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## EU – UKRAINE RELATIONS:

In search the “Eastern Partnership”



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In this issue of quarterly publication we present results work of the international experts group according to prospects of the initiative "East partnership". This publication is prepared within the framework of a joint project "Monitoring of EU-Ukraine Relations" initiated by the Regional Office of Friedrich Ebert Fund in Ukraine and Belarus and the Foreign Policy Institute of the Diplomatic Academy of Ukraine under the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Ukraine.

The need for implementation of this project was predetermined by the need to reconsider the situation in EU-Ukraine relations, as well as the need to elaborate a new model of Ukraine's integration strategy into EU in the framework of good neighborhood policy.

Reconsideration of Ukraine's strategy of pursuing the EU integration course requires the development of new approaches to implementing the European standards in different areas of Ukraine's social life to bring Ukraine closer to meeting EU membership requirements. One of such approaches is related to the formation of strategic understanding among the political elite with regard to the European vector of Ukraine's development. Another area for implementation of European integration aspirations of Ukraine is securing broad public awareness regarding the status and prospects of Ukraine's integration into the EU. One more important task is to raise awareness and understanding of the importance of Ukraine's European integration by Ukrainian businesses, include them into Ukraine's strategic thinking, and into the process of adapting Ukraine to the European market and business culture.

Regional aspects of integration tend to be an important segment of implementation of Ukraine's EU integration objectives. In this respect the regions should be regularly informed about major events in the European Union and the EU-Ukraine relations.

To achieve these objectives the above project monitors and analyzes the EU-Ukraine relations, publishes monitoring results, and mails out findings of monitoring directly to regional government bodies, foreign diplomatic missions and NGOs.

The views expressed in this publication are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the views of the Foreign Policy Institute and Friedrich Ebert Fund.

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## **THE “EASTERN PARTNERSHIP”: KEEPING ALL OPTIONS OPEN**

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### **INTRODUCTION**

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On 7 May 2009, the European Union’s Prague summit approved the “Eastern Partnership” with six countries neighbouring the EU in the East – Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, Moldova, and Ukraine. Based on the European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP) of 2004, and developing it further, the Partnership provides a new framework for the relations of the EU with these countries. The summit also mandated the European Commission to put the policy into practice.

Over the year that it was in the making, the Partnership has been the object of various controversies. Within the EU not all member states were equally convinced of the merits of having a special policy towards the Union’s Eastern neighbours. But after the August war in Georgia a consensus emerged that the EU should “offer the maximum possible” to its Eastern neighbours with the intention to “bring a lasting political message of EU solidarity, alongside additional, tangible support for their democratic and market-oriented reforms and the consolidation of their statehood and territorial integrity. This serves the stability, security and prosperity of the EU, partners and indeed the entire continent”<sup>2</sup>. When announcing the proposal publicly, External Relations Commissioner Benita Ferrero-Waldner stressed that the Partnership “will offer more concrete support than ever before to encourage reforms that are essential to build peace, prosperity and security, in our mutual interest.”<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Eastern Partnership. Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament and the Council, COM(2008) 823 final, Brussels, 3 December 2008, p. 1,

<sup>3</sup> Benita Ferrero-Waldner: Eastern Partnership – an ambitious project for 21<sup>st</sup> century European foreign policy. Brussels, 20 February 2009, [http://ec.europa.eu/external\\_relations/eastern/docs/eastern\\_partnership\\_article\\_bfw\\_en.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/external_relations/eastern/docs/eastern_partnership_article_bfw_en.pdf).

This initiative increasingly rised Russian objections. Russia particularly feared that the Partnership would foster a far reaching integration of the six countries with the EU, thus potentially undermining Russia's own integration efforts in the post-Soviet space.

But comments from the potential partner countries were critical as well and often doubtful whether there would be any value added to the existing ENP setup. Some stressed the heterogeneity of the group of six, others believed the Eastern Partnership to be just another regional integration project on the territories of the former Soviet Union and particularly objected to the lack of an EU membership perspective provided.

In Ukraine, critical voices came from two sides. While ultimately welcoming the Prague summit declaration, President Viktor Yushchenko on various occasions stressed that Ukraine would not accept the Eastern Partnership as a substitute for full EU membership, which would remain on top of the country's policy agenda.<sup>4</sup> A different perspective was presented by political analyst Anatoly Orel who doubted that these six countries would have enough in common to be treated under one umbrella – in particular he took issue with the idea that Ukraine should be treated like Moldova. Moreover, the funds provided for the Partnership were only able to cover the travel costs of European Union functionaries, and in turn the EU would just monitor and criticise Ukraine's domestic policies and expect Ukraine to be thankful for that. He therefore advocated that Ukraine would need to define her own interests strongly and chose her regional integration policies accordingly.<sup>5</sup>

However, in judging the Eastern Partnership, it is important to relieve it from unrealistic expectations. On the one hand, while it does not provide a membership perspective for the six partners due to the reasons mentioned, it also does not exclude it in the long run. Given the state of reforms in the partner countries, the sometimes emotionally overloaded membership debate presently lacks a real base in any case. So the Eastern Partnership should be taken as an opportunity to divert attention away from this 'phantom debate', which is simply not on the agenda for years to come. Rather, the partner countries can now concentrate on the potentials of a domestically defined modernisation strategy that includes the long-term policy option to gradually approximate and associate themselves to the EU. In doing so, it keeps all options open

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<sup>4</sup> Rosie Johnston: Yushchenko in Prague: Eastern Partnership no substitute for EU membership. Český Rozhlas/ Radio Praha, 24. March 2009, <http://www.radio.cz/en/article/114510>. - Yushchenko reminds what he awaits from Eastern partnership. ForUm, 05 May 2009, <http://en.for-ua.com/news/2009/05/05/153107.html>.

<sup>5</sup> Statement of Anatoly Orel at a panel discussion on "Russia, Ukraine and the EU's Eastern Partnership" held at the German Council for International Relations (Deutsche Gesellschaft für Auswärtige Politik, DGAP), Berlin, 22 June 2009.

for the partner countries, and gives them all freedom to define their national modernisation agendas.

On the other hand, the Eastern Partnership undoubtedly provides a major boost to the European Union's political attention, ambitions and means of cooperation towards its Eastern neighbours. It reflects a "change of paradigm",<sup>6</sup> and taking into account the constraints of *realpolitik*, this should not be underestimated. After all, the Partnership has been adopted while the EU is facing rough times, characterised by ongoing uncertainties around the ratification of the Lisbon Treaty, the necessary consolidation of the EU's internal structures and workings after its major 2004 enlargement, and a public opinion that is increasingly critical vis-à-vis any further enlargement in general, and last not least the world financial and economic crisis. It is a positive coincidence that one of the two initiating countries takes the EU Presidency in the second half of 2009 – and Foreign Minister Carl Bildt has clearly taken on the challenge when stating that "The Swedish Presidency will have the important task of initiating the implementation of the Eastern Partnership."<sup>7</sup>

### **The Making of the Eastern Partnership**

Following its enlargement by ten countries in 2004, the European Union developed a desire to define the relationship with its direct neighbours more explicitly, but below the level of a concrete membership perspective. This resulted in the formulation of the European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP), which equally addressed the EU's neighbours in the East and the South. The ENP's goal was to create an area of political stability and welfare encompassing the EU and its neighbours, by promoting economic exchange, the rule of law and cooperation in fields of common interest. The ENP served as a very general policy umbrella for a collection of neighbour countries with widely varying European ambitions, reform and association agendas, and whose relations with the EU continued mainly on a bilateral basis. A first German effort to create an "ENP Plus" policy in 2006, which would have introduced a specific Eastern dimension into the ENP, did not find sufficient support at that time. Things changed when the French President Nicholas Sarkozy started promoting a Union for the Mediterranean especially for the Southern neighbours, which came into being in 2008.<sup>8</sup>

<sup>6</sup> Cornelius Ochmann: EU Eastern Partnership: Fine, but what about Russia?. Spotlight Europe 2009/06, Bertelsmann Stiftung, May 2009, [http://www.bertelsmann-stiftung.de/cps/rde/xbr/SID-158D774B-6D00C191/bst/Engl\\_spotlight\\_EU%20Eastern%20Partnership\\_09-05-28.pdf](http://www.bertelsmann-stiftung.de/cps/rde/xbr/SID-158D774B-6D00C191/bst/Engl_spotlight_EU%20Eastern%20Partnership_09-05-28.pdf).

<sup>7</sup> Carl Bildt: Statement of Government policy in the Parliamentary Debate on Foreign Affairs, Wednesday, 18 February 2009, p. 11, <http://www.regeringen.se/content/1/c6/12/07/57/6af6d6b7.pdf>.

<sup>8</sup> For the genesis of the ENP cf. Eckhart D. Stratenschulte: *Planquadrat Osteuropa. Die Östliche Partnerschaft der EU [Grid Square East Europe. The Eastern Partnership of the EU]*, in: *OSTEUROPA* 5/2009, pp. 29-44, available at <http://www.osteuropa.dgo-online.org/issues/issue.2009.124380720000>.

This led foreign policy thinkers in Poland and Sweden to begin developing a new policy vis-à-vis the Union's Eastern neighbours, which had the German "ENP plus" idea as a starting point. In May 2008, a Polish-Swedish policy paper on the Eastern Partnership was circulated to the member states. It advocated a Partnership to strengthen cooperation, policy dialogue, and integration with the EU, thus providing a stronger incentive to reform policies in the countries concerned, and – in its revised version – suggested that "Such a partnership should be based on, but go beyond the current ENP, confirming, on the one hand, the differentiation principle towards the neighbours, in line with the ENP, and, on the other hand, strengthening horizontal links between these neighbours and the EU."<sup>9</sup>

The European Council on 19-20 June mandated the Commission to prepare a proposal for the Eastern Partnership, which was presented in December 2008 in a Communication to the Parliament and the Council.<sup>10</sup> The key issues that required fine-tuning amongst member states concerned the funding for the Partnership, possible negative effects on other EU policies such as the Black Sea Synergy, the intended visa liberalisation, and the impact on the EU's relationship with the Russia.

