

A map of Eastern Europe and the Black Sea region. The landmasses are outlined in black. The Black Sea is a dark blue area in the center. To the north and west of the Black Sea, several countries are highlighted in yellow, including Ukraine, Belarus, and parts of Poland, Lithuania, and Latvia. The rest of the map area is a light blue color.

Europe Looks to the East: Eastern Partnership One Year Later

***Europe Looks to the East:
Eastern Partnership
One Year Later***

***2010
Sofia***

Europe Looks to the East:
Eastern Partnership One Year Later

Issued by:
Centre for European and International Studies
Friedrich Ebert Foundation

Translation by:
Kalina Panayotova, Nevena Aleksieva, Miroslava Gateva

CONTENTS

| | |
|--|----|
| INTRODUCTION | 5 |
| Why the Eastern Partnership? | 5 |
| Democratic Process in Former Soviet Republics in the Context of Eastern Partnership | |
| <i>Victoria Ivanova, Assya Bratanova, Vesselina Miteva, Zahari Zahariev, Jordan Petrov, Miroslava Gateva, Peter Kalachev</i> | 7 |
| Strengthening democratic governance | 7 |
| Guarantees for fair elections | 9 |
| Reforming the judicial system | 10 |
| Fighting corruption | 12 |
| Settlement of regional conflicts | 13 |
| Protection of human rights | 15 |
| Freedom of expression | 16 |
| Economic Aspects of Eastern Partnership | |
| <i>Boyan Balev, Alina Garkova, Ivaylo Ibrishimov, Ivaylo Conev, Mihail Angelov, Petya Petrova</i> | 19 |
| Black Sea – corridor or border? | 19 |
| Legal harmonisation | 24 |
| Capacity Building in the Eastern Partnership Countries | 25 |
| Economic effects of the trade intensification | 28 |
| Energy Security | |
| <i>Kaloyan Pargov, Alexander Vladimirov, Ivan Angelov, Olga Verbanova, Pavlin Barenski</i> | 30 |
| Political aspects of energy security | 30 |
| Institutional and financial framework for cooperation | 32 |
| Nuclear safety | 33 |
| Challenges ahead of big gas projects | 34 |
| Diversification of energy supplies | 35 |
| The role of Bulgaria in energy partnership | 36 |
| Eastern Partnership: Opportunities for Contacts Between People | |
| <i>Teodor Slavev, Vesselin Pashov, Vladimir Harizanov, Ivo Tsvyatkov, Mariana Georgieva, Stefka Porova</i> | 37 |
| Liberalisation of visa regimes | 37 |
| Education and culture as a mechanism for approximation | 40 |
| Development of sustainable civil society | 42 |
| Information society as a mediator between social groups | 44 |
| Intercultural dialogue as a political technique | 47 |

INTRODUCTION

Kalina Panayotova
President of Centre for European
and International Studies

While the CEIS team was preparing our project “Europe looks to the East: Eastern Partnership one year later”, we were worried. Would the topic be interesting? Would we succeed in selecting the right people for the project? Would we make it with the tight time framework that we had to work with?

Worry was normal: CEIS has just turned two years of age and although we did have a similar project (Bulgaria in Europe and the world), we are still cautious when we take small steps towards our ambitious goal – to find people who share our views and with whom we can talk on the really important issues of foreign policy and international affairs.

Now, when I read the results of our work, I can say that we need not have worried. We had the support of the Friedrich Ebert Foundation in Sofia and MEP Kristian Vigenin, chairman of EP Delegation to the EuroNEST Parliamentary Assembly. We received more than 40 applications - twice the number that we could take on board. The selection was difficult because we sought balance; between men and women, between students and young professionals; between different educational backgrounds.

And that is the way we reached this point: seven girls and 13 boys, 13 youngsters under 25 and seven over this age, who came from eight different universities from Varna to Blagoevgrad. To be honest, they surprised me not only with their sincere interest in the project but also with their courage to step outside the cliché and speak their own mind.

Why the Eastern Partnership?

Just a year ago, in Prague, European leaders and heads of state and government of six “Eastern neighbours” of the EU (Ukraine, Belarus, Republic of Moldova, Georgia, and Azerbaijan) signed a declaration for closer cooperation. This year was extremely important, because the goals of the Partnership and cooperation mechanisms were to be specified.

During this one year, Bulgaria, as an EU member and a

country which boasts traditional proximity and close ties with these six countries, failed to find its place in the Initiative. Maybe it was the change of three foreign affairs ministers that did not allow our country to form its opinion on the new policy and to set its own agenda within the framework of cooperation.

That is why we – the participants in the CEIS project, supported by the Friedrich Ebert Foundation and Kristian Vigenin – tried to do this.

Below you will find our short analysis of the challenges ahead of the Eastern Partnership and the opportunities this policy provides, as well as our ideas of where Bulgaria's place is within this new policy.

Democratic Process in Former Soviet Republics in the Context of Eastern Partnership

*Victoria Ivanova, Assya Bratanova, Vesselina Miteva, Zahari Zahariev,
Jordan Petrov, Miroslava Gateva, Peter Kalachev*

Democracy is an aim and a way of existence of two thirds of the real players on the international arena. The national governance, based on clear separation of powers, objective and fair judicial system, anticorruption measures, guarantees for implementation and protection of human rights, freedom of expression are the essence of democracy in its purest form. As a winner of the idea of practical application and actual implementation of those democratic principles, the European Union is a “messiah” in the Eastern Partnership Initiative, launched in the spring of 2009. With this project, the EU provides new opportunities for democratic development of six CIS countries - Azerbaijan, Armenia, Belarus, Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine. Thematic platform “Democracy, good governance and stability” of the Eastern Partnership proposes reforms tailored to the individual characteristics of each country that ensure stability and prosperity in the region. The European Neighbourhood Policy, defined by Barroso as “a way to form a circle of friends”, aims mutually beneficial economic and political relations between the EU and countries bordering it. The Eastern Partnership, in parallel with the strategic partnership between the EU and the Russian Federation offers a new approach of relations between the East and the West, based on cooperation and mutual support in building a more secure and stable world order.

Strengthening democratic governance

The initiatives set forward in the four thematic platforms of the Eastern Partnership would not be successful without reforms aimed at convergence and deepening of the integration processes.

For a second decade, the transition from former Soviet policy towards pro-European policy in these Eastern countries has occurred in the shadow of the Russian Federation. Those countries are to a large extent under Russian influence.

The Eastern Partnership should become the basis for rapprochement between the EU and its eastern neighbours, through common commitments and shared values. **Improving administrative**

capacity of each country through training, technical assistance and appropriate innovative measures is a major reform in the national government. The implementation of changes in accordance with the European political model requires continuity of state and government structures of the partner countries. Action plans are adopted for each country depending on their need to ensure their implementation within a period of three (Ukraine and Republic of Moldova) to five (Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia) years. The focus is on the need for closer political and economic integration.

Strengthening democratic governance in all countries must be in accordance with international standards. This requires reform of electoral and institutional systems in order to ensure the separation of powers and the rule of law. The administrative reforms should strengthen local governance by imposing decentralization and fighting corruption at all levels.

Currently, if you compare the six countries, only the behaviour of Belarus is characterized to some degree of volatility in reforms and political course. The pace of management reforms in Belarus is slow. The country supports Russian activities in the region and at the same time it interacts economically with the EU. The deep bilateral cooperation of Belarus with the Russia makes it very difficult for European values to spread in the country.

To be successful the Eastern Partnership should be looking for its interaction with other initiatives in the region such as the Black Sea Synergy. It should try to create prerequisites for inclusion of Russia and the Republic of Turkey and also for closer interaction and establishment of greater trust. The creation of strong regional cooperation initiative parallel to a strong desire to focus on political attention at a regional level and strengthen the ongoing process of interaction should be designed as a flexible framework in order to provide a greater coherence in policy.

The planned reforms under the project IP and the other existing regional programs need a strong EU support for the development of effective democratic institutions. The implementation of cooperation projects needs to be done through the interaction between countries at bilateral or regional level.

As a result, the EU presence in the post-soviet space opens up new perspectives and opportunities for imposing order and stability in the region for a long term.

Guarantees for fair elections

In the context of the national governance, the question about the electoral process, for the mechanisms and the legal instruments that govern it takes central place. All these elements of the electoral system, to a lesser or greater extent, reflect the social attitudes, the structure and the degree of democratic maturity. In the context of the Eastern Partnership the six countries that fall within its focus, have a different destiny and a way of building institutions, but in terms of the electoral system several groups of common problems related to the political representation, participation and transparency during elections time, can be identified.

- *Independence of the so-called representative electoral institutions.* According to experts, it is unacceptable to have political interference in such institutions and these institutions must be independent because they are responsible for the whole organization and conduct of the electoral process, which give them a strong position in regard to political parties.

In the countries mentioned, only in Georgia and Ukraine the members of these central committees are appointed according to their professional expertise. In all other countries the appointments are political. The President approves the members or makes a proposal to the Parliament. Republic of Moldova is an exception, because the appointments are made jointly by the Parliament, the President and the executive power in order to ensure a peculiar balance between political and professional representatives.

It is necessary that these institutions be formed by experts and appointed by President, Parliament and Cabinet (having equal quotas or by the Parliament alone, with the approval of the Head of state and NGOs. The Judiciary should be represented in its capacity as supervisory authority.

- *Political participation of the citizens in the electoral process.* The democratic process itself requires some degree of a civic education. Therefore, during, before and after elections civic education campaigns should be carried out, especially in new democracies. This kind of education should seek to inform the citizens about their rights and obligations, and about the methodology and the principles of a democratic voting system.

