaments of the member states), as well as the differentiated extension of political relations to the most advanced ENP states in accordance with

their reform achievements. The policy of the ›internal‹ differentiation of instruments must follow an open understanding among the EU-27 concerning more ›external‹ differentiation of Neighbourhood Policy between South and East. Linking these historically, culturally and strategically different geographical regions under a uniform approach corresponds to the balance of interests within the EU, but to a considerable degree hinders the effectiveness and attraction of Neighbourhood Policy in Eastern Europe.

4. Neighbourhood Policy with the Eastern partner states must supplement the previously dominant bilateral approach with a stronger regional one. In the Eastern ENP states the enlarged EU sees itself as confronted by unsolved problems of security and democracy, with the rule of law and – increasingly – energy security being the greatest challenges in its immediate neighbourhood. An approach based purely on bilateral cooperation, as in the action plans, is not sufficient to achieve the self-defined aims of Neighbourhood Policy. As already practiced in the Southern dimension, in the East too, bilateral forms of cooperation should be combined with more regional ones. The so-called Black Sea Synergy initiative introduced into the ENP debate by the German government in 2007, which also includes Russia and Turkey, can promote intensified regional economic cooperation and also build trust as regards frozen conflicts. The gradual solution of the abovementioned challenges requires the concentration of regional cooperation with the Eastern partner states in the following areas: the long-term safeguarding of energy and energy transport from these countries; the solution of security policy problems (so-called frozen conflicts); the addressing of environmental and migration issues; as well as intensified police and judicial cooperation in the fight against terrorism and organised crime (drugs and human trafficking, money laundering). Far more use should be made of the EU's political and institutional experience with the Barcelona Process and the Northern dimension for an intensified regional engagement within the framework of the ENP.

5. The EU must integrate Russia and Turkey more closely in its Neighbourhood Policy as ›strategic partners‹. A constructive partnership with Russia is of central importance in strengthening the Eastern dimension of Neighbourhood Policy. As far as (EU) foreign policy is concerned, it is ultimately a matter of irreversibly anchoring Russia in Europe. More regional cooperation within the ENP (see Thesis 4) can, together with an intensified ›open door policy‹ towards Russia, help to reduce the danger of a Russian veto policy. The ›modernisation partnership‹ for which the EU and Germany are striving with the Eastern ENP states cannot succeed if Russia becomes isolated, or in competition with Russia. The precondition for this remains that the EU must speak with one voice in relation to Russia. At the same time, Russia should not oppose EU offers of constructive dialogue with common neighbouring states – for example, consolidation of cooperation in the Black Sea region.

As both accession candidate and member of the Barcelona Process Turkey, too, should, on the basis of its strategic, political and cultural significance for the EU, be gradually integrated in the ENP – above all in the interests of a feasible strategy in the Black Sea region – without blurring the borderlines between neighbourhood and enlargement policy.

6. The EU needs to be open to new forms of cooperation in its ENP. The current agreement with Ukraine on extended and comprehensive free trade with the EU, under negotiation since the beginning of 2007, can set a precedent for other partnership and cooperation agreements. There is no common EU stance on a uniform type of new partnership and cooperation agreement, however. The positions of the different EU member states still differ from one another too much; they vary due to differing assessments of the relationship between ENP for the neighbours and their (sidelined) accession prospects, and lead to different forms of treaty-based relations. The aim of the ongoing negotiations with Ukraine should be the conclusion of an association agreement that underlines Ukraine's special role for Europe and, in terms of treaties, serves as an example for privileged relations between the EU and the (Eastern) neighbouring states.

7. Visa improvements and greater travel opportunities are important steps towards wider acceptance of the ENP. The attractiveness of the ENP also hinges on the extent to which visas can be issued in a reasonable time and at a reasonable price for short stays, such as business, educational or holiday trips, or for entry in connection with research and scientific activities or to participate in conferences involving civil society organisations. The current practice towards the Eastern neighbours, however, contradicts this self-defined EU aim. To make legal cross-border mobility and entry into the EU easier requires that the processing of visa applications be improved and made less costly. The establishment of common Schengen visa offices in the partner states should therefore be strongly supported. At the same time, new opportunities for more mobility (up to the conclusion of a bilateral agreement on the regulation of regular border traffic) must be developed, and thereby implement the ENP's aim of making possible more people-to-people contacts in practice.

8. The EU's Neighbourhood Policy must ›dare more democracy‹: by means of more civil society involvement ... So far, the ENP has been an elite-driven and -managed policy. As a result it lacks sufficient grounding in society, in both the partner states and in parts of the EU itself. The aim of opening up existing EU mobility and community programmes to the ENP neighbours would be made much easier by – and to some extent even depends on – a stronger and sustained inclusion of civil society organisations. This applies to educational, scientific and youth exchange programmes, as well as business contacts or town twinning. All too often civil societies in the Eastern partner states are represented by isolated elites with international contacts and their own specific interests. If the ENP is to be better imple-

mented (and controlled), the representatives of civil society must in future be more closely involved in the ENP's implementation process and the cooperation of state and non-state actors intensified, for example, by means of exchange programmes for NGOs or town or regional partnerships.

9. ... and the inclusion of democratic values in agreements on objectives with the partner states. The EU must make the 'democratic dimension' of its policy towards neighbouring states clearer. This applies particularly to future agreements on objectives: guaranteeing citizens' rights of participation, freedom of opinion and association, as well as social justice should in future be given greater emphasis among the necessary reform measures at the centre of ENP action plans. The establishment of bilateral forums of dialogue for the treatment and safeguarding of human rights and democracy at both parliamentary and non-state level within the ENP framework can contribute significantly to the consolidation of bilateral and social policy dialogue with the neighbouring states.

10. The ENP needs more clarity and honesty concerning the finality of its Neighbourhood Policy. The question of the finality of the ENP, deliberately put to one side in 2004 in order to preserve the EU's ability to act in the area of foreign policy, remains – above all under pressure from the Central and Eastern European states – on the ENP agenda. The lack of a definition of the ENP's aims runs the risk of a growing conflict of interest within the EU, as well as between the EU and individual partner states, which also threatens successful implementation of the ENP. Without a clearer definition of aims regarding accession prospects and/or comparable models (EEA+/forms of association/'accession lite') the EU above all lacks the apparatus that was the central success factor in EU enlargement in 2004. In any case, we can expect that the political pressure on the Community will increase from those Central European EU member states that favour the accession prospects of Eastern European neighbours or do not wish to exclude them any longer.

Imprint

Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung
International Policy Analysis
Division for International Dialogue
D-10785 Berlin

www.fes.de/ipa
E-Mail: info.ipa@fes.de

Orders

Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung
International Policy Analysis
z. Hd. Ursula Müller
D-53170 Bonn

E-Mail: info.ipa@fes.de
Fax: +49 (228) 883-625

All texts are available online:

www.fes.de/ipa

The views expressed in this publication are not necessarily those of the Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung or of the organization for which the author works.