The European Union's Prague Summit on 7 May 2009 approved the Partnership in a Joint Declaration with all six partner countries concerned.<sup>11</sup> Until very shortly before the summit, it was unclear whether or in which format Belarus would be participating, but following some positive signs in the country's development over the past year, some EU member states argued forcefully to not further isolate the country and rather include it into this initiative.

The Joint Declaration states that the "Eastern Partnership is launched as a common endeavour of the Member States of the European Union and their Eastern European Partners (hereinafter the partner countries), founded on mutual interests and commitments as well as on shared ownership and responsibility. It will be developed jointly, in a fully transparent manner".<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> Polish-Swedish paper with the support of the incoming Czech Presidency. Elaboration of the Eastern Partnership. 3 October 2008.

<sup>10</sup> Eastern Partnership. Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament and the Council, COM(2008) 823 final, Brussels, 3 December 2008, op cit. [http://ec.europa.eu/external\\_relations/eastern/docs/com08\\_823\\_en.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/external_relations/eastern/docs/com08_823_en.pdf).

<sup>11</sup> Joint Declaration of the Prague Eastern Partnership Summit, 7 May 2009, available at <http://www.eu2009.cz/event/1/3553/>.

<sup>12</sup> Joint Declaration, op. cit., para. 1.

The Partnership's main goal is "to create the necessary conditions to accelerate political association and further economic integration between the European Union and interested partner countries."<sup>13</sup> However, the Joint Declaration also formulates – albeit carefully – more ambitious political goals as regards stability in the region concerned, in that it "should further promote stability and multilateral confidence building. Conflicts impede cooperation activities. Therefore the participants of the Prague summit emphasize the need for their earliest peaceful settlement on the basis of principles and norms of international law and the decisions and documents approved in this framework."<sup>14</sup>

In order to pursue these goals, the Eastern Partnership is developed along two lines. Under the classical bilateral line, the EU offers new Association Agreements to the partners. In addition to that, the Partnership provides for a multilateral component under which participants are to meet in four thematic platforms for policy dialogue and planning.

Funding allocated to the Eastern Partnership is €600 million in the period 2010 to 2013, with €250 million taken from existing ENP funds and €350 million fresh money reallocated from other regional EU programmes. Critics have argued that this is not enough to have a strong impact. However, experience with many new EU programmes, or the activities developed under the Stability Pact for South East Europe in the early years of the millennium, suggests that it will take some time for the partner countries and the EU to develop sound projects, and by the time they will be sufficiently developed they can be included into the drafting of the EU's next financial perspective for the years 2014-2020. Moreover, in addition to this grant assistance the Partnership provides the chance to leverage preferential investment loans from the European Investment Bank and the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development.

### **Bilateral Relations Focused on New Association Agreements**

The Partnership's bilateral dimension will focus around the process of negotiating and concluding new Association Agreements with each of the six partner countries, should their internal development permit it. The Agreements will include provisions on trade, visa regimes, energy and others.

In the field of trade, the goal is to establish deep and comprehensive free trade areas between the EU and the countries, based on the assumption that the partner countries will have joined the

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<sup>13</sup> Joint Declaration, op. cit., para. 2.

<sup>14</sup> Joint Declaration, op. cit., para. 2.

WTO beforehand. This goal is long-term, as deep free trade, which includes the liberalisation of services, requires the countries to have ambitious functional preconditions in place. These are highly technical, often too boring for the grand policy discourse and challenging in their implementation and include the proper application and control of the rules of origin, sanitary and phytosanitary standards, harmonisation of procurement rules and the right of establishment, regulatory approximation, etc. However, this long-term time horizon is not to the detriment of the partner countries' development. Quite on the contrary, this allows them with the option to shelter their economies during a transition period in which to develop the necessary administrative and business practices.

A second important element of the bilateral process will be gradual visa facilitation and ultimately visa liberalisation. This has always been a key interest of the Eastern neighbours, as complicated visa procedures hamper business contacts, the exchange of students, culture, tourism etc. While this view is also accepted in the EU, visa liberalisation will continue to face plenty of concerns in the areas of security and labour migration.

A third element will be energy, with the aim to include chapters of mutual interdependence into the new Association Agreements. Measures in this area will be tailor-made. The EU encourages Ukraine and Moldova to join the Energy Community quickly and advocates the conclusion of Memoranda of Understanding on energy security with Moldova, Georgia and Armenia. Approaches and instruments with Azerbaijan and Belarus will be discussed further.

Finally, the EU intends to support the internal developments of the partner countries through two sets of measures. First, training, technical assistance and equipment will be devoted to comprehensive institution building programmes. Second, support will be provided to economic and social development of less developed regions in the partner countries.

### **The New Multilateral Dimension**

Compared with the earlier ENP approach, the multilateral dimension of the Eastern Partnership is a distinct new feature. The European Union wishes to use it for a regular dialogue about legislation and standards in the Union, and to share the lessons learnt and best practices, with a view to promote legislative and regulatory approximation. This rather technical process is at the heart of any closer integration with the EU, and successful implementation by the partner countries would not only be the key to maximise their access to EU markets and attract EU

investment, but also the most important precondition to talk about closer forms of integration at a later stage.

The key instrument to promote dialogue is the creation of four policy platforms, all of which were supposed to have their initial meetings already in June 2009. The platforms' task is to jointly define realistic core objectives and to formulate work programmes for each participant. They are to cover the following topics:

- (i) Democracy, good governance and stability;
- (i) Economic integration and convergence with EU sectoral policies;
- (i) Energy security; and
- (i) Contacts between people.

Platforms are to meet twice a year on the level of senior officials and experts. They are to be complemented by annual meetings of the Foreign Ministers and bi-annual summits of the Heads of States and Governments. In order to ensure that concrete results are achieved in the foreseeable future and to make the works of the Eastern Partnership visible within the partner countries, so-called flagship initiatives shall give priority to concrete projects in five policy areas, namely Integrated Border Management; SME promotion; regional electricity markets, renewables and energy efficiency; the Southern energy corridor, and disaster preparedness and response.

In the design of its multilateral dimension, the Partnership provides enough flexibility to take into account the heterogeneity of the six partner countries and the very different degrees to which they presently intend to pursue a course of approximation with the EU, in that it allows the countries to determine the degree to which they would like to get engaged into the multilateral activities themselves, without jeopardizing any progress in the bilateral track. Hence, "Activities within the multilateral framework of the Eastern Partnership should be voluntary and based on the principles of a cooperative approach."<sup>15</sup>

On the other hand, "Third states will be eligible for the participation on a case-by-case basis in concrete projects, activities and meetings of thematic platforms, where it contributes to the objectives of particular activities and the general objectives of the Eastern Partnership."<sup>16</sup> This

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<sup>15</sup> Joint Declaration, op. cit., para. 12.

<sup>16</sup> Joint Declaration, op. cit., para. 12.

provision is aimed at Turkey and the Russian Federation and pays tribute to the fact that it might both make sense and be advisable to involve the two largest neighbours of the partners into policies and projects that have a wider regional impact. Therefore, the Joint Declaration also explicitly mentions the goal of achieving complementarity of the Eastern Partnership with other regional initiatives, in particular the Black Sea Synergy.

In addition to the gradual development of bilateral free trade arrangements with the EU, the Eastern Partnership also encourages the partner countries to develop a free trade network among themselves, which might end up in a “Neighbourhood Economic Community”. As all partner countries have emerged from the common Soviet economic space, they still share common sets of technical and product quality standards, as well as consumer preferences to a certain degree. As long as it is ensured that old trade relations are not used as a pretext to resist engaging in the necessary modernisation of production, existing regional markets are beneficial for business learning and should therefore be promoted.

Experiences in the Western Balkans, where countries decided to join the enlarged Central European Free Trade Area (CEFTA) in 2006, suggest that such a regional free trade initiative will take time to materialise but might still be implemented easier and more quickly than free trade with the EU, where the partner countries are required to meet extremely ambitious technical standards. However, experience in the Western Balkans and statements from some of the six partner countries also suggests that regional trade is mainly seen in political terms. In particular, politicians fear the risk of strengthening or re-establishing old ‘imperial’ economic ties – in particular, if the former imperial centre combines economic reasoning with rhetoric of imperial revival.

Finally, the EC has been mandated to develop further the proposal for a Civil Society Forum, which would build on a kick-off meeting held in parallel to the Prague summit. This would well complement the activities of the platforms which will be more focused on intra-governmental relations, and provide the space to discuss policy issues of general concern to the public.

### **Cooperation or Competing Projects of regional Integration?**

In contrast to Turkey, a declared membership candidate, Russia has declined to be taken under the ENP umbrella at an earlier stage and has on various occasions criticised the Eastern Partnership. Speaking at the Brussels Forum on 21 March 2009, Russian Foreign Minister

Sergei Lavrov raised concerns that the partner countries might be confronted with an either-or-choice between their integration with Russia or the EU and demanded “that integration processes in all Soviet space and in the European Union should be compatible, they should not be mutually exclusive, they should be mutually supportive. ... So we were told originally that Eastern Partnership is about cooperation including with Russian participation at some part. And then after those type of statements we have questions – is it about pulling countries from the positions which they are supposed to take freely?”<sup>17</sup> Other statements from the Russian Ministry of Foreign affairs criticised that the Partnership would force the partner countries to choose between Russia and the EU.<sup>18</sup>

EU officials have since argued that while indeed providing a policy option to the partners, this is neither an exclusive choice nor a zero sum game in which one party necessarily loses what the other party gains, and that it can in fact result in win-win-situations for all parties. The perception that the partner countries would need to choose between Russia and the EU is mistaken; in fact all of them have been pursuing a two-vector policy towards Russia and the EU in the past and will be able to pursue it in the future.