In Belarus such kind of campaigns are not used, in Azerbaijan and Armenia civic education takes place only during election times,

without a strategy for it. Conversely, in Republic of Moldova, Ukraine and Georgia constant education campaigns are carried out. A problem accompanying low political involvement and awareness of the citizens is the lack of debate between the main political opponents, as well as the limited –broadcast in major national media.

Democracy, as well as the electoral system must be grasped before being accepted, enforced or rejected. The democratic election procedure must be considered in schools, universities, NGOs, business associations and by public debate to be identified the problems and to be found the necessary solutions.

- *Political qualification and the abuse of political power*

An age limit to the right to be elected; a high electoral threshold for parties to enter the Parliament; a cash deposit to participate and others are among the most frequent constraints. For most of the six countries the right to be elected comes at 25-years of age. 300,000 signatures in Azerbaijan and 200,000 in Georgia are required to initiate a referendum. Parties must pass the five percent election barrier. Media presence in the national broadcasting is not always guaranteed (Republic of Moldova). There are financial deposits for parties' participation in elections – for example, in Armenia this deposit is equal to nearly 2500 minimum wages, in Ukraine - to nearly 2000. All of these are factors that hinder the development of the democratic political process and hamper the equal political participation. The election process needs to be liberalized, without restricting the control.

Reforming the judicial system

In view of the reforms concerning the statehood in the sixth countries, as well as the electoral system, legitimated a real power, the judiciary system plays an important role in the democratization of the region. The fair administration of justice is one of the best indicators of the maturity of a nation or society. It is impossible to make a progress without clearing the “gaps” in the judiciary. The reform of the judiciary system in each country is quite difficult because there is no a standard successful model that can be implemented. Unfortunately, the corruption factor also has its negative impact. However, the efforts to achieve an efficiency of the judicial system should not be abandoned lightly, just because of its complexity and duration in a long term. On the contrary, precisely because of the obstacles, the countries should even make greater efforts.

After nearly two decades of independence, the Eastern Partnership countries are still on the path of a political and legal transition. Although each country has its own characteristics, both in their legal and judicial systems, it can be difficult to avoid their similarities as a result of their joint past. There is still an impact of the problems of the Soviet legal system and that is the reason why these states should base their reform of the judicial system on some general principles and objectives. The main objective, on the one hand, would be the fight against the corruption and the politicization, in order to create good conditions for a rapid and an effective punishment of corrupt practices and complete exclusion of the possibility of the latter in the judiciary, and on the other hand – a full depolitisation of litigation and administration.

The main objective, formulated in this way, offers several priority axes in the course of reform. First of all, *an improvement of the legal basis for the reform* in the field of material and procedural laws, or legislative reform, in which an active participation has not only the judicial community, but also and the legislative body. Secondly, not less important, is *the removal of political influence* over judicial matters by influential public figures and parties or by the state prosecution. Such an action is in a direct conflict with the fundamental principle of separation of powers and is unacceptable for any country aspiring to democracy. It is also necessary to establish *clear procedures for the appointment* of new staff into the system, while those in welding position - to be certified again. Last but not least, to improve the quality and availability of training and qualification of judges, prosecutors and investigators, in line with the good European practices.

The efforts in this area must be made not only by the group of the six countries participating in the Eastern Partnership, but also by the EU. Several countries, including Bulgaria, which also carried out similar reforms, can substantially contribute to their experience, both successes and lessons learned from a failure to reform.

To establish a real rule of law, however, it is necessary to build a rigorous and comprehensive monitoring system. The Initiative's institutions should have free access to the processes in the judicial systems of countries in order to monitor progress without such an action being construed as interference in the internal affairs as it interacts with the underlying principle of transparency of the judiciary. The regular periodic reports of the European Commission help identify the problems and lagging areas, and focus the united efforts in these areas.

The development of the judicial reform must meet the most complete public needs from new legal regulations and organizational changes, consistent with the need for social and economic changes and aiming to achieve a legal stability and confidence in the judicial sphere.

Fighting corruption

Corruption is a “disease” that affects all organs of the democratic state structure, including the most important - the judiciary. This “incurable disease” is typical for former Soviet satellites whose officials often tempted to take bribes – a sign of weak states in crisis.

The reasons for the high prevalence of corruption in the Eastern neighbours are political, institutional and economic.

The political preconditions include: the use of political power resources in order to create clientelist networks; an underdeveloped civil society, lack of an effective institutional cooperation between NGOs and private business, on the one side, and the state itself from another.

The institutional precondition. The availability of legal-institutional vacuum, maintaining a large, **cumbersome**, bureaucratic public administration, lack of a civil control over the state institutions play a major role.

The prerequisites in the *economic* field can be summarized as: a presence of illegitimate business structures, a large share of a shadow economy”, bureaucratic and legal obstacles.

A structural element of corruption practices in these countries is the smuggling and illicit trafficking in drugs, weapons and people. In this way most revenue within the “shadow economy”, a major source of funding for the organized crime, are generated. Surveys conducted by NGOs confirm the central role of corruption in the trafficking and smuggling in these countries, highlighting their importance to the transit zone. A huge number of people are waiting in the post-Soviet space to be transferred into Western Europe without having a legal right to reside there. This process is a result of corruption in law enforcement.

Each year the international NGO “Transparency International” examines the degree of prevalence in corrupt practices globally in the “Annual index of corruption perception”. The value index varies between 0 and 10, in countries whose index is closer to 0, there

is a serious problem with corruption, while those whose index is 5 or higher, are less affected by corruption. According to the index of corruption in 2009, most of the former Soviet states fall at the bottom in rankings. The most affected by corruption countries are Georgia-4,1; Moldova-3,3, Armenia-2,7; Belarus-2,4, Azerbaijan and Ukraine-2.3-2,2.

One of the main aims of the Eastern Partnership is cooperation in the fight against corruption and organized crime and increasing the effectiveness of the anticorruption measures. For this purpose, the following steps are necessary:

- creating incentives for cooperation between the six countries, between institutions and civil societies of these countries on anti-corruption measures
- adopting strategic documents for combating corruption;
- reinforcing the capacity of the administration for implementation, coordination and monitoring of anti-corruption strategies and programs;
- taking concrete measures against corruption at high levels of government (political corruption);
- pooling of expertise and mobilizing its potential in order to prevent corruption practices
- combining tools for action and active political dialogue with other countries on the issue of combating corruption;
- strengthening civil society.

At present, corruption is also an enemy number one for EU. The effective dealing with it in Eastern Europe and the Caucasus is a guarantee for a sustainable partnership between the West and the six republics of CIS.

Settlement of regional conflicts

The conflicts at all levels in the Caspian-Caucasus region raise the need to ensure internal order and security of those countries. The European Neighbourhood Policy, in the context of which the Eastern Partnership was born, inevitably raises the question how this new EU initiative will contribute to the development of EU policies in the region and also will help for resolving the regional issues, the territorial and ethnic conflicts that threaten the internal order and the peace and the safety?

Due to the five-day war between Russia and Georgia in

August 2008 and the war in Nagorno-Karabakh, the EU condemns the idea of a military conflict resolution, and calls the parties to show more ambition in the peace negotiations in accordance with the resolutions of the Security Council of UN. The EU urges the authorities and leaders of the communities to demonstrate their commitment to the establishment of peaceful interethnic relations. The EU also considers that the issues relating to the situation of internally displaced persons should be decided in accordance with the international standards - in ensuring their safety and dignity. Only by following all of these recommendations, balanced multilateral agreements and arrangements that would ensure lasting peace in this ethnically and culturally colourful region can be signed.

Challenges facing the EU in the South Caucasus and its involvement in the region determined the development of long-term policies and strategies to deal with these challenges. The more active political role of Europe in the region, the launch of the Eastern Partnership and the entry into force of the Treaty of Lisbon, provide a good opportunity for the preparation of an EU strategy, by **combining a soft force with a hard approach** that will contribute to transform the South Caucasus, in a stable region.

At the same time, the European Commission takes measures to bring about a serious financial and technical support for building and promoting political trust among the population by approving projects which generate income and socio-economic integration of internally displaced persons (IDPs), projects for restoration of residential buildings and for a dialogue and mediation. An important aspect is **the management of natural resources**.

The management and the conflict resolution requires the safeguarding of the internal order and security, also a spirit of an open and objective review of the idea of the past events, and what is the most important a readiness to withdraw from big ambitions, incentives for innovative approaches and willingness for genuine discounts.

One of the perspectives and tasks of the Eastern Partnership is to provide methodological support and assistance to resolve the long term ethnic and territorial conflicts between the neighbouring and the contiguous countries. The methods and the tools for ensuring stability, internal order and security must be comprehensive, including the structures of state institutions, the NGOs and the civil society. It is essential to strengthen the cooperation not only

among countries – the six countries and EU, but also to coordinate better with other countries in the region such as Russia and Turkey, taking into account that the synergies between them will contribute to the success of the Eastern Partnership. The interaction with the international organizations such as OSCE and UN are also important.

With the Eastern Partnership initiative, the EU makes efforts and tries to contribute to global, regional security and stability through institutionalized mechanisms of political dialogue, economic cooperation and open crisis management in a way that avoids the controversial situations be transformed into a conflict.

Protection of human rights

Undoubtedly, everything said here loses its meaning if it is not guaranteed the observance of human rights and freedoms in the Eastern dimension. **The implementation of standards for protection of human rights** is an integral part of the partnership. EU shows the importance of the principles of respect for human rights and the application of methods for continuous monitoring and support for the implementation of effective models of social mediation to regulate relations between people. The current state of human rights in the six countries of Eastern Partnership could hardly be presented in one frame. The differences in development of the countries are extremely large - for example, while Ukraine is treated by all international organizations as a free country fulfilling its commitments under the international agreements on human rights, Belarus is accused of violating them. The “Lukashenko” regime regularly subjected the political opposition to a brutal pressure. The parliamentary elections in 2008 are an example of an electoral manipulation and violations which led to a distortion of the vote.