At the press conference following the EU-Russia Summit in Khabarovsk on 22 May 2009, when asked whether the high-level EU delegation had been able to convince him that the “Eastern Partnership should not be a concern or irritation for Russia”, Russian President Dmitri Medvedev replied: “They tried to convince me, but they did not completely succeed. ... to be frank, what concerns us is that some countries view this partnership as a partnership against Russia. ... It is simply that I would not like to see this partnership lead to consolidation between countries with anti-Russian attitudes and other European countries”.<sup>19</sup>

Russia’s critique of the Eastern Partnership is based on two sets of arguments:<sup>20</sup> The first set is about economic issues, such as trade relations, technical standards, visa regimes etc. The second one is about more general political issues based on a thinking in “regions of privileged interest”, as President Medvedev put it. Both sets of arguments warrant different approaches by the EU and the partner countries.

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<sup>17</sup> Transcript available at [http://www.gmfus.org/brusselsforum/2009/docs/BFDay2\\_ConversationRussia.doc](http://www.gmfus.org/brusselsforum/2009/docs/BFDay2_ConversationRussia.doc).

<sup>18</sup> Cf. Susan Stewart: *Russland und die östliche Partnerschaft (Russia and the Eastern Partnership)*, SWP-Aktuell, Stiftung Wissenschaft und Politik, Berlin April 2009, [http://www.swp-berlin.org/common/get\\_document.php?asset\\_id=5935](http://www.swp-berlin.org/common/get_document.php?asset_id=5935).

<sup>19</sup> Extract from the Press Conference following Russia-EU Summit. Russian Presidency press releases, quoted from CEPS European Neighbourhood Watch 49, Centre for European Policy Studies: Brussels, May 2009, p. 7, <http://www.ceps.eu/files/NW/NWatch49.pdf>.

<sup>20</sup> Cf. Andrei Zagorski: *The Eastern Partnership from the Russian perspective*. June 2009.

## **Optimising Benefits of Cooperation**

In the economic area, there are legitimate concerns that if countries opt for free trade with the EU, this could at some stage require adaptations in their trade regime with Russia, in particular as long as Russia is not yet a WTO member. Also, if countries increasingly adapt the technical product standards established by the EU in order to be able to export to EU markets, this might affect their trade with Russia if Russian standards were not to develop in the same direction. Obstacles might also arise when moving on to visa free travel with partner countries which would need to ensure that standards in their border regimes, document security, and readmission agreements are in place.

These effects can be seen world wide and result from decisions by countries and enterprises to orient themselves towards the EU's market. Due to the economic opportunities this market is offering to outward oriented economies, the EU has increasingly become a standard setting institution – one of the key effects of the Union's soft power. As a result, those countries that were ready and successful in adapting EU standards had a competitive advantage over countries that were not. So Russia's own lack of competitiveness and uneasiness about a further potential negative impact on Russia if the six Partnership countries orient themselves towards the EU market is at the core of this argument.

In this context, involving Russia in the discussions on these aspects of EU association is not only beneficial to Russia but to the partner countries as well, as the latter ones have – to a more or less degree – an interest in maintaining and further developing their existing economic relations not only with the EU, but also with Russia. It is certainly not in their interest either to pursue an approximation strategy towards the EU legislation and regulation in the sense of a zero sum game.

In the end, however, no country's modernisation strategy should be held hostage by the slowest performer in the region. So while some of the concerns can be well addressed through cooperation, to the benefit of the partner countries as well, this might ultimately not be possible in all areas. Obviously, in global markets a moment of economic competition remains – and has to remain.

## **Limiting Sovereign Choice?**

The second set of criticisms directed at the Eastern Partnership by Russia is related to the revival of the notion that the states of the former Soviet Union form a “region of privileged interest” to Russia. In this context, the Partnership is perceived as potentially directed against Russia, because it involves countries from that very region.

In reality, the Eastern Partnership has neither the aim nor the instruments to be directed against Russia, with whom the EU is in fact developing cooperative relations in parallel with the intention of creating a strategic partnership – much more actually than is being offered to the Partnership countries. As it is the European Commission which is mandated to implement the Partnership this will be made as compatible as possible with the EU policies vis-à-vis Russia. Moreover, the Partnership’s multilateral Platforms are intentionally designed to allow the participation of Russia, and the involvement of Russian NGOs into the activities of the Civil Society Forum is equally feasible.

Moreover, the Partnership will not be able to impose policies or options on the partner countries against their will. The EU’s soft power is reflected in the need for the Partnership to build on the partner countries’ choices and their commitment to pursue respective policies. The European Commission therefore pointed out that “Joint ownership is essential, and both sides of the EaP have their responsibilities. Only with strong political will on both sides will the EaP achieve its objective of political association and economic integration.”<sup>21</sup> Not only have they not been bullied by the EU into strengthening the European vector of their foreign policy – so far, all six partners have been able to continue pursuing a two-vector policy, developing good relations with the EU and Russia at the same time, and often to their best interest.

However, if the supporters of the notion of a Russian “region of privileged interest” take their position as far as postulating that Russia should have the right to determine to which degree and at what speed the six partner countries should pursue their European path, this would ultimately deny these states a sovereign choice of their own foreign policy orientation. As Russia has put the respect for sovereignty first in the debates on a strengthened sustainable pan-European security order, the right of any of the Partnership countries to define the degree and speed of European integration should be beyond question, while joint discussions and cooperation on the above mentioned economic aspects seem all the more reasonable.

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<sup>21</sup> Eastern Partnership. Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament and the Council, COM(2008) 823 final, Brussels, 3 December 2008, p. 3, op cit.

### **Conclusion: Not enough or much too much?**

With its Eastern Partnership, the EU confirms a sound long-term commitment to its Eastern neighbours and provides a framework to jointly work on a common European future. It reflects the increased attention the EU is paying to these countries even in difficult times. Its concrete shape and activities will be developed jointly between the EU and the partner countries and is therefore open to their specific needs and proposals. The particular blend of the bilateral and the multilateral dimension of the Partnership provide a unique setting to ensure that in spite of the heterogeneity of the partner countries, each one will be treated in its own right.

The Partnership leaves all options for a European perspective open. At present, it creates the chance to divert attention away from the ‘phantom debate’ concentrating on EU membership perspectives, which is simply not on the agenda for years to come. Rather, it should help to concentrate on the opportunities provided by a modernisation strategy that includes the option of approximation and association with the EU, while providing enough flexibility to also reap the benefits from economic exchange within region.

Expectations towards the Partnership need to be realistic. It does not provide a quick fix. Rather, its instruments are designed to support the partners to embark on domestic policies that will create gains in the long run – in the areas of trade, energy, standards, regulation and the like – and gradually establish the preconditions for further integration with the EU. Hence, they have the opportunity to define their own reform agenda – and be prepared for further steps of integration when the time is ripe. And to the degree that this agenda includes the goal of association with the EU, the Partnership provides a strong political supporting framework accompanied by the concrete assistance measures which the EU has at hand.

For Ukraine, the offer provided by the Eastern Partnership should not be considered too much, and not too little. The beauty of the initiative lies in the fact that there is no requirement to make a choice between its Eastern and its Western policy vector, but that it can pursue both of them on the basis of a rational judgement of interests. While Ukraine would need to strengthen its economic ties with the European Union in order to modernise the country, it would not be advisable to jeopardise its existing economic exchange with Russia. So a common discussion on the further development of trade and regulatory regimes in the region could potentially create win-win outcomes for all countries.

With Sweden taking over the Presidency of the European Union during the second quarter of 2009, one of the drafters has a unique chance to steer the new initiative into concrete action. And Ukraine has all the opportunities to take a responsible role in shaping the partnership to its own benefit – if its policy makers grasp the chance.

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to the European Union.*

## **“EASTERN PARTNERSHIP” AS A NEW ELEMENT IN RELATIONS BETWEEN UKRAINE AND THE EUROPEAN UNION**

### **Results of the Prague Summit**

On the 7<sup>th</sup> of May 2009 the Eastern Partnership Summit took place in Prague (Czech Republic). Its participants were, on one side, the EU countries and institutions, on the other side – Eastern European Partners alas Partner Countries: Azerbaijan, Belarus, Armenia, Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine. Participants signed the Joint Declaration of the Prague Eastern Partnership Summit<sup>22</sup> which outlined their practical vision of the Eastern Partnership and its political mission. Other important Eastern Partnership documents were the Declaration by the European Council on the Eastern Partnership of 21.03.2009, as well as the Communication from the European Commission “Eastern Partnership”<sup>23</sup> and the working paper “Polish-Swedish Paper with the support of the incoming Czech Presidency. Elaboration of the Eastern Partnership” of 03.10.2008, - the document that was considerably taken into account in forming the further official positions and making the decisions.

These documents of the European Union in relation to the Eastern European countries, Caucasus and the Caspian region received quite ambiguous, sometimes – unexpectedly critical comments. The latter ones mainly have the openly emotional or propagandist character and are based not on facts but on assumptions, that is why the above mentioned basic documents provide an opportunity to the researcher to objectively determine what the question is actually about and what should be expected from the Eastern Partnership and what should not.