EU draws attention to the full respect for all human rights in the region - civil and political, economic, social and cultural including access to public and social services, labour rights and right to private property. As a result of this policy progress reports are prepared annually on each country separately, with the exception of Belarus, where the EU is waiting certain steps to be made by the government in order to launch the Eastern Partnership for that country.

Many things should be done in the area of employment and social policy. The partners are facing many challenges such

as high rate of unemployment, which affects mainly young people and women. In most countries an integrated approach to achieving sustainable development of labour policy is missing. The situation is further compromised by the lack of administrative capacity which is needed for implementation of changes. Some of the countries have taken steps to enhance a bilateral and multilateral social dialogue. A good example in this direction is Republic of Moldova. Georgia was again included in the scheme of preferences for the 2009 – 2011 period in order to show compliance with the standards of the International Labour Organisation. In addition, Armenia and Azerbaijan receive stimuli for improving management of the sector.

The social protection in the region is not sufficient. Therefore, most countries are in the process of developing measures of protection, including pension system reform. The financial crisis is expected to affect the social sector. The Eastern Partnership should pay particular attention to the social inclusion of vulnerable groups in society. The presence of women in all fields should be strengthened. The discrimination against them is still widely- spread. It is necessary that additional measures are taken to promote gender equality, including equality in the labour market. It should be noted that there are no targeted policies to improve women's participation in public life in any of the countries.

Protection of human rights in the frame of the Eastern Partnership is marked by severe deficits. Although there are good examples such as Ukraine, where protection of these rights becomes a guarantee of stability can be noted that in countries like Azerbaijan and Belarus the situation is alarming. In times of global economic crisis, the prospects for progress in the region are negative. The EU faces a serious challenge in its intention to spread the idea of human rights as a value in the potential candidate countries for EU membership.

Freedom of expression

The theme of human rights and freedoms is a media policy in the six partner republics as well as the freedom of speech, whose nature is seriously suppressed in the region.

Freedom of speech is a human right, deeply embedded in both the Declaration of Human Rights and the constitution of each democratic country. It legitimized the relationship between people

and institutions, which is essential for a better transparency in government. Sustaining it ensures stability and prosperity of any country in the international relations.

The reform in media policy is one of the main aspects in the thematic platform named "Democracy, good governance and stability". In the form of reports, the European Commission brings problems and foresees prospects on the issue of a free expression.

The regular analyses of media in the Eastern dimension indicate a poor state of the media in the six republics. The media market, considered the monopoly of Russia, does not allow a scene for the European media. The public access to information resources reflecting the internal and external situation of the partner countries is very limited.

The journalists' activity is often exacerbated by the government, which affects dialogue between media and government. Criticism against the government in the six partner countries in most cases is punished by imprisonment. Arbitrary law enforcement is also exercised against reporters. Sociologist surveys show that they are frequent victims of violence by police for TV reports that expose illegal actions and irregularities. There are many cases of attacks against editors and publishers of newspapers and magazines, based on findings of unfair dealings in government. For violation of human rights and inflicted physical and material damage many journalists bring lawsuits against the state (valid for six republics). Almost all end in failure.

The governments of Azerbaijan, Armenia, Belarus, Georgia, Republic of Moldova and Ukraine adopt new laws which restrict the activities of the media and the Internet as mass media by the month. The vote buying, the vote manipulation, the intentional errors in the counting of election ballots during elections in the partner countries are concealed by the government. In this way, journalists are not given the opportunity to objectively present the real to the citizens. This is considered to impose an information blackout and censorship on important news and public disclosures

Objectively, twelve months are not enough time for deep reforms. The prospects in front of the six republics which guarantee the free expression and the media freedom are revealed in two main aspects - a reform of the state and judicial reforms. In the first aspect, the main aim is a continuous monitoring of the political

processes in the Eastern partner countries in order to control the violations. The second vector is aimed at adopting a new legislation on media policy as well as at observing the constitutional norms that protect the freedom of expression.

The possible future cooperation and the united position of the Russia Federation and the EU might be crucial to the successful implementation of the envisaged EU guarantees for freedom of expression in the six countries. The establishment of the democratic principles in Azerbaijan, Armenia, Belarus, Georgia, Republic of Moldova and Ukraine starts precisely with transparency in governance namely related to the freedom of media. As a result, the regional stability is the basis for fruitful and mutually beneficial political and economic partnership between the EU and the six countries.

A year later the difficult way of reforms followed by the countries of the Caspian-Caucasus region, did not lead to serious reforms. The statehood is severely affected and therefore needs a thorough reform and transformation into a democratic one. Compliance with the constitutional and international norms, fair trials and consequently the intersection of corrupt practices are challenging and require a perseverance and coordination of actions in order to be marked as successful actions. It is also worth mentioning the issue of holding elections in accordance with the democratic principles of developed societies. Overcoming conflicts in the region (Nagorno-Karabakh, South Ossetia, Abkhazia) is a condition to build an effective system of internal order and stability in all countries. Securing and protecting human and civil rights are enshrined in the international law. UN and EU must work together for their actual implementation in Azerbaijan, Armenia, Belarus, Georgia, Republic of Moldova and Ukraine. The media independence and freedom of expression are a painful subject which seeks its adequate solution in the buffer zone between Russia and Europe. The prospects for Eastern Partnership for the actual implementation of the reforms set out in the thematic platform "Democracy, good governance and stability" draw the boundaries of that democratic process, which is a prelude to a better and more liberal form of social structure in the countries of the Eastern dimension.

Economic Aspects of Eastern Partnership

*Boyan Balev, Alina Garkova, Ivaylo Ibrishimov, Ivaylo Conev,
Mihail Angelov, Petya Petrova*

The history of the European integration is a history of **overcoming political** troubles on the base on deep mutually **beneficial economic cooperation**. The establishment of a common market helps to overcome many economic problems and their respective political projections. At the same time the common market and common economic interests create preconditions for common politics and blur traditional political differences. This is the way the European Union came together. From this perspective, the economic dimensions of the Eastern Partnership could become the basis for political success of the Initiative and contribute to overcoming challenges in of the relations between the EU and its partners in this Initiative.

The 2009 Prague Declaration highlights the need of acceleration of economic growth of Partner countries. The main purpose of this paper is to explore the opportunities for enhanced economic cooperation and intensified trade which will ultimately promote economic and hence political development of those countries.

Black Sea – corridor or border?

The six countries, with which the EU seeks to deepen the cooperation through the Eastern Partnership, could be divided geographically into two groups. The first one includes the countries of the Caucasus - Azerbaijan, Armenia and Georgia, the other - Belarus, Republic of Moldova and Ukraine. What separates them and simultaneously connects them is the Black Sea. This geographical feature defines the special role that the Black Sea could and should play within the Eastern Partnership. This role necessitates synchronization of policies in the framework of the Eastern Partnership and the Black Sea Synergy.

The strategic position of the Black Sea as the main transport corridor between the Partner countries makes its role even more important, although only Georgia and Ukraine have a direct outlet. Moreover, the Black Sea provides direct access to the markets of

Central and Western Europe through the Rhine - Main – Danube corridor (Transport Corridor No. 7) and to the Atlantic and Indian Oceans through the Mediterranean. It is therefore crucial to ensure access of Belarus and the Republic of Moldova to this corridor using natural waterways (Dnieper and Dniester) that connect these countries with the Black Sea through Ukrainian territory.

Of course, exploring the opportunities offered by the Black Sea, we cannot ignore the fact that it is also **a field of major geopolitical conflict of interests** – of EU member-states (Eastern Partnership is the first attempt to synchronize these interests) and six Partner countries, as well as those of major players along its coast - Russia and Turkey, and of the USA as global superpower. In all cases, overcoming the differences, common desire to improve economic relations and increase the trade in the region could play leading role. From this position, the EU could look for a common ground with the countries from the region and other interested parties - Russia, Turkey and USA.

The point a view of *Russia* largely overlaps the point a view of the Eastern countries. The Black Sea provides cheap sea transport corridor for the raw materials exported by Russia. Ever since Peter I, Russia has perceived the Black Sea as a gateway to the Mediterranean and adjacent waterways, and with Bulgaria's and Romania's accession to the EU, Russia received direct access to EU markets trough the Black Sea Basin.

We need to take into account the fact that Russian positions towards the Black Sea region are based on the idea that Russian exports of strategic materials are an instrument to achieve political objectives. For Russia, political goals have priority over economic expedience and this is the starting point of Kremlin's relations with the six Eastern Partnership countries. As former Soviet republics these states are considered a part of the Russian sphere of influence and the European Union and USA attempts to strengthen their positions in the region are considered "hostile" to Russia.

The *USA* thinks of the Black Sea as region where the US influence should be expanded at the expense of Russia. Trough active US presence in some of the Black Sea countries, which allows it to accumulate political and military resources, the USA tries to exert influence on the neighboring Caspian region. The nascent trend in US and Russian policy, which presupposes cooperation between the

two superpowers in order to weaken the EU's economic and political potential and its influence on the European and global political scene, is cause of concern. The projections of such a policy in the Black Sea region can block the Eastern Partnership to a large extend.

It is very important that the EU receives support for the Eastern Partnership by another leading player in the region – *Republic of Turkey*. The Black Sea encompasses almost entirely Turkey's northern border and is one of the many gateways to Europe, which Turkey has. Economic development of the the Black Sea region is important for Turkey for several reasons. First, the existence of economically developed countries in the region means increase goods traffic through Turkish straits - the Bosphorus and Dardanelles – to the rest of the world. The second reason is the opportunity to speed up the economic development of significant part of the Turkish territory, near the Black Sea coast. Thirdly, deepening economic cooperation between the countries in the region on one hand and the EU on the other will inevitably make Turkey closer to full membership in the Union.