First of all, specialists knowing the EU work pay attention to the lack of established definition of the Eastern Partnership. Obviously, this contrasts with other subjects of the EU attention in relations with the neighbors (here and hereafter we will focus on relations with the **EU Eastern European neighbors**). In particular, the European Neighborhood Policy is clearly

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<sup>22</sup> [www.eu2009.cz/en/news-and-documents/press-releases/eastern-partnership-summit:natural-dimension-of-eu-foreign-policy-20997/](http://www.eu2009.cz/en/news-and-documents/press-releases/eastern-partnership-summit:natural-dimension-of-eu-foreign-policy-20997/)

<sup>23</sup> Commission of the European Communities, Brussels 03.12.2008 COM (2008) 823/4

determined as one of the EU **policies**. As it is emphasized, it is “distinct from the opportunities for European countries under the Article 49 of the Treaty on European Union”<sup>24</sup>.

Another important event is the “Black Sea Synergy” (sometimes – the Black Sea cooperation) which is defined by Brussels as a regional **initiative**<sup>25</sup> that brings together “Greece, Bulgaria, Romania and Moldova in the west, Ukraine and Russia in the north, Georgia, Armenia and Azerbaijan in the east and Turkey in the south...; although Armenia and Azerbaijan are not the Black Sea countries, their history, proximity to the sea and close ties make them natural regional actors”<sup>26</sup>.

Other EU initiatives for the Black Sea region are also defined – Baku **Initiative**, **Programme** INOGATE (The Interstate Oil and Gas To Europe pipelines), **Programme** TRACECA (The Transport Corridor Europe Caucasus Central Asia Programme), Danube Cooperation **Process**, etc.

Instead, the Eastern Partnership in the EU documents is mainly described according to its vision by the term “**dimension**”<sup>27</sup> or “common endeavour, attempt”<sup>28</sup>, but not as a clearly defined format. Such definition allows speculating in the weakened legal basis and the main thing is that it deliberately restricts the Eastern Partnership as a **part** of the ENP from 2004.

### **Partners’ reaction to the Initiative**

These and other, less noticeable uncertainties in formulating the Eastern Partnership provisions gave grounds for criticism of this initiative in Ukrainian mass media and its comparably restrained official assessment. In particular, it is warned in the comment of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Ukraine on the Communication from the European Commission “Eastern Partnership” of the 3<sup>rd</sup> of December 2008<sup>29</sup> that “the ambitious frames of the Eastern Partnership need the adequate funding sources”, and that “Ukraine is ready to support and to pragmatically use all the elements of the “Eastern Partnership” in that case if the new EU policy (as is mentioned in the text – A.V.) is not positioned as an alternative to the EU membership prospect, but, on the contrary, it is bringing Ukraine to this goal”.

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<sup>24</sup> Communication from the Commission. European Neighbourhood Policy. Strategy Paper. Brussels, 12.05.2004. COM (2004) 373 final, p.3

<sup>25</sup> “The Commission offers the Black Sea Synergy as a new regional EU cooperation initiative”, Communication from the Commission to the Council and the European Parliament. Black Sea Synergy – a new regional cooperation initiative. Brussels, 11.04.2007. COM (2007) 160 final.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid., p.2.

<sup>27</sup> „a specific Eastern **dimension** of the European Neighbourhood Policy”, in “Declaration by the EC on the Eastern Partnerships” p.1.

<sup>28</sup> “common endeavour”, *ibid.*, p.1.

<sup>29</sup> [www.mfa.gov.ua](http://www.mfa.gov.ua), 04.12.2008

In the comment of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Ukraine on the decision of the European Council on the “Eastern Partnership” of the 19<sup>th</sup>-20<sup>th</sup> of March 2009<sup>30</sup>, where the **dimension** has been called the “new foreign policy initiative”, the warnings are mentioned more clearly and the critical tonality dominates, despite the initial positive notes. It is characteristic that when the first Comment perceived the Communication “with interest”, “welcomed the joint initiative of Poland and Sweden”, “welcomed taking into account the Ukrainian approach by the European Commission”, then the second Comment merely “notes the weakening of ambitiousness of the “Eastern Partnership” in comparison with the December EC proposals”, expresses the “particular concern as to the limitation of interaction potential in visa-migrational sphere”. Such position is not motivated enough for the EU, as it is clearly emphasized in the Joint Declaration that “The Eastern Partnership ... is complementary to existing bilateral contractual relations. It will be developed without prejudice to individual partner countries’ aspirations for their future relationship with the European Union. It will be governed by the principles of differentiation and conditionality<sup>31</sup>”.

There are a lot of reasons for temperately critical approach. It is known that the public expectations in Ukraine from cooperation with the EU are very (and unreasonably!) high. The main reason of this is the misunderstanding by general public of the nature of the European Union and its basic principles, when a pragmatic trading bloc with the elements of political and security cooperation is perceived by many people as a “new patron and donor” to replace the USSR (“just the same reliably predictable, but more generous and without any repressions”). Hence, we observe the “demanding” official position which would demonstrate to the population the country’s efforts for gaining the EU membership.

Another subjective but important reason is the beginning of the presidential election campaign in Ukraine and deep confrontation between the branches of power, when the critical position in the context of external policy should be perceived by voters as a proof of power of the certain political camp. It should be also considered that there is some agiotage around the possibility of getting by Ukrainian citizens the visa-free regime for entries to the Schengen Area countries in the nearest future, where the Eastern Partnership is an instrument of this achievement.

Existence of the above mentioned three reasons is clearly observed in the critical publications of Ukrainian mass media about the “Eastern Partnership” the day before the

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<sup>30</sup> *ibid.*, 23.03.2009.

<sup>31</sup> Joint Declaration, p.1.

Summit<sup>32</sup>. Instead, the well-balanced opinions were expressed almost only by representatives of domestic or foreign diplomacies<sup>33</sup>.

Other Partners' reaction to the EU proposals concerning the Eastern Partnership was not uniform from the very beginning. Each of them, first of all, projected the **dimension** into its internal policy environment (as a matter of fact, this has been also largely made in Ukraine) and, according to the level of political culture, either broadly, or briefly informed the population about its content and expectations for the country. In this context it is necessary to mention the great informational work in Belarus, where the President of the Republic of Belarus and the Minister for Foreign Affairs continually discussed this subject during the meetings with general public, the country's decision makers and the business groups. The latter one devoted the television interview to this subject, during which he said, in particular, that "The Eastern Partnership is a serious turn in our relations with the EU and Member States. Therefore, this is a positive result... The new platform will enable to change the character of our relations. We are interested in the Eastern Partnership as in an opportunity of implementation of the new regional projects"<sup>34</sup>. However, all these efforts did not save the Belarusian authorities from accusations of betraying the ideals of "friendship with Russia, strengthening of the CIS". The story with the statement of the Chairman of the Executive Committee – CIS Executive Secretary S. Lebedev was made public in which he warned the Republic of Belarus of the need "to choose between the EU and the CIS". The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Belarus was made to organize the special publication "Response of the MFA Press Secretary Andrey Popov to the questions of mass media representatives in connection with S. Lebedev's statements concerning the "Eastern Partnership" initiative"<sup>35</sup>. In such a way the authorities of the Republic of Belarus aspired to draw a line under the numerous ambiguous hints and unambiguous warnings which were made by the President, Prime Minister, Speaker of the State Duma, the highest diplomatic corps and especially the Russian mass media which were satirically discussing the decision of the President of the Republic of Belarus not to participate in the Eastern Partnership Summit on the 7<sup>th</sup> of May 2009. The attacks were not stopped even after the Summit.

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<sup>32</sup> "Ukraine is not too satisfied by the budget of the Eastern Partnership, Deutsche Welle 2009.04.28 14:19; Ukraine did not offer to the EU its vision of the "Eastern Partnership" Razumkov Centre 2009.04.29.11:01; Anatoliy Orel: "I think it will be a mistake if our President takes part in the Eastern Partnership summit, UNIAN 2009. 04.29 10:48; Eastern Partnership: Modest financially, ambitious in words? Radio Svoboda 2009.04.28 22:38; Ukraine wants to get more from the EU than the "Eastern Partnership" – Ministry of Foreign Affairs, ForUm 2009.04.24 16:32; Ukraine-EU: in search of lost time. Andriy Fialko Dzerkalo tyzhnya. 07-04-2009, etc.

<sup>33</sup> Eastern Partnership is an additional chance for rapprochement with the EU. Aleksandr Motsyk, Ambassador of Ukraine to Poland Zerkalo nedeli 2009.04.24 22:58; Yaroslav Bashta: "The EU would like the neighboring countries to adhere to generally accepted democracy rules" Interview, Kievskiy Telegraf 2009.04.25.13:40;

"Eastern Partnership" will accelerate Ukraine's integration to the EU: V. OGRYZKO UNIAN 2009.04.07 16:49

<sup>34</sup> [www.mfa.gov.by/print/ru/press/tv/faOae535048214c7.html](http://www.mfa.gov.by/print/ru/press/tv/faOae535048214c7.html). 08.05.2009

<sup>35</sup> [www.mfa.gov.by](http://www.mfa.gov.by). 16.05.2009

Similar although less transparent destructive acts were also performed against other Partners, especially Moldova. Using its vulnerable position after the riots on the 7<sup>th</sup>-9<sup>th</sup> of April 2009, Russia began to put pressure upon Moldova and achieved some results. Tonality of assessments of the Eastern Partnership in this country discorded with its demonstratively “pro-European” rhetoric. The then President V. Voronin, recalling the Eastern Partnership in the context of anti-Romania statements based on the results of the above mentioned riots, even allowed himself to call it the “sanitary cordon against Russia”, as it was presented by mass media, although then he refuted such words. The Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Moldova A. Stratan also commented on this subject in a temperate manner considering the Eastern Partnership as a probable obstacle for Moldova in its “particular, rapid and separate accession to the EU in the frames of the “Southeast European Cooperation Process” where Moldova is taking over the Presidency during May 2008-May 2009<sup>36</sup>.

The **dimension** got quite positive, although far from euphoria characteristics in Azerbaijan. The President I. Aliyev supported the EU approaches concerning the Eastern Partnership. The Minister of Foreign Affairs of Armenia E. Nalbandyan characterized the Eastern Partnership as “a new format of cooperation with the EU which has a great potential..., Armenia is going to cooperate actively in this programme”<sup>37</sup>.

### **Third countries’ attitude towards the Eastern Partnership dimension**

It is symptomatic that the issue on **the third countries’ attitude towards the dimension** caused much more comments which were more controversial by nature.

Possibility of their involvement and scopes of this involvement are clearly outlined in the Joint Declaration in P. 12 and P. 14 and, theoretically, would not be discussed. In particular, § 2 P. 12 declares: “Third states will be eligible for the participation on a case-by-case basis in concrete projects, activities and meetings of thematic platforms, where it (third state – A.V.) contributes to the objectives of particular activities and the general objectives of the Eastern Partnership”. P. 14 additionally specifies: “Complementarity with regional initiatives between the European Union and relevant partner countries, in particular the Black Sea Synergy, will be ensured. Interaction with other regional initiatives should be considered on a case-by-case basis”<sup>38</sup>. In such a way a possibility, but not obligation, is defined, of interaction of the Eastern Partnership with the untitled here cooperation initiative in the Four common spaces between the

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<sup>36</sup> [www.chairmanship.mfa.md/south-east-european-cooperation-process/](http://www.chairmanship.mfa.md/south-east-european-cooperation-process/)

<sup>37</sup> [www.armeniaforeignministry.com/news/index.html](http://www.armeniaforeignministry.com/news/index.html)

<sup>38</sup> Joint Declaration, p. 4,5

Russian Federation and the EU<sup>39</sup> which, as a matter of fact, has the same neutral and positive position concerning the other EU regional events<sup>40</sup>.

In order to discard suspicions concerning the “hostility” of the **dimension** against the third states, the principles and objectives of the Eastern Partnership outlined in P. 1 of the Joint Declaration are quite eloquent – “it builds on and is complementary to existing bilateral contractual relations.., will be based on commitments to the principles of international law and to fundamental values, including democracy, the rule of law and the respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms, as well as to, market economy, sustainable development and good governance”.

Therefore, there should not be any reasons for concern, and especially for existence of the threats. However, they appeared in the form of numerous warnings from the Russian Federation’s authorities (the President, the Prime Minister, the Minister for Foreign Affairs, leaders and deputies of the Parliament, high-level diplomats and military men)<sup>41</sup>. Deputies of the State Duma call the Eastern Partnership “the sanitary cordon against Russia”, having picked up the phrase ascribed to the President of Moldova V. Voronin.

During the EU-Russia Summit which took place on the 22<sup>nd</sup> of May 2009 in Khabarovsk the President of the Russian Federation, answering the question whether the Polish Minister of Foreign Affairs has succeeded to convince him that the Eastern Partnership is not harmful for Russia, unexpectedly stated: “They did try to convince me, but they did not completely succeed... As far as the Eastern Partnership is concerned, it is not yet very clear to us what shapes this partnership will take. Certainly, we know that this partnership is about economic development and creating various new opportunities for a number of Eastern European countries. But to be frank, what concerns us is that some countries view this partnership as a partnership against Russia”<sup>42</sup>. It is clear that in this situation the calming words of the President of the Czech Republic were inadequate and unconvincing<sup>43</sup>.

### **Expectations from the Eastern Partnership in the European Union Member States**

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<sup>39</sup> [Joint Statement on EU Enlargement and EU-Russia Relations](#)  [48 KB] 27/04/2004

<sup>40</sup> [http://ec.europa.eu/external\\_relations/russia/common\\_spaces/index\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/external_relations/russia/common_spaces/index_en.htm): „exchange of views on new initiatives and on possible use of instruments related to security and stability”.

<sup>41</sup> [Transcript of Remarks and Response to Media Questions by Russian Minister of Foreign Affairs Sergey Lavrov at Joint Press Conference with Acting Czech Minister of Foreign Affairs Karel Schwarzenberg and EC Deputy Director General for External Relations Hugues Mingarelli after Plenary Meeting of Russia-EU Permanent Partnership Council, Luxembourg](#), April 28, 2009.

<sup>42</sup> [http://www.kremlin.ru/appears/2009/05/22/0937\\_type63380\\_216699.shtml](http://www.kremlin.ru/appears/2009/05/22/0937_type63380_216699.shtml)

<sup>43</sup> *ibid.*, : “Summit became another opportunity to consider the “Eastern Partnership” of the European Union with six states which concerns the strengthening of democracy, prosperity and common values. I consider that these three objectives will also serve the interests of Russia”.

It would be also interesting to analyze the reaction and expectations from the Eastern Partnership in the EU Member States. It is clear that different overtones and nuances were also expressed here in media publications, conclusions of the think tanks and debating societies which sometimes reflected quite clearly the authors' political sympathies. However, having learned this mass data, the impression of more consolidated product remains. And this is not by chance: as if the EU countries have reached a positive consensus in general, then their civil societies also comment on the subject appropriately. So, without using a lot of quotations, we will cite a rather vague but comprehensive characteristics of the Eastern Partnership which belongs to the European Council on Foreign Relations.

Five years after the EU's "big bang" expansion took in eight former communist countries to its East, the Union is in danger of losing the hearts and minds of its Eastern neighbors because of its complacency and long-winded approach to crises. The Eastern neighbors are not like the Central European states that negotiated EU accession in the 1990s. Their statehood is weak, their leadership often weaker, and they lack the consensus about their European destiny that enabled difficult reforms in Poland, Slovakia and the Baltic States to be pursued.

By an accident of bureaucratic timing, the Eastern Partnership is seen by many in the East as merely the EU's response to the global economic crisis, not as a strategy tailored for the region. Indeed, Moldovan President Vladimir Voronin dismisses it as "candies".

To be sure, the EU's technocratic focus on structural reforms is having some effect in the region. All six states, except Belarus, now trade more with the EU than with Russia. But the political relevance of these changing economic realities is close to nil. If anything, the region has been moving in the wrong direction, with security tensions and even war (in Georgia) increasingly frequent. Fake elections are rapidly become the norm. The six states do not have the time or the inclination to swallow the EU's bureaucracy in one gulp.

Russia has managed to revamp the way it operates in the region since it got its fingers burned by interfering so crudely in Ukraine in 2004. It now uses a broad range of hard and soft power, some incommensurate to that of the EU: for instance, the military bases that it has managed to secure in each of the six states. Moreover, it does things that the EU does and does them better, a notable example - until recently - being its more open labor market. Russia is also using less coercion and more carrots, offering economic assistance, security guarantees and an ideology of "sovereign democracy" that appeals to many post-Soviet elites.

The Eastern Partnership is a typical long-term EU technocratic instrument. The alternative is a wall of instability in what is, after all, Europe's neighborhood. The EU's Eastern

policy should not be seen as philanthropy but as a strategy promoting clear-cut pan-European interests”<sup>44</sup>.

### Eastern Partnership peculiarities

The specific definition of the Eastern Partnership as a **dimension** (in fact – **the Eastern Partnership dimension**. – A.V.), its cautious perception in some partner countries and, most importantly, the demonstrative distrust and imperception in the Russian Federation have created the false impression of the Eastern Partnership in Ukraine. In our opinion, such situation hurts the development of Ukraine-EU relations in general, the practical events of bilateral agenda and the purpose of integration into the EU as such. Attitude towards this EU initiative should be formed on the basis of detailed analysis of the documents, suggested practical actions and expected consequences rather than the empiric negative assumptions.

So, first of all, it is necessary to return to the sources and to turn over a few pages of history. The appearance of **dimension** is dated as of May 20, 2008, when a joint Polish-Swedish initiative “Eastern Partnership” – a proposal to launch the separate dimension of EU foreign policy concerning the EU neighboring countries in the East of the European continent – was officially represented at the meeting of the EU General Affairs and External Relations Council. Despite the fact that the Eastern Partnership initiative should officially remain within the framework of European Neighborhood Policy (ENP), according to its authors’ intention it should become a step forward towards the deeper integration of Eastern neighbors, considering their European identity.

Eastern Partnership is a continuation of efforts within the EU to form the especial “Eastern dimension” of the EU foreign policy which would bring its Eastern neighbors to the common space of European standards and values, would promote strengthening of stability and prosperity in them, would encourage implementation of reforms. In this context the Eastern Partnership continues the joint initiative of the *EU High Representative* for Common Foreign and Security Policy Javier *Solana* and the EC *Commissioner* for External Relations Chris *Patten* of 2002 on the “Wider Europe” policy, the initiative proposed during the German presidency in 2007 concerning the “Eastern dimension” of European Neighborhood Policy, Poland’s similar proposals, etc. So, the critics’ statements (that this is something unexpected, undeveloped, anti-Russian) are beneath criticism. The facts confirm that the Wider Europe and subsequently - the ENP – also stipulated Russia’s participation from which it refused, having launched the own Four common spaces with the EU instead.

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<sup>44</sup> <http://ecfr.eu/content/entry/commentary-wilson-popescu-Moscow-times-eastern-partnership/>

In 2008 a favorable climate was formed for realization of the Eastern Partnership conception due to the initiative of the President of France N. Sarkozy to create the ENP “Southern dimension” – “The Union for the Mediterranean”. Paris’ successful lobbying of its project demonstrated the purposefulness and necessity for the EU to promote the Eastern Partnership.