From this perspective, Turkey is interested to assist the EU in the process of Eastern Partnership implementation, but only if the Union recognizes its importance. Turkey has a very serious and long experience in developing economic cooperation with the European Union and the Turkish economy is undoubtedly the most dynamic in the region. Turkey is able to catalyze the process of economic cooperation and to support the progress of the six partner countries. The influence of Turkey as a regional power, especially on its neighbours – the Caucasus countries – should also be taken into account. Turkey is one of the major trading partners for these countries, and respectively a key factor for economic development, which could provide access to markets and investments. The Black Sea provides serious opportunities for development of economic cooperation between Turkey and Ukraine, and the Dnieper and Dniester rivers make even Belarus and Moldova closer to Turkey. The development of economic relations between Turkey and Romania, where again the Black Sea is a major corridor together with the land connection through Bulgaria, also plays a favourable role.

Of course, Turkey's support for the Eastern Partnership, even in the context of cooperation in the Black Sea region and possible future membership of Turkey in the European Union, alone would not be able to eliminate all problems and conflicts in the region and

contradictions among the “Great Powers”. Such conflicts exist in one way or another and hinder the development of relations within the formally existing international organisations such as the Black Sea Economic Cooperation Organisation. Overcoming contradictions and even cooling conflicts in the region, especially in the Caucasus and Transnistria, is possible only if a stable economic basis of cooperation exists. In the framework of the Eastern Partnership, the Black Sea is the transport corridor, which creates great opportunities for the six partner countries to develop economic relations with each other, with the European Union and the rest of the world.

Financial Backing of the Eastern Partnership

Immediately after the Prague Declaration was signed, the European Commission has undertaken actions to ensure financial recourses for the Eastern Partnership. Without solid financial backing the proposed concept for establishment of a free trade zone could not be realized. The financial package allocated amounts to 600 million euro for the 2007 - 2013 period. This adds up to the approximately 180 million euro allocated to the European Neighbourhood Policy. The major part of the funds will be allocated to fulfil three main objectives in line with the concept of economic integration and convergence with EU policies:

- *Comprehensive Institution Building Programme*: 175 million euro will be allocated to the long term goal of the signing of Association and Visa Liberalization Agreements. One of the conditions for funding of institutional development will be successful “twinning projects”.

- *Pilot projects*: 75 million euro will be used for financing regional development programs that contribute to overcoming the economic and social disparities between Eastern Partnership countries.

- *Implementation of the Partnership's Multilateral Dimension*: most of the financial resources (approximately 350 million euro) are allocated for implementation of EU priority policies such as economic integration, democratization, good governance and stability, energy security, human resources management and contacts between people.

Regarding the approach that should be taken when funds are allocated, based on careful review of the basic principles for financing of the European Neighbourhood Policy, there are several options that could be applied to financial support under the Eastern Partnership. One of them is parallel or joint co-financing.

Typically in the parallel co-financing funds are received from two donors or from the EU budget while approval procedures are in accordance with the requirements of national legislation. The advantages of this type of financing is that it emphasizes the cooperation at European level and practically each donor country knows very well what resources are expected from the,. However, this approach is fraught with some risks that may arise in the process of coordination between donor countries. Differences may occur mostly due to differences of procurement and tenders procedures in the different countries.

Joint co-financing provides opportunities for the parties concerned to raise funds together. One of the parties is the leading party, while the other is auxiliary. At the same time the European Commission has the opportunity to raise funds on his own initiative also from other donors, such as individual member countries or international financial institutions interested in similar projects. The funds raised should be spent in accordance with the requirements of the Neighbourhood policy and approval procedures laid down in the EU budget. The Commission may also approve the allocation of funds of other donors, which could be spent according to the general rules for funding elaborated by them.

The forms of cooperation mentioned above, however, conceal benefits as well as some risks mostly related to the consolidation of the EU Common Foreign Policy. There is a real danger that some of the more active in the field of foreign policy and economically developed EU member states will try to establish on a purely bilateral basis deeper economic relations with the countries of the Eastern partnership. In most cases such a policy is not coordinated with other countries, particularly those bordering the Eastern Partnership countries, and this raises doubts of pursuit purely national interests. However, bilateral cooperation facilitates the establishment of closer contacts that could be used as best practices in implementation of future projects of other member states. Therefore the development of deeper bilateral economic relations in a certain priority areas could help the expansion of EU influence in the region where there is a good coordination and clear financial policy at European level.

In the process of funding of priority axes the Programs for trans-border cooperation and integrated border management could be crucial for Bulgaria. Bulgaria as an EU member, purely geographically belonging to the Caspian-Black Sea area which in the recent years

emerged as a major transit corridor from Europe to Asia, would benefit from the opportunity to participate more actively in the policy to support the processes of diversification and secure transport routes, which would provide to pass the majority of trade between Europe, the Caucasus, Central Asia and Far East in the next few years.

Legal harmonisation

Successful implementation of the Eastern Partnership requires a new degree of **harmonisation of the Eastern European countries legislation with the EU laws**. In this process EU apparently is in a favourable position to set the requirements, but it is in the interest of the partners themselves is to create a stable region where good laws are respected, because it will make these countries attractive for foreign investors and declines their vulnerability to external shocks.

In a view of the fact that the Partnership is beneficial for both sides, the best we can do is to apply reforms in priority areas of cooperation, especially in the economy. EU is interested to expand its markets, while six countries are interested to partner with the EU.

When it comes to market, trade and economic integration, the differences in established quality standards lead to serious problems, especially when the exporters are confronted with requirements other than those of their own market. To avoid such situations harmonization with the EU requirements is of utmost importance. The easiest way to achieve this goal is the transposition of EU directives concerning the convergence of technical standards in the countries of the Eastern Partnership.

Given the fact that much of the EU budget is used to finance the Common agricultural policy, it is reasonable to pay particular attention to this sector and especially to the quality of production. It is linked to the definition and establishment of rules ensuring the protection of public health and safety of consumers. In this regard, the EU changed its legislation on food and has adopted harmonized common rules for to the common market. In order to be closer to that market, Eastern Partnership countries should effectively change their practices and rules. For example, the EU is talking about standards that cover the full spectrum of produce “from the farm through the factory to fork” to supervise the safety and quality of the food of the European citizens. That means that any different production coming

non-member states should prove it has the same level of safety and quality. Otherwise it would not be permitted into the EU market. Therefore, Eastern Partnership countries should develop quality control systems to ensure their production would be granted entry into the European market. This will probably require major changes and administrative capacity to guarantee the product quality.

Most probably, changes in the production process will be indispensable so that it meets the **environmental standards** of EU member states. In the last few years, the EU seems to be a global leader in the environment policies. We can expect that in the nearest future that topic will become more and more pressing, and Europe will commit to it even more. Therefore it is reasonable to expect some demands for reducing the environmental impact of manufacturing not only in Member States but from in partners. In the nearest future the EU could close its borders for products which have no environmental approved label. The six countries should step up and harmonize its legislation with the EU's environmental legislation before such requirements are enforced.

The sensitive **issue of border control** is extremely important, because one of the main reason for the Eastern Partnership is the need of stability and peace in the region. Unstable external borders mean lack of safety for the Union not only in the military sense but also in an economical one. Parts of EU's neighbours are weak, their population is young but poor, and most of their political systems are unstable. As a consequence EU faces serious problems with immigration, international crime and terrorism. That requires joint efforts for better control of borders and especially immigration flows and for combating trafficking and drug trade. There is a serious need for exchange of best practices, for customs cooperation and training for personnel. The cooperation between police and customs is really important but the scope of their cooperation should be regulated.

Capacity Building in the Eastern Partnership Countries

The issue of capacity building in the six countries of the Eastern Partnership indisputably takes its relevant place amongst the aspects of the economic integration and the harmonisation with the sector policies of the EU. It can be seen in several aspects – capacity for harmonization of the legislation of the partner countries with the Acquis communautaire of the EU, capacity for implementation of this

legislation, capacity for application of the principles and the values of the Union, capacity for programming, planning and budgeting etc. The building of such capacity should be considered as one of the serious and obligatory goals to have real effect in the process of transition to sustainable development, market economy and approximation with the member-states of the European Union. Capacity is a guarantee not only for Eastern Partnership objectives and tasks but also for meeting the requirements future Association Agreements between the EU and the partner countries in an effective and sustainable way.

The Prague Declaration focuses on the development of Comprehensive programs for institutional building for each partner country aimed at the improvement of its administrative capacity. Unfortunately all documents and initiatives within the framework of the Eastern Partnership consider solely the hypothesis of capacity building in the state administrations and leave capacity building in the business, which will help better management, understanding and implementation of the policies, principles and values of the EU for sustainable development of the countries.

The capacity building as part of the ways to attain economic integration and convergence with the EU should be considered in these two directions – capacity of state administration and **capacity of private economic entities**. These are the main actors in the economic life of each country and making joint efforts for the enhancement of their capacity, they shall be able to walk more effectively along the path of greater convergence with the EU. The capacity for project preparation and management is needed in the private sector in these states, as a larger part of their initiatives and financing is based on the project principle, and according to some modern management theories, each activity or initiative may be considered and managed as a project. The building of such capacity in the business sector shall provide not only availability of planning, programming and budgeting, but also these processes shall be developed in a way convergent with that applied in the member-states and in the EU itself.