Why were there any skeptics in the EU concerning this initiative? It is not difficult to reply, having analyzed the unstable nature of the Partners’ political development during the last five years. The Russian-Georgian conflict in August 2008 has become an additional incentive for the EU to intensify the work on the initiative what was noted in the conclusions of the extraordinary European Council meeting on the 1<sup>st</sup> of September 2008 held by reason of the Caucasian conflict. For three months the EU officials – the Commission, France taking over the Presidency and the Czech Republic which had to be the next one to take over the Presidency, the European Parliament and other EU bodies – were actively communicating with the future Partners in order to feel how the EU ideas met the Eastern Europe’s aspirations.

The EC offers to adopt a more ambitious agenda of the Eastern Partnership, the new basic principles of relations based on the principles of *political association and economic integration*, as well as to conceptually recognize the Eastern neighbors’ European identity and aspirations (the Joint Declaration avoids this preciseness, considering the lack of a common denominator in the Partners’ aspirations in this issue).

It is noted in the Communication that the Eastern Partnership initiative should be implemented in parallel with the EU’s strategic partnership with Russia. The third important component of the overall EU Eastern dimension is the negotiation process with Turkey as an EU candidate. As both in the first (Russia) and in the second (Turkey) cases there is a bilateral legal format that satisfies the parties, the new format is also offered to the Partners.

It is planned to renew the existing EU contractual and legal framework with its Eastern neighbors, substituting the Partnership and Cooperation Agreements for enhanced agreements of the new format. The Association Agreement between Ukraine and the EU is taken as a sample, however, without any integration references which Ukraine aspires to see in it. According to Ukraine’s example, the new enhanced agreements should be implemented through the Action Plans – the new policy cooperation instruments.

It is clearly determined in the Communication and other documents that the Eastern Partnership is not an agreement on accession to the EU and even not on the candidate status. It is mentioned in it that the final format of new agreements will depend on the level of readiness and ambitions of the partner countries. At the same time, in order to please the EU countries which are the “skeptics” of the Eastern neighbors’ European prospects, *the Communication*

*emphasizes that the conclusion of new framework agreements “will not determine in advance the European aspirations” of the participating countries.*

In this context the proposal mentioned in the Communication to create *a special assistance programme for strengthening the administrative capacity of the partner countries* – Comprehensive Institution-Building Programme (CIB) – attracts attention. Its funding should be made through the funds of the Neighborhood Instrument (ENPI). In point of fact, the question is about the informal “screening” (without reference to this term) of the partner countries’ progress in implementation of the new generation of agreements and policy instruments.

**Certainly, the most essential part of all work on realization of the Eastern Partnership will be a practical approximation to the standards, norms, practices and legislation declared at the political level.** This process will be implemented within the framework of the four thematic platforms – “Democracy, good governance and stability”, “Economic integration and convergence”, “Energy security, environment” and “Contacts between people”. Here is their summary.

Instead, as it has been already continually emphasized, the weak point of the EU interaction with the European East until now was the economic component. Considering this desire, the new enhanced agreements on association between the EU and the Eastern Partnership countries, according to Ukraine’s example, **should include a deep free trade area**. Concluding the free trade areas will depend on the willingness of these countries’ economies to liberalize the trade with the EU to the appropriate extent. In prospect *the formation of a regional deep free trade area* is not excluded which would unite the Eastern Partnership countries and the EU. Liberalization of the trade regime between the EU and its Eastern neighbors should be strengthened by sectoral agreements in the sphere of technical standards, energy, transport, agriculture and protection of intellectual property rights.

Another strong, if not the strongest desire of the Partners, was the liberalization of visa regime with the EU. Therefore, the Communication project stipulated a number of events of the EU and the partner countries in the short and medium term in the sphere of visa policy and labor mobility concerning the partner countries. In visa policy the Communication puts an emphasis on the need for **gradual** development of relations. The first steps will be the conclusion of visa facilitation agreements “in the package” with readmission agreements, the preparation of the “coordinated plan on improvement of consular covering of the countries of the region” through establishing the joint visa centers. As an example, the successful experience of joint consular centers of the Member States in Moldova is suggested.

The conclusion of “mobility and security pacts” will be also launched with the Eastern Partnership countries, the main elements of which should become:

- assistance in implementing the border management procedures in accordance with the highest standards;
- assistance in establishing the qualitative regime of personal data protection that will make possible the operational cooperation of the participating countries with Europol and Eurojust;
- support of the partner countries' cooperation with the EU appropriate agencies.

The Communication entertains a possibility of launching the visa-free dialogue with the partner countries on the condition that the visa facilitation and readmission agreements have been “effectively implemented”.

In the issue of liberalization of the labor movement it is suggested to make an assessment of costs and revenues for the EU that should be considered as a positive innovation. So, the Eastern Partnership documents offer an opportunity of the next steps (in the short term):

- signing of visa facilitation agreements with the other countries of the region, such as an agreement with Ukraine;
- abolishment of consular fees for issuing of Schengen visas as the second stage of the visa facilitation process;
- development of a coordinated plan on improvement of the Member States' consular presence in the region, including the establishment of joint centers receiving visa application forms.

Events in the medium and long term:

- introduction of the visa free regime with the partner countries through the implementation of road maps according to the four main directions: safety of documents, fight against illegal migration, public order, foreign relations;
- providing the partner countries with the special status in the EU appropriate agencies;
- signing of “mobile partnerships” with all the Eastern Partnership partners which stipulate the gradual opening of the EU labor market for the partner countries' citizens in case of introduction by these countries of measures for the counteraction to illegal migration.

It is clear that the opportunities will be offered gradually and only to successful ones.

**Energy cooperation** has been called one of the predetermined subject elements of the Eastern Partnership. It is natural that the Communication puts an emphasis on strengthening the energy security of the EU and its Eastern Partnership partners basing on the principles of the

Energy Charter. This is the document that the EU considers to be the basic one, and its implementation – to be obligatory. Therefore, the Eastern Partnership initiatives in this sphere should be as follows:

- including the chapters on “energy interdependence” into the association agreements which would establish the trade regulations, rules of investments into the energy sector, as well as would increase the transparency of the energy products transit;
- signing the memorandums of understanding on cooperation in the energy sphere, according to Ukraine’s example. In case of **Armenia** an emphasis is put on the need for closing of the Metsamor Nuclear Power Plant. Special attention is given to **Azerbaijan** as a single exporting country of energy products within the framework of the Eastern Partnership;
- rapid completion of the process of joining of Ukraine and Moldova the Energy Community, holding of consultations with other Eastern Partnership partners on gaining by them the observer status;
- promoting the Eastern Partnership partners’ participation in the Intelligent Energy Europe Programme.

In the multilateral dimension the Eastern Partnership should support the Baku process on creation of the regional legal regime for extraction and transit of energy resources. In this context the European Commission intends to promote the new, innovative approaches to strengthening the transit security through the schemes of joint management or ownership of oil- and gas pipelines by the companies of consuming countries, transit countries and producer countries of energy resources. It is planned to promote the integration of energy networks of the partner countries and the EU and the regional harmonization of energy legislation, rehabilitation of energy infrastructure. As an example, the plans are mentioned concerning the organization of an international investment conference on modernization of Ukraine’s gas pipeline system.

The last Eastern Partnership thematic platform is defined as **the regional development alignment policy, support for economic and social development (cohesion policy)**. In this sphere the Communication project contains 4 proposals: signing of the Memorandums of intentions concerning cooperation in the sphere of regional policy; assistance in developing the pilot projects in the sphere of regional development; establishment of direct contacts between the regions of the partner countries and the EU Member States (with involvement of the EU Member States into participation in the appropriate programmes for South-Eastern and Eastern Europe); transfer of the ENPI financial resources in the sphere of cross-border cooperation (for the

moment they are used for realization of the projects on the EU's external borders) on the borders between the partner countries.

It is necessary to mention the originality of proposed approaches, in particular, the EC's intentions to extend the existing within the EU process of developing the programmes for the regional development alignment for the Eastern Partnership partner countries, as well as the appearance of opportunities of using the ENPI financial resources for realization of the projects on the partner countries' joint borders.

Special attention is given to the civil society's involvement into the political dialogue between the EU and Eastern neighbors. For this purpose, it is offered to create the Eastern Partnership Civil Society Forum which would encourage the regular contacts of non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and their dialogue with the authorities.

Described above thematic platforms are the directions of cooperation. Within the framework of directions the concrete projects will exist. They are called the **Flagship initiatives**. In particular, the following initiatives are suggested:

- Integrated Border Management Programme;
- Small and Medium-size enterprise (SME) Facility;
- Regional energy markets, energy efficiency and renewable energy sources;
- Caspian – Black Sea Energy Corridor to the EU;
- Prevention of, preparedness for, and response to natural and man-made disasters.

For the purpose of functioning of the mechanism, both the institutional structure and the opportunities for multilateral format of the **political dialogue** should be well thought-out.

According to the European Commission, the responsibilities of coordination and operating supervision of realization of the Eastern Partnership projects and priorities will be imposed on the appropriate departments of the European Commission which are in the process of necessary reorganization now.

In order to implement the Eastern Partnership tasks the Commission offers to use the existing financial resources reserved in the frames of the ENPI Regional Programme East in the amount of EUR 250 million for the period of 2010-2013. In addition, the EC offers to actively attract the additional financing sources of the Eastern Partnership projects from international financial institutions, international organizations and third countries. For effective managing the increased financial resources it is also offered to strengthen the Missions of the European Commission to the Eastern Partnership countries on a priority basis.