In the framework of the Eastern Partnership **Comprehensive Institution-Building Programmes** will be elaborated for each of the six countries. These programs will be oriented mainly to support the countries' institutions in the process of implementation of their commitments and harmonization of the legislation. It is expected that in the first quarter of year 2011 the Programmes for institutional building will be completely developed, open and working. Thus,

fast after the launch of Eastern Partnership instruments to enhance administrative capacity of the six countries will be available.

Although the idea for capacity building in the partner countries as an objective of the Eastern Partnership is of lesser priority than free trade zone establishment, crises management and other, the fact that more than a quarter of the funds for the programme period will be allocated to activities such as twinning projects, technical assistance and training is very positive.

This creates conditions, in case of good mobilization of resources and political will in the interested parties, to accomplish the maximum in regard to further convergence between the Eastern Partnership countries and the EU in the time remaining to the end of the budget period. Some of the serious challenges to effective cooperation – the “speaking of different languages” and doing things in a diametrically opposite way compared to the practice of the member-states and of the EU itself – should be overcome.

At the same time, it should be noted that the Eastern Partnership focuses almost exclusively on activities for capacity building understood as twinning projects, technical assistance and trainings. The other possible activities – exchange of experience, research and implementation of new practices, training and specialized visits on specific problems, scholarships for specialized trainings, visits from member-states experts to exchange experience etc., are rarely used.

The Technical Assistance and Information Exchange Instrument (**TAIEX**), which focuses on a limited range of issues and activities which are to be financed, is no exception. It is short-term oriented and based on specific needs of support for activities in the process of harmonization of the legislation of the partners with the Union through training, technical assistance and especially submitting information.

The other instrument, which may be used for enhancement of the capacity in the six countries, is functioning in a same way. The difference here is that the instrument Support for Improvement in Government and Management (**SIGMA**) is a joint initiative of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development and the EU, launched in 1992. Just like TAIEX, SIGMA provides short-term solutions for specific needs and problems, initiated by the participant countries themselves. It supports the capacity building in the sphere of good management, institutional building up and development of legal frameworks and procedures to attain convergence with the EU practices and the standards. Certainly, the basic instruments of SIGMA are again the provision of advice, technical

assistance, analyses and evaluations, methodological instructions, publication of instructions, trainings.

It would be useful if the Eastern Partnership focuses not only on the administrative capacity building for harmonization and transposition of the European norms in the countries' legislation. It is important also to focus on enhancement of capacity of the administration for preparation, elaboration and convergence of various strategic documents for development, as well as the process of planning and budgeting. These processes are strictly specific for the EU and therefore they differ from the planning and budgeting processes studied by economic theory. The budget periods and perspectives of the EU are different, the hierarchic structure and the preparation, approval and coordination of the strategic documents of the countries are different than those valid for the EU as an independent subject. If these substantial differences are not understood and the administrations of partner countries do not manage to get to know the core of the problems, any serious degree of convergence of the economies and policies of the six countries with the EU could not be anticipated.

In the same manner if no actions are undertaken for the enhancement of the capacity of the business sector with regard to the strategic planning, programming, work on a project principle, this will considerably delay the economies of these countries in the process to achieve sustainable development, economic integration and convergence with the EU. The developing negative trends in the development of the trade between them would not be broken up.

Economic effects of the trade intensification

Eastern Partnership aims to strengthen the integration of partner countries to the European economy by bilateral and multilateral partnership and inclusion of these countries in the single market. The development of trade is of particular importance to increase the competitiveness and excite the economy.

After the collapse of the former Socialist community, in the process of transition from planned to market economy, countries from Eastern Europe and South Caucasus undertook the strategic course to overcome their isolation from world economy. This course is reflected both in the liberalization of foreign economic relations of countries in transition and in the real territorial redirection of these relationships.

The analysis of the trade data shows low share of trade

among Partnership countries, despite their geographical proximity - only 5.9 percent of the total trade.

There is a general technological backwardness in these countries, and that is why the exports of goods consist mainly of products with low level of manufacturing and low added value. The imports to these countries consist predominantly of technologically sensitive processed products. Inability of partner countries to offer such products makes them lose their competitive advantages to the inter-partner market.

However, there is an opportunity through elimination of the trade and custom restrictions (and real establishment of complex and comprehensive free trade areas) and attraction of foreign investments to achieve improved competitive position of the national economies and thus to reach an increased trade between the Eastern Partnership countries.

Future trend in the trade relations development is the establishment and the strengthening of trade relations, which can lead to increased market integration of the Eastern partners into the European Union trade.

Bulgaria could take good place in the economic and trade cooperation with the Eastern Partnership countries by increasing trade relations in a view of the geographical and cultural proximity. Our country is one of the former socialist countries that have reoriented their trade to the West. Before 1989 Bulgaria's trade with CMEA countries (without the USSR) amounted to 20-25% of our total trade. This means that in the recent past these markets were well known to the Bulgarian exporters. Bulgarian production still prevails, because is associated with quality and reliability.

Participation of the Eastern Partnership countries is continuation of the globalization process, launched after the collapse of the socialist bloc. The economy of these countries has established deep foreign trade relations with the European Union.

Despite forecasts for growth of the turnover among partners, given the already mentioned backwardness and the proximity of the two major economic powers - the European Union and Russia, it would be unrealistic to expect this growth to be serious, if there is not a result-oriented policy to stimulate the development of the economic relations is carried out.

Such policy, backed by solid financial support from the EU, will lead simultaneously to an increase Union's role in the region, deeper economic cooperation of mutual interest and political stabilization as a result of economic recovery in the six countries.

Energy Security

*Kaloyan Pargov, Alexander Vladimirov, Ivan Angelov,
Olga Verbanova, Pavlin Barenski*

The Black Sea region is an area of key strategic importance when it comes to production and transit of energy resources to the EU countries. It also holds major significance for diversification and security of energy supply. When speaking of the Black Sea region we cannot ignore the Caspian basin and its role in geostrategic policy. The big race for diversification of supplies and constant launch of different projects and initiatives, led by main geopolitical players: EU, Russia, and the USA, involves not only Central Asia and the Caucasus, but also the Balkan countries whose territory is designated to become a transit route for energy corridors. The accession of Bulgaria to the EU in 2007 undoubtedly changed its significance from a geopolitical point of view. It also defined Bulgaria's role, along with Romania, as a strategic border of the EU with the Black Sea and Caspian region. This justified a more active political commitment of the European Union in the geopolitical solitaire behind which the ideas for cooperation and confrontation with Russia are poorly hidden. The six countries Ukraine, Republic of Moldova, Belarus, Azerbaijan, Georgia and Armenia, intertwined in the plans of all major players, also have a role to play in the strategic game. The fight between the major powers boils down to influence and control of the area of these six countries by including them in plans for diversification of energy streams.

The Eastern Partnership initiative of Poland and Sweden seeks to put relations of these countries on a new basis including bilateral and multilateral lines of cooperation thus balancing the policies towards the Southern and the Eastern dimensions after the establishment of the Union for Mediterranean.

Political aspects of energy security

The political aspects of energy security are of significant importance of each country, region or regional body such as the EU. The issue is even more important for countries in the Caucasus region as well as Ukraine, Belarus and Moldova. They are located in the heart of Eurasia, which means that they are the **meeting**

point of security and energy interests of key global and regional players. The attention of main powers towards this part of the world is increased even more by the fact that major energy projects are planned to take place.

Listing main political players in the region and going from east to west, we should start with China with its joint energy projects with Caspian states. Going west we reach Russia and the EU. The Eastern Partner countries once belonged to the USSR and are now a part of the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS). There are compact groups of ethnic Russians living in each country. That is the reason why the *Russian Federation* follows closely the processes in the region, claims it has traditional interest in the area and views interventions by any other international factor with mistrust and suspicion, usually considering these acts of hostility towards its borders.

The *European Union* acknowledges the need for a more active policy towards the region because of its specific geographic location and historical tradition. EU is interested that these countries, which will transport energy supplies to the Union, are stable, democratic and predictable economic partners. The EU thinks that it can aid the process of democratization, rule of law, human rights protection, and establishment of active civil society and improvement of security. It should be kept in mind that such aid is not aimed against Russia or any other countries.

Apart from these neighbouring global players, a regional power, Turkey, also eyes the region. Having its historical reasons, Turkey looks at Azerbaijan as its traditional and strategic partner in the area. Turkey also leads an active energy policy and strives to become a leading regional factor in this matter.

Another key player that deserves mentioning is *Iran*. By developing its military industry and perfecting its mid- and long-range missiles, this country has gained grounds for expanding its influence in the area.

Besides the complex knot of contradictory global and regional interests, there are a number of **different historical confrontations and conflicts** between the six Eastern Partnership countries. These conflicts develop with different intensity and undermine every attempt to establish long-term security.

The Eastern Partnership, being a part of the European Neighbourhood Policy, seeks to foster relations with Europe's

Eastern neighbours by encouraging them to undertake democratic and market-oriented reforms and by supporting the partner states in protecting their territorial integrity, especially after the war between Georgia and Russia in the summer of 2008. The Eastern Partnership runs in parallel with the Strategic Partnership with Russia and it is not aimed against the Federation. At the beginning Russia did consider the Partnership a threat, but later accepted the initiative under the condition that it would not hinder the integration processes within the CIS and agreed to take part in multilateral projects.

Institutional and financial framework for cooperation

After the launch of Eastern Partnership, four thematic platforms for multilateral cooperation were introduced. Among them, undoubtedly “Energy Security” is of key importance. In this platform, the participants are divided in three groups including EU member states, partner countries, the European Commission, the European Parliament, the General Secretariat of the European Union, the Committee of the Regions, the Economic and Social Committee, the European Investment Bank, the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development, international organizations such as the Council of Europe and the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, international financial institutions and third countries.