## Value added of the Eastern Partnership: conclusions and recommendations

Communication from the European Commission on the Eastern Partnership is a sign of the trend to gradual division of the European Neighborhood Policy into the “Southern” and “Eastern” dimensions. Consensus support of the initiative by the Member States (positive conclusions of the EU Council of Ministers of Foreign Affairs, September and December EU summits in 2008 and March summit in 2009...) demonstrated that the EU understands the need for strengthening the relations with its direct neighbors in the East of the continent and strengthening their integration character. *Such understanding is present in all EU countries and institutions now.* In this context the appearance of the term “political association and economic integration” in the EU’s political rhetoric concerning the Eastern Partnership countries taken from the final documents of the Paris Ukraine-EU summit is quite notable.

As it was expected, the content of the Communication from the European Commission on the Eastern Partnership in comparison with the initial Polish-Swedish proposals, the spirit of the Declaration by the European Council on the Eastern Partnership Principles, as well as the Joint Declaration of the Prague Eastern Partnership Summit show *the lack of vision of the Eastern Partnership format in the frames of the European prospect* what is the first to be mentioned by critics. The events and state of democracy in Georgia, Moldova, Belarus, Ukraine, the continuing Karabakh conflict in the second half of 2008 - first half of 2009 also played an important role in this context. **At the same time the EU reserves this European vision as an opportunity for each concrete country** what absolutely corresponds to Brussels’ longstanding tradition to follow the strictly individual approach. In particular, such prospect is actually given to Ukraine in the Joint Declaration of the EU – Ukraine summit in Paris on the 9<sup>th</sup> of September 2008<sup>45</sup>. So, it is natural that the European Commission and the countries supporting the Eastern Partnership put an emphasis on the concrete thematic directions and cooperation projects. In this context the activity of Ukraine and other Eastern Partnership countries in the preparation and lobbying of appropriate project proposals will be of great importance.

The Eastern Partnership bilateral component is based on the experience of Ukraine – EU relations. As a matter of fact, this represents the highest political value of the Eastern Partnership for Ukraine. At the same time *the Eastern Partnership practical component represents for Ukraine the relatively low value added*, except for the prospects of partial opening of the EU labor market, programmes for regional development, cooperation in the sphere of education,

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<sup>45</sup> “Ukraine, as a European country, shares with the European Union countries a common history and common values”

culture, people-to-people contacts. Ukraine is also interested in possible extension of the EU's assistance within the framework of the existing assistance instruments (ENPI).

Ukraine is interested in the proposals to launch the Eastern Partnership multilateral dialogue which may become the basis for formation of the "European – oriented" mechanism of political cooperation between the Eastern Partnership countries and the EU, to encourage the strengthening of their European orientation in general. The prospect of transition of European countries of the post-Soviet space to the format of "political association and economic integration" in relations with the EU corresponds to Ukraine's European integration interests.

Taking the above mentioned into consideration, the initial priority for Ukraine should be the active development of bilateral cooperation with the EU. Ukraine ought to participate in implementation of the Eastern Partnership "flagship" projects on a pragmatic basis, basing on the national priorities, to lobby the provision of the EU's additional assistance in the frames of the Eastern Partnership, as well as to take an active part in the Eastern Partnership multilateral dialogue. For this it has got the developed contractual and legal framework, relatively developed institutional capacities.

Six countries have been crossing from the post-communist world to the European one. It appears that this is a surprise for many people. They came here following the rapid globalization route almost against their will, having placed them in many dilemmas deliberately aggravated by Russia. Instead, it seems that the EU restricts itself offering the oars and saying: scull by yourselves! It is obvious that the oars are short, and Brussels which recognizes this explains that it does not wait for anybody today, because of the crisis. It is more cheerfully to swim all together, though in separate boats, but some have not yet decided which shore they would like to gain. It is obvious that it is not Ukraine's affair to scull for others, as well as to encourage all of them to make a start at one time. However, it is necessary to share the sculling technique in the heavy sea which our country has already learned to some extent. It is very honorably to share the skills, and Ukraine should do it. And, certainly, it should scull quickly by itself.

## **BELARUS AND "EASTERN PARTNERSHIP"**

### **Evaluation of the Eastern Partnership Initiative**

The Eastern Partnership Initiative (EP) is the most large-scale and far-reaching political project in relation to the Eastern European countries (the post-Soviet states) proposed by the European Union after the end of the "cold war". It reflects the European realities after the last «massive wave» of Union's enlargement (2004), the practice of post-communist transformations, develops the experience of European Neighborhood Policy and seeks to take into account the geopolitical ("peripheral" conflicts) and geo-economic (energy) collisions at the continent that have been especially sharp in recent years.

Undoubtedly, among the strong points of the Eastern Partnership are its realizability (feasibility), pragmatism (focus on practically achievable and vital tasks for the participants), openness to joint development and filling by all parties involved, and consequently, its flexibility and sustainability (great demand) in the future.

Eastern Partnership combines the complexity and modularity of the interaction mechanisms at the bilateral and multilateral level what creates the opportunities to include, as necessary, and/or while creating the appropriate prerequisites, and finally creates a synergic effect due to the fact that all these instruments are aimed at achieving the interdependent goals of support of the democratic and market reforms and political and economic stability in the partner countries<sup>46</sup>.

It will be justifiably to start discussing the "disadvantages" of the Eastern Partnership not in a month or two after the official "start", but when it will be possible to evaluate its first results. In the meantime, it should be noted that the Eastern Partnership Initiative attracted a very serious interest from the candidate countries, generated the public debate (in particular, rather intensive – in Belarus) and its components (f.e., energy) fit well into the Eastern European political and strategic processes.

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<sup>46</sup> See: Eastern Partnership. Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament and the Council. COM(2008) 823 final{SEC(2008) 2974}. Commission of the European Communities, Brussels, 3.12.2008. [http://ec.europa.eu/external\\_relations/eastern/docs/com08\\_823\\_en.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/external_relations/eastern/docs/com08_823_en.pdf)

**«Eastern Partnership» - this is what we make of it », or the Belarusian version of social constructivism**

At the moment the Eastern Partnership is more a political way, a vision of some possible and desirable future, than a detailed political project. Therefore, depending on positions and interests of those political actors which are relevant to this project way, a wide range of expectations, intentions and concrete plans may be connected with it.

Accordingly, it is more correctly now to talk about the opportunities opened up before Belarus by the Eastern Partnership, than about the direct or even immediate significant benefits from it, as well as about the expectations of various actors of Belarusian policy which are often opposite in many ways and which form a whole “theory of probable improbabilities”.

In fact, there are a few “Eastern Partnerships” de facto – one at a time for official Brussels and Minsk, for the Belarusian opposition and civil society, for Belarus as a state and for the most of population which knows about it mainly through the state mass media which only fix quite poorly the outcomes of official negotiations and tend to especially emphasize “the effectiveness of Minsk’s foreign policy in a western direction” and the recognition by the European Union of “the Belarusian model’s advantages”.

**Table 1. Interdependence of evaluation of EU policy on normalization of relations with Belarus and geopolitical and political preferences**

Answer	Confidence in the president		Attitude towards the authorities		Attitude towards Belarus’ joining the EU		Choice between the EU and the RF	
	Trust (45.4)*	Distrust (38.1)	Authority supporters (32.8)	Authority opponents (21.6)	For (34.9)	Against (36.3)	With the RF (42.4)	With the EU (35.1)
The EU should cooperate with the authorities supported by the people	<b>53.1</b>	21.2	<b>53.9</b>	19.6	<b>29.5</b>	<b>47.9</b>	<b>46.9</b>	<b>30.7</b>
The EU did what was	9.0	<b>29.0</b>	8.2	<b>32.1</b>	<b>30.6</b>	9.7	10.1	<b>31.1</b>

right, the main thing is to weaken Belarus' dependence on Russia								
The EU betrayed its own principles	9.0	<b>16.5</b>	10.5	<b>17.8</b>	11.7	12.0	9.8	<b>16.4</b>
The EU did what was wrong, as it tries to separate Belarus from Russia	13.2	8.2	13.1	9.2	7.6	14.8	<b>15.6</b>	7.2

*\* Figures in brackets – the percentage of those who chose the appropriate answer among all the respondents*

According to the latest opinion poll held by the Independent Institute for Social and Economic and Political Studies (see **Table 1**), there is no substantial growth of pro-European sentiments in Belarus, however, the European Union's new policy (Eastern Partnership) is supported by the most of people in Belarus, although on different grounds. In this regard more than a half of the existing authority supporters approve the improvement of relations with the EU, following the official propaganda points, while the authority opponents' pivotal motive for approval of the new European policy is the desire to distance Belarus from Russia which prevails over the opinion that the European Union betrayed its own moral and political principles through the "appeasement" of the Belarusian President<sup>47</sup>.

Perception of the Eastern Partnership in Belarus "splits" the opposition quite originally according to such "moral and political" grounds. Many respected political forces and politicians, supporting Belarus' rapprochement with the EU, underline the necessity of continuing the EU efforts on democratization of the country, what, from their point of view, is more important than any geopolitical or economic motives<sup>48</sup>.

Relations with the EU and the "Eastern Partnership" programme for Belarus were uniquely transformed into the field and instrument of acute political struggle not only between the authorities and the opposition, but also between different factions within the democratic camp. Thus, for example, one Congress of pro-European forces has already taken place, the second one (alternative) is scheduled to be held in autumn.

<sup>47</sup> Warm wind from the West. <http://www.iiseps.org/press6.html>

<sup>48</sup> Зварот Рады беларускай інтэлігенцыі да Саміта еўрапейскіх дзяржаў па праблемам Усходняга партнёрства.