The goals of thematic platform “Energy Security” are related to development of mechanisms for energy assistance and energy security, diversification of energy supplies and constructions of interconnections, improvement of energy efficiency and use of renewable energy sources, synchronization of regulatory frameworks of energy policies. Among these goals, priority funding will be allocated to energy efficiency and renewable sources. All actions and initiatives will be in line with the Treaty for Energy Community and the Energy Charter, as well as future comprehensive free trade agreements to be concluded under the bilateral cooperation line of the Eastern Partnership policy.

A work programme was adopted for the 2009-2011 period. Its main goals are: exchange of information regarding the security of energy supply based on a model approved by the Energy Community; construction of electrical, gas and oil interconnections and diversification of supply routes; energy efficiency and renewable sources; synchronization of regulatory framework.

Financing is a key factor for the success of the Eastern Partnership. Some 450 million euro were allocated to the European Neighbourhood Policy Instrument (ENPI) until 2008; the funding will be raised up to 785 million euro by 2013. Apart from ENPI, funds are expected to come from EIB and EBRD which will coordinate Member States donor activity and direct investments. Last but not least, other mechanisms such as NIF instrument for foreign investments in neighboring countries, the fund for aid and management, will be used for additional financing of projects in Eastern Partners who excel in meeting their goals and achieving results.

The Communication from the European Commission to the European Council and the European Parliament “Eastern Partnership”, Brussels, 3.12.2008, which underlines that energy security is one of the most important areas of cooperation, points out that in addition to multilateral initiatives the Commission proposes **bilateral measures** while keeping in mind the Second Strategic Energy Review. These bilateral measures involve the inclusion of energy interdependence clause in Association Agreements and, if needed, signing of Memoranda of Understanding on energy issues with Moldova, Georgia and Armenia. The Memorandum with *Armenia* should take into account the closing of the Medsamor nuclear power plant. Bilateral measures will also affect *Ukraine* in the context of the goal of integrating the country's market with the market of the EU. Bilateral measures should take into account the importance of satisfactory safety evaluation of all operating nuclear plants in the country.

Nuclear safety

EU is committed to the idea of the development of a modern European legal framework for nuclear energy, which will guarantee high level of safety of nuclear plant operations, safe disposal of nuclear waste and safe closure of nuclear power plants.

The safety of operating nuclear power plants in Eastern Partnership countries is among the most important energy issues. That is why these issues are covered by the Communication and concerns are raised for two countries in particular.

In **Ukraine** the share of nuclear energy is almost 50%. The legal framework of EU-Ukraine relations is the Partnership and Cooperation Agreement, signed in 1994, in force since 1995,

as well as a number of agreements on specific matters including nuclear energy. In December 2005, EU and Ukraine signed an *Agreement for safety evaluation* of Ukraine's nuclear power plants. The evaluation should assess compliance with international safety standards and requirements and should propose additional steps for improvement including the financial aspect of the matter.

Cooperation on matters of nuclear energy and safety remains EU priority and that is why the Union supports the Ukrainian Nuclear Regulation Committee, takes steps to enforce the Euratom agreement on peaceful use of nuclear energy, seeks further development of the question of resuming operations of the Chernobil nuclear power plant and the conversion of Block IV of the Chernobil plant into safe zone, and demands the adoption of Strategy for nuclear waste management.

Armenian nuclear sector faces serious challenges like poor infrastructure and networks, which are often a subject of thefts, inefficiency, strong dependence on Russia and need for closure of existing power plant. The EU and other donors continue to support safety measures at the Medsamor power plant and urge Armenian government to develop a strategy for its early closure and for alternative energy supplies.

EU's determination to give absolute priority of high level nuclear safety culture in both Member States and neighbouring countries will inevitably transfer into a new generation of laws and international agreements which will in turn help calm discussions on the question.

Challenges ahead of big gas projects

The big geopolitical battle for Caspian gas continues and one of the goals of Eastern Partnership is undoubtedly overcoming conflicts which hinder the realization of big gas projects.

It is expected that old disputes between Azerbaijan and Turkmenistan will cool down, which will boost work on **Nabucco** project. However Russia may conclude bilateral agreements to buy all the gas extracted in the region. Such tactics have already been applied against European partners in the **South Stream** project. These bilateral agreements hinder a common European energy policy and give priority to national interests rather than solidarity and shared values.

Energy projects are a part of the Commissions initiative for a new platform for the relations with Eastern Partnership Countries.

They are a guarantee for Europe's security and prosperity, but they will also lead to closer political and economical ties. European neighbourhood policy seeks balanced growth based on multilateral cooperation. These countries' natural resources and close ties with Russia are a stimulus for such development.

Diversification of energy supplies

The annual energy dispute between Russia and Ukraine, which left millions of Europeans without heating in the winter of 2009, reveals the incoherent European system for energy supplies and lack of political cohesion which undermines EU's ability to build a long-term political strategy.

Diversification of energy sources, as a goal of Eastern Partnership, is the first step in building a reliable energy security strategy. It requires long-term planning and coordination because the construction of infrastructure required will take decades.

Until 2030, EU countries are expected to import 90% of the oil, 60% of the natural gas and 66% of the coal required for their consumption. For the time being, Russia is the main supplier of oil to the EU with a share of 26%, followed by Norway with 13%, Saudi Arabia with 9%, Libya with 8% and Iran with 5%. EU's domestic oil production satisfies 18% of the demand.

The dependence on Russia as EU's main supplier of oil and gas affects the common European external and internal policies as well as those of member states. Taking into account Russia's position as the high political risk in the Middle East, EU interests for alternative supply of fuels naturally turn to the Caspian region. The strategic need for diversification of both fuel supply and transport corridors is of even higher priority than the question of energy independence. Because of their geographic position, the Eastern Partners are a bridge to energy-rich countries and therefore to the EU they have a key role as a transit corridor. In this respect the Black Sea can be considered as the "energy door" of the Union.

On its road to energy security, the EU has to resolve **several key issues**:

- *Restricting the dependence on Russian gas imports*: even if the gas supply dispute between Russia and Ukraine is resolved, the fact that even started should be considered as a sign for the EU that a common energy policy is needed;

- *Restricting the dependence on oil importing countries* such as Saudi Arabia and Iran which are still far from stability and democracy and could stop deliveries at any moment;

- *Increasing energy efficiency of Europe's economy* and limiting greenhouse gas emissions by 20 % until 2020. This will be an important and decisive step in the fight with global warming;

- *Increasing the share of renewable energy* in EU energy mix;

- *Strategic restructuring of EU's energy mix.*

Speaking of these priorities of the energy policy and the role of Eastern Partnership in achieving these goals, it is important to note that in order for the EU and its members to take full advantage of the energy importance of the region, they need to exert efforts and invest in the democratization of the region and the cooperation between authorities, business and NGOs in the six partner countries. Although the funds allocated to Eastern Partnership policies are small and they will not be spent directly on energy projects if funds are used to achieve the present goals of the "Energy Security" thematic platform, this will prepare the region for these huge projects and lay the basis of a successful European energy policy in the future.

The role of Bulgaria in energy partnership

As an EU member state and external border, Bulgaria is very much interested in the success of the Eastern Partnership, because more energy projects mean more peace and stability in the region.

That is why Bulgaria should carefully set its priorities and read the signals coming from EU, the USA and Russia, as well as build its institutional capacity for active participation in the Eastern Partnership on state, business and NGO level.

Eastern Partnership: Opportunities for Contacts Between People

*Teodor Slavev, Vesselin Pashov, Vladimir Harizanov,
Ivo Tsvyatkov, Mariana Georgieva, Stefka Porova*

The goal of this paper is not to be a comprehensive revision of the existing analyses, practices and official statements on the Eastern Partnership and specifically the “Contacts between people” thematic platform. Its ambition is to focus on the actions leading to the approximation of the social models and social development of the European Union on one hand and the countries neighboring the EU and Russia on the other hand. The paper pays special attention to the liberalization of the visa regimes as a prerequisite for intensifying the contacts between people and mobility, to the education and science as mechanism for approximation of policies and as a factor for development of the countries’ innovation potential. The paper also highlights the opportunities for building of sustainable civil society, which strengthens horizontal relationships between people and thus stimulates the accumulation of social capital. Last, but not least, the paper pays attention to the importance, the state of play and the possibilities for establishment of information society and opportunities for the media to play their democratic role as a intermediary between different social groups. Culture as political technology for converging different cultural and political models is also analyzed below.

Liberalisation of visa regimes

One of the major goals of Eastern partnership is political association and economic integration. Having this in mind, the EU ought to propose to the six partner countries – Belarus, Ukraine, Moldova, Georgia, Azerbaijan and Armenia – “**mobility and security pacts**”¹. These pacts should include mobility issues as well as the necessary security conditions such as measures for combating illegal

¹ COMMUNICATION FROM THE COMMISSION TO THE EUROPEAN COUNCIL AND THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT – “Eastern Partnership”, Brussels, 3.12.2008;

migration, upgrade of the countries' asylum regulations to European standards, and implementation of integrated border management systems. Such **pacts** will **boost** mobility of people while bringing stability and security for all partners and ensuring the security of EU borders. It is recommended that these pacts be adapted to the specific conditions in each country and reflect the recent Communication from the Commission for Strengthening the Global Approach to Migration and the European Pact on Migration and Asylum² from October 2008.