06.05.2009. <http://eurobelarus.info/content/view/3019/24/>

At the same time, “Eastern Partnership” promoted the consolidation of Belarusian pro-European nongovernmental organizations. In April 2009 the conference “Participation of the Belarusian civil society in the “Eastern Partnership” initiative” took place in Minsk and became the permanent national platform of the Belarusian civil society’s participation in the Eastern Partnership<sup>49</sup>.

### **Belarus’ interests in the Eastern Partnership**

Which “versions” in the Belarusian format of “multiple” and various Eastern Partnership are offered by the Belarusian authorities?

Their general characteristic is “full and pragmatic cooperation with emphasis on the economic component”<sup>50</sup>. However, such format of relations is the “Eastern Partnership” emptied of all substance which is more similar to the EU relations “with third countries”. In fact, the question is about establishing the normal bilateral relations and their further development mainly in the sphere of economy. However, there is not enough or almost nothing concrete mentioned in the context of solution of political problems with which everything begins. And this is the whole chain of interrelated bilateral steps: implementation by Minsk of the EU recommendations – total abolition of sanctions – conclusion of the Partnership and Cooperation Agreement (there is still no bilateral underlying agreement) – facilitation of the visa regime – achievement of the higher quality level which opens up the new horizons. It is not quite clear how Belarus will be able to join the Eastern Partnership multilateral (regional) mechanisms with the EU participation, not having the underlying agreement with it.

In the message to the Belarusian people and the National Assembly A. Lukashenko emphasized “the crucial importance of significant intensification” of Belarus’ relations with the European Union and the timeliness of the Eastern Partnership initiative. He also mentioned that the European market, investments, new technologies, in particular, energy efficiency, cooperation in strengthening the energy security, taking advantage of Belarus’ transit location between the EU and Eurasia, etc, were of particular interest for the country. The Belarusian president did not include the democratic and market reforms which the Eastern Partnership was oriented to support into the list of his policy priorities, stating that Belarus’ participation in the Eastern Partnership had not to damage its sovereign interests<sup>51</sup>. According to A. Lukashenko, the “Eastern Partnership” initiative was attractive for the Belarusian state, first of all, in the context of

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<sup>49</sup> See the information about the conference “Participation of the Belarusian civil society in the “Eastern Partnership” initiative”, as well as the hyperlinks to the adopted resolution and texts of speeches during the panel discussions, at:

<http://eurobelarus.info/content/view/2908/135>

<sup>50</sup> See in particular: Pazdnyak, Vyachaslau “EU-Belarus: Same Decision-Makers and Decision-Takers in a New Setting.” – *Bell: Belarus Infoletter*. No.1-2 (1), 2009. [http://www.eesc.lt/failai/Issue%201%20\(1\).pdf](http://www.eesc.lt/failai/Issue%201%20(1).pdf)

implementation of some concrete projects. “We want to get what we expect in this project. In other words, cooperation on such issues as roads, pipelines, infrastructure projects, etc. People need the practical returns of this project ... What do they want from us? Conversations on democracy and human rights? ... But these are just conversations, chatter ...”, - the Belarusian president said<sup>52</sup>.

In the meantime, on the 16<sup>th</sup> – 17<sup>th</sup> of June 2009 the first round of negotiations on human rights between the representatives of Belarus and the EU took place in Prague<sup>53</sup>.

### **Degree of Belarus’ participation in the Eastern Partnership**

Reality of mutual relations between the subjects of the European Union and the Republic of Belarus which we are dealing with may be described as a political communication space. Within this reality different processes take place: “dialogues”, disputes, conflicts, negotiations, harmonization of interests and goals, etc.

Secondly, anyway, all the major (and often minor) “actors” of socio-political process are involved into the political communication with the European Union. Not only the authorities, but also the political opposition, NGOs, private mass media and others.

At the same time, concerning the negotiations with the EU, this is a very specific sphere. In this sphere the acutest struggle is observed. The authorities adhere to their position; the opposition adheres to its position. The European Union, being in constant contact with both sides, in a certain sense, acts both as an intermediary between them and as an object of the struggle for influence. However, conditions for joint “round table” have not still been established.

Following the above-mentioned approach, undoubtedly, the diversified “dialogue” as a part of political communication will be continued. The question is whether it will become more positive, purposeful and effective.

At the same time, the most important changes will take place in the course of negotiations which will determine both the character and the format of relations between the Republic of Belarus and the European Union, and to a great extent – the future of the Belarusian state.

At this moment the disturbing tendencies to tightening of internal policy are evident. If the EU comes to the conclusion that the situation is similar to that one which was in August 2008, it is clear that

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<sup>51</sup> Message of the President of the Republic of Belarus A. Lukashenko to the Belarusian people and the National Assembly of the Republic of Belarus. The official internet portal of the President of the Republic of Belarus A. Lukashenko. 23.04.2009. <http://www.president.gov.by/press70398.html#doc>

<sup>52</sup> President of Belarus Alexander Lukashenko made working visit to Mogilev region. The official internet portal of the President of the Republic of Belarus A. Lukashenko. 22.05.2009. <http://president.gov.by/press71915.html#doc>

<sup>53</sup> EU/Belarus Human Rights Dialogue. Prague, 16-17 June 2009. Council of the European Union. 11196/09 (Presse 187). Brussels, 18 June 2009.

it will be necessary to re-start with the lifting of political reprisals before it is possible to talk about some other far-reaching steps. Priority of steps on liberalization (five, more or less) may be changed (given the fact that all of them are necessary), however, the key point is the democratization of electoral legislation and procedures.

Finally, it is necessary to mention another “condition”. In the current context, the role of democratic forces is still great; however, it is not adequately interpreted and implemented in all things. The democratic forces should “play over” the existing authorities in the strategic proposal on attractive and positive programme of the country’s development, including relations with the European Union. In particular, they should be able to explore the issue on Belarus’ participation in the Eastern Partnership better (and without any previous romantic illusions). Then the chances will increase that the “dialogue” will become both multilateral and productive.

For official Minsk the successful inclusion in the Eastern Partnership would symbolize the overcoming of isolationism, lifting of all obvious and unobvious restrictions in political and economic fields, international legitimation, “transformation” into the normal European state which it is possible to calmly deal with and which could participate in European trade and economic exchange to its profit and address many other issues in other spheres.

Spheres of cooperation between Belarus and the EU are still rather limited and include, apart from the issues on energy, transport and agriculture, the food security, the product quality control, the interaction of financial institutions and some other spheres<sup>54</sup>. The latest significant fact was providing of technical assistance to Minsk in the amount of 10 million euro for improvement of quality and increase in food manufacture volumes<sup>55</sup>.

It is possible to assume that the “will to Minsk’s cooperation with Brussels” in the future will be increasingly determined by the degree of its discomfort in mutual relations with Moscow.

### **Harmony and differences of the partners’ interests**

Harmony of interests of all states participating in the “Eastern Partnership” is quite obvious: the economic and social progress through the reforms implemented with the help of the European Union; achieving the advanced technical and economic and legal standards enabling to successfully and mutually profitably develop the comprehensive relations with the leading European and world political and economic union; strengthening the political sovereignty and economic independence.

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<sup>54</sup> For more details, see the web site of the Delegation of the European Commission to Belarus <http://www.delblr.ec.europa.eu/>

<sup>55</sup> Эўразьвяз выдзеліў Беларусі 10 мільёнаў эўра тэхнічнай дапамогі. 19.06.09. [http://n-europe.eu/news/2009/06/19/eurazvyaz\\_vydzeliu\\_belarusi\\_10\\_milenaу\\_eura\\_tekhnichnai\\_dapamogi](http://n-europe.eu/news/2009/06/19/eurazvyaz_vydzeliu_belarusi_10_milenaу_eura_tekhnichnai_dapamogi)

Both the similarity and difference of interests is directly associated with a number of circumstances which include:

- geographical location (proximity or remoteness of partners from each other);
- integration intentions regarding the European Union and readiness for purposeful interaction within the framework of “Eastern Partnership”;
- internal political and economic situation;
- existence of internal and/or external conflicts (threats);
- degree of external economic (resource) and other dependence<sup>56</sup>;
- level of ensuring the energy and economic security;
- obligations within the framework of other integration entities (e.g., for Belarus – the treaty with Russia on the creation of a Union State, EurAsEC, etc.).

Depending on the configuration of the above mentioned factors, the character and forms of cooperation of the partners will acquire their individuality.

It is natural for Belarus to aspire to intensify the cooperation with Ukraine and the neighboring EU member states – Lithuania, Latvia, Poland and others. As the Chairman of the Committee on Foreign Affairs of the European Parliament Jacek Saryusz-Wolski has noted, as a weak element for all six countries – partners is the “deficit of democracy and human rights”, this assumes both the similar problems in organization of productive interaction of the civil society organizations of six countries with the state bodies and the difficulties in organizing the effective work of the Eastern Partnership Civil Society Forum.

### **Eastern Partnership in the interests of Belarus**

For Belarus an ideal variant of implementation of the “Eastern Partnership” programme could be the combination of processes of reforming, modernization and liberalization of the country’s economy with the democratization and renewal of its political system, as well as with the “Europeanization” in the widest sense – approaching the European standards, Europe’s values and, finally – creation of a unified free trade area and visa-free regime. In other words – full realization of all opportunities stipulated in the Eastern Partnership.

It is clear that at the first stage this assumes the hard work of all (first of all, democratic) structures of the Belarusian society in cooperation with the European partners to move from the current selective approach of the Belarusian authorities to “spillover” in the area of electoral and criminal

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<sup>56</sup> See, e.g.: Popescu, Nicu; Wilson, Andrew. The Limits of Enlargement-Lite: European and Russian Power in the Troubled Neighbourhood. European Council on Foreign Relations. (June 2009).

legislation, removal of obstacles on the way to creation and functioning of public associations, independent