Given the state of play, when developing its **visa policies**, the EU should consider measures for *gradual visa liberalization* and provide specific conditions and supporting measures including financial ones for the partner countries. In the pacts, the EU should commit to specific actions for practical implementation of such policies. A first step in that direction could be the initiation of visa liberalization talks with the partner countries. The visa liberalization pacts should be accompanied by agreements on readmission and, if needed, agreements for technical assistance to partner countries to fulfil their obligations under the agreements within the financial framework provided. A second step could be the revision of these agreements and the introduction of additional visa reliefs like abolishing the visa taxes. There should be a coordinated plan for improving the EU member states' consular jurisdiction in the partner countries: for example EU could encourage a wider consular representation and provide financial support for single visa centres based on the successful experience in Kishinev. After the effective implementation of visa liberalization and readmission agreements, the EU should start negotiation for visa-free travel with all economic and political partners. The dialogue would lead to roadmaps towards visa-free travel in **four key areas**: (1) *document security*; (2) fight with *illegal migration* including readmission; (3) issues pertaining to *domestic security* and (4) issues related to *external affairs* including human rights of migrants and other vulnerable groups.

Another important task of the Commission is the *cost-benefit analysis of labour mobility* and possible measures for finding congruence between labour supply and demand. Depending on analysis results, the

² Opinion of the Committee of the Region „Strengthening The Global Approach To Migration: Increasing Coordination, Coherence And Synergies”, Brussels, 17.06.2009;

EU could resort to targeted opening of labour markets to citizens of third countries and to measures for facilitating circular migration within mobility partnerships. Along these targets and priorities, in order to guarantee security, the EU should help its partners to fulfil their political and economic commitments in justice and home affairs within the framework of European Neighbourhood Policy. This can be achieved through more intense technical cooperation and financial aid.

An important aspect of visa policy are high-level **border management procedures** at the external borders including the implementation of an *Integrated Information System* for **border control**, as well as approximation of border management forms to the *European specimens*. The EU should provide comprehensive support for establishment of sustainable **data protection** regime: for example, to meet European standards for identity documents the partner countries should include biometric data in the documents to allow exchange of data with Europol and Eurostat as provided in bilateral agreements.

The strongest move for building a more attractive image of the EU in the neighbouring countries³ is the liberalization of EU visa policies. This remains a sensitive matter for many member states, but we believe that more hospitable visa policies will not only strengthen the Union's soft power, but it will also capitalize on the investments by encouraging seasonal migration of labour and by satisfying short term need of labour once European economy recovers.

Ukraine and Moldova ought to be offered **road maps** for visa free travel for their citizens combined with firm demands for reforms of border control and law enforcement. At the same time, the European Commission should guarantee that all member states will implement fully the visa facilitation agreements signed between the two countries and the EU in January 2008. EU should also aim for visa free travel of certain categories of citizens (such as journalists, businessmen, students) from South Caucasus states and Belarus.

³ Although in the report cited ("The Limits of Enlargement – Lite: European and Russian Power in the Troubled Neighborhood") the term "neighboring countries" is used by the European Commission to designate 16 countries covered by the European Neighborhood Policy, we use neighboring countries in reference to the six states included in the "Eastern Partnership" Belarus, Ukraine, Moldova, Georgia, Azerbaijan and Armenia.

In the course of negotiations, the EU should let go of visa taxes. One of the main goals of these talks should be facilitation of contacts between people. This cannot happen while visa restrictions, which remain a technical and financial obstacle, exist.

Education and culture as a mechanism for approximation

The EU, at its highest level⁴, has declared that the fundamental political line for organizing contacts between people **is education, science and training**. The European Commission pays serious attention to modernizing education and training practices in the Eastern neighbours. Some of these modernizations include: stepping up of **learning mobility** (of students, teachers, researchers, young people), including language learning as a key tool to promote mobility, as well as **opening of the eTwinning programme** for schools to the Eastern Partners. Before developing such programmes however, it is crucial that the European Commission study the level of information about the programmes offered in partner countries. Such research can be carried out by organizations like UNESCO and UNICEF who already have experience in similar studies. The study should provide information about the needs for *change in the educational systems* in the countries in question in view of expanding the scope of programmes such as **Erasmus Mundus** and **Tempus**. Last, but not least, the study should pay special attention to the influence of Russia as a major factor in defining teaching methods and study plans especially in Ukraine, Moldova and Belarus. According to data, there is a clear course (and some positive results) of reforms towards European type of education in Belarus⁵ and Ukraine⁶. The

⁴ See Eastern Partnership Platform 4 'Contacts between People'; Core objectives and proposed Work Programme 2009-2011, 10th of June 2009, http://ec.europa.eu/education/external-relation-programmes/doc/eapwork_en.pdf

⁵ Education in Belarus (National Report of the Republic of Belarus); Rapporteur Generale: Siarhei Vetokhin (National Institute for Higher Education) Minsk 2004; <http://www.ibe.unesco.org/International/ICE47/English/Natreps/reports/belarus.pdf>;

⁶ REFORM STRATEGY FOR EDUCATION IN UKRAINE; EDUCATIONAL POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS With the support of United Nations Development Programme, International Renaissance Foundation, Open Society Institute (Budapest) Kyiv – 2003

http://www.undp.org.ua/files/en_27489strateg_all_eng.pdf;

governments of these two countries have shown political will for reforms through increasing budget for education, modernization of study process, slow improvement of study facilities and search for better European practices. These reforms are expected to ultimately lead to successful participation in European programmes. A similar trend can be observed in **Armenia**⁷ and **Georgia**⁸, although not as clearly. In terms of reforms, **Moldova** and **Azerbaijan** perform poorly as stated in a UNICEF report⁹ on access to education in the CIS.

Higher education has a major role in development of human capital and logically it is the focus of programmes for increasing mobility of students from the Eastern partners. The Commission should seek better dialogue with its partners through the **European Training Foundation**¹⁰. We support the Commission in its intent to organize a large-scale information campaign in all universities in partner countries on the opportunities of the **Erasmus and Tempus programmes**, as in 2011 the Commission plans to raise their budgets by 16% and 25% respectively.

One of the Eastern Partnership goals is the approximation of society models and values. In this line of thought, the implementation of the **Jean Monnet programme**, with European studies and European integration at its core, can be especially attractive to partner countries. The programme is designed to promote learning, debates and research on European affairs including the relations between EU and other regions and the contacts between people. The Jean Monnet programme exists since 2001 and is open worldwide.

While Erasmus and Tempus programmes are designed for higher education and are already open to the partner countries, it is necessary that secondary education is not left behind. The **e-Twinning** programme can suit this purpose. In line with the planned opening of this programme for the Eastern partners, the Commission proposes

⁷ Education in Armenia by Mher Melik-Baxshiam; <http://www.ibe.unesco.org/curriculum/SoCaucasuspdf/Education%20in%20Armenia.pdf>;

⁸ The Law of Georgia on Higher Education; http://planipolis.iiep.unesco.org/upload/Georgia/Georgia_Law_of_Georgia_on_HE.pdf;

⁹ Country Profile – Education in Moldova, UNICEF Moldova 2008; <http://www.unicef.org/ceecis/Moldova.pdf>

¹⁰ An European Union Agency, whose goal is to contribute for the development of education and educational system in partnering countries;

a round table to present the priorities, the requirements and the rules of the programme. e-Twinning essentially involves the establishment of an internet connection between participating secondary schools and seeks to improve teaching cooperation. The participants work on educational projects together with schools in other European countries. Regular round table debates are an important opportunity for participants to discuss major technical issues such as logistics, internet security and language barriers.

Development of sustainable civil society

The education level in a country corresponds directly to the opportunities for establishing of a **sustainable civil society and active citizenship**. Practice shows that the model of civil society building in Central and Eastern Europe is to a large extent unsuccessful, because the Western liberal model applied was not consistent with the specifics of the political culture and traditions of these countries. In both eastern and western science there are many heterogeneous theoretical definitions of civil society and its structure. That is why we think that we can adopt as a working model for the establishment of civil society in the Eastern Partners the model of **Ernest Gellner**¹¹ for civil participation in decision making process. The six countries lack tradition of democratic practice; at the same time there are discrepancies between civil structures and political elites which may lead to undesirable results for example the politicizing the third sector. The Gellner model for sustainable civil involvement in decision making process requires: (1) **social partnership** through establishment of councils with the participation of trade unions and other stakeholders; (2) **consultative and advisory organs** directly established as part of the executive; (3) **pressure groups** such as lobbyists and other groups aiming to influence the decision making process; and (4) different forms of **civil activity** – petitions and other. Therefore these are the communication channels to be stimulated within the Eastern Partnership.

Civil society development is an exceptionally complex

¹¹ Ernest Gellner (1925–1995) – since 1984 a professor of anthropology at the Cambridge University. Critics point out the high functionalism in his works, as he tries to relate certain historical facts directly to his theoretical constructions. Gellner is influenced by the ideas of Marx, Durkheim and Weber.

process and some procedural prerequisites are crucial for it to be fully developed in substance. First and most important preconditions are *freedom of speech and association and access to information from different sources*, as well as pursuit of *high level of education*. Another requirement is the *active communication between the different elements of civil society and between its representatives and the state institutions*. The first aspect of this communication helps the civil society to **build networks and work within them**, which will improve the cooperation between different organizations and will speed up the process of forming civil positions and building support for them. The second aspect helps the government identify the most pressing problems and work to resolve them before they invoke civil discontent. This aspect can also serve as a basis for delegation state functions to civil society organizations and provides expertise which cannot be found within governments' administration.

As a whole, after 1989 in the Eastern Partnership countries, conditions for development of civil society start to appear. Ukraine sets an example: "resource centres" supporting NGOs were established in mid-1990s. As of 2000, there were 27 000 registered NGOs, of which 40% are grassroots organization, and 8% are Ukrainian with international status¹². In the past few years, NGO activity has been more active in Armenia, Moldova, Georgia, Azerbaijan and Belarus. The presence of international donors such as Social Development Fund of the World Bank, USAID, Ludwig Boltzmann Institut and others has become more tangible in the region.

There are a number of Eastern Partnership initiatives that could strengthen horizontal ties within civil society in partner countries: (1) creating an **electronic register** for NGOs working in specific fields to the Civil Society Forum; (2) setting up a **donor fund**, also governed by the Civil Society Forum, financing NGOs, supporting research centers, think-tanks and cultural exchange and encouraging multinational cooperation; (3) opening **information centres** in capital cities, which inform and support NGOs in seeking financing and preparing project proposals.

¹² Data provided by Bulgarian Ministry of Foreign Affairs - <http://www.mfa.gov.ua/bulgaria/bl/12688.htm#top> – 18.04.2010;

Information society as a mediator between social groups

Civil society in developed democracies draws on the resources of information society. The Western society is often described as information society. Based on the concept of constantly developing global information system, which encompasses human potential, information technology, information infrastructure, services, ideas and projects which are open to all and benefit all, **information society** becomes a **prerequisite for the establishment of sustainable, democratic, political system**. Information is globally traded capital¹³ and holding it is a feature of democratic societies. The development of information society is an exceptionally complex process closely related to independent media.

Media are those that explain to people what is happening. The choices of news, of footage topics, of specific words form the public feelings and expectations. To a large extent, the media environment, especially in societies in modernization process such as the Eastern Partners, predetermines the societies' success in accomplishing their goals for democratization. This makes the problem of **active cooperation and dialogue between media, political elite and society** extremely serious. Therefore, Eastern Partnership should strive for **correct communication of European values in the context of specific political culture of these societies through partnership with media**, which will set up the base for active citizens' culture. For example, it is very important that each partner state citizen shall have access to digital or printed media. Unfortunately, as of today, this is not the case and this has become an obstacle for achieving the goal for modernization and has led to **limited representation** and consequently to lower social security.

A common trait of all Eastern Partnership countries is that during the transition period media elite has exploited mostly the old elites and despite of their active use of democratic rhetoric, media have preserved their servility and still cater the interests of old elite. This poses the serious question of what would be the most appropriate way to **put the transition on a stable democratic basis**. Unless this is done, there is

¹³ See Manuel Castells. *The Rise of the Network Society, The Information Age: Economy, Society and Culture*, Vol. I. Cambridge, MA; Oxford, UK: Blackwell (1996) (second edition, 2000) and Manuel Castells. *The Power of Identity, The Information Age: Economy, Society and Culture*, Vol. II. Cambridge, MA; Oxford, UK: Blackwell (1997)

a risk that undemocratic public communication models remain in these societies although covered by the rhetoric of façade pluralism.

With the exception of Georgia and Ukraine where, according to the Reporters Without Borders Press Freedom Index¹⁴, the media are considered “Partly Free” or slightly dependent, media in remaining four partner states is deemed to be highly dependent (“Not Free”). The latter means that media policy is dictated by powerful circles who desire an easily manipulated society which, tired of constantly living in the huge gap between promises and reality, will cast its vote for every newly emerged political power in elections and in the times between elections it will allow to be carried away with small talk on everything else but a true reflection of political life. In other words, media do not try to offer **alternative political views**. The political product is put in different packages with little substance inside, which remains hidden to the citizens, who do not have the habit of demanding information in a pluralistic information society.

The EU can influence the process through DG Information Society and Media¹⁵ and more specifically through elaborating a **clear prognostic and strategic plan** for stimulating the processes in Partner countries which will lead to more objective presentation of information. We would therefore recommend that similar bodies, independent on the executive, be established in each Partner State. An initiative like this will contribute to harmonization of the work process of the institutions of the partner countries and the European Union, but it will also guarantee **access to ICT** regardless of the citizens’ social status. From that point on, the next logical step is the creation of **Eastern Regional Information Society** (similar to the Global Information Society¹⁶)

¹⁴ Reporters Without Borders. *Press Freedom Index 2009* - <http://en.rsf.org/press-freedom-index-2009,1001.html>

¹⁵ DG Information Society and Media is responsible for a number of activities in the field of information and communication technologies as ICT innovation contribute significantly to improving life of all European citizens.
http://eur-lex.europa.eu/budget/data/P2008_VOL4/BG/nmc-titleN1529D/index.html;

¹⁶ The Global Information Society is based on some of the following key principles if cooperation

- Acknowledging the need for global cooperation with special attention of less developed countries;
- Stimulating cultural and ethnic diversity;
- Universal provision and access to services.

based on cooperation between Eastern Partnership countries working towards the basic principles of the Information society.

The role of ICT in **healthcare and education** is especially important. The ICT provide conditions for these public policies to be more accessible and efficient. In healthcare, information mobility can save lives. New technologies allow life support and improvement of the lives of the people. The role of technology in education is also important if not indispensable. Information and knowledge mobility, self-learning software development, opportunities for distance and online learning allow timely and quality training of skilled labour for every job. This will also make education more accessible and competitive and will lower the cost of contacts between people.

We should not underestimate EU achievements in development and implementation of the information society concept. One of the more adequate results is the Commission's Regional Information and Communication Programme¹⁷, which seeks to increase public knowledge and awareness of the EU and its relationship with the Neighbourhood countries by providing financial support¹⁸ and training for journalists. The Programme focuses on supporting and working with journalists and media organizations in Eastern Partnership Countries and Russia building knowledge on the EU, providing information sources and facilitating the production of reportages. It offers young journalists, in particular, the opportunity to understand the EU and report its activities that affect their country. Media organisations are stimulated to build **regional channels of communication and networks**.

The Programme funds four projects. They are: '*Media activities*: maximising EU presence in the region's media' which awarded a number of contracts to media outlets; '*Communications Multiplier activities*: Training & network building' that provides training for journalists from leading media in the region; '*Information and communication support and media monitoring project* focused on information production and media monitoring; and the '*Strategic communications research & analysis*: Opinion research and polling' project.

¹⁷ Regional Information & Communication Programme: http://www.enpi-info.eu/mainmed.php?id=247&id_type=10;

¹⁸ A total of 7 million euro are allocated for Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, Moldova, Ukraine and Russia.

The Programme itself is a sign of EU solidarity with Eastern Neighbours: it shows interest in the process of democratization and development of civil society in these countries. Along with its positive sides, the Programme does have a number of **weaknesses**, most notably its diverse scope of activities. The Programme seeks to provide support for two groups of countries: the abovementioned Eastern dimension and the Southern one including Jordan, Egypt, Israel, Lebanon, Morocco, Palestinian territories, Syria and Tunisia. The bulk of the funding is allocated to the Southern group of countries. To offset this weakness, the Commission should explore the opportunities for a **new programme** focused on Eastern Neighbours only. This will motivate future beneficiaries to actively participate by opening **new perspectives and opportunities** for closer cooperation with the EU. Such a programme could be established at a high-level Eastern Partnership – EU summit with the participation of the civil society. The implementation of the Programme should be based on equality and shared ownership.

Intercultural dialogue as a political technique

With the Eastern Partnership, EU seeks to establish closer ties with the people of Belarus, Republic of Moldova, Ukraine, Armenia, Georgia and Azerbaijan, while respecting their **national and regional cultural diversity** while pointing out their common **cultural heritage** through cultural dialogue. That is why EU acknowledges the value of cultural cooperation as an integral part and basis of the rest of the Eastern Partnership policies in areas like energy, economy, social affairs, etc. and underlines the importance of culture in development of political processes and facing challenges in the process of establishment of stable democratic societies.

Intercultural dialogue itself is a **unique political technique** which helps building long-term relationship between peoples, tolerance and mutual respect for peaceful living. In the context of the Eastern Partnership, contacts between people of different cultures should become the highest political priority. Promoting dialogue could strengthen relations between individuals, bridge generation gaps and encourage participation.

Cultural and habit differences in Eastern Partners on one hand and the EU on the other should not be considered a motive for separation; on the contrary, it should become a condition for bringing peoples closer. Belarus, Moldova, Ukraine, Armenia, Georgia and Azerbaijan are a part

of a larger cultural area, which differs the European one. This means that their difference is intriguing enough for the Europeans and vice-versa: for the Eastern countries Europe is a model for state development.

The cultural dialogue between EU and the Eastern Partners could be based on a number of well developed programmes such as Culture (2007-2013), Youth in Action, Europe for Citizens, and European Capitals of Culture. By including six partner states in these programmes; their citizens will be encouraged to participate in the process of getting closer to the EU. Joint participation in these programmes will improve mutual understanding, cultural dialogue and respect for cultural diversity. A two-way cultural dialogue will make European values and cultural achievements more popular and will bring Europe closer to its partners. Europe's attractiveness should become an opportunity for building good neighbourly relations.

The highest potential stimulus for intercultural dialogue can be found in well funded project activities such as raising awareness and preservation of cultural monuments of European importance, encouraging transnational mobility of the people working in the cultural sector as well as transnational movement of works of art and culture, establishing various cultural networks, and training.

Basically, these projects should seek to (1) **promote transnational cooperation for cultural exchange** and activities; (2) **preserve cultural and natural heritage** through *conservation and restoration schemes*; (3) **manage cultural and natural heritage to achieve economic goals** such as boosting tourism and attracting foreign investments; (4) support **small and medium-sized enterprises engaged in arts and crafts**; (5) provide **financing for cultural infrastructure** in particular for renovation of art and performance buildings such as theaters, operas, cultural centres; (6) **support for artistic projects** which help *social cohesion* or target *young people* or seek to improve *equal opportunities*. (7) fund projects seeking **to overcome language barrier** and racial issues.

After such cultural projects are successfully carried out, in a short term perspective not only will there be established forms and models of regional cooperation, but also contact between people will become a part of everyday life and will continue even without an active political commitment of the EU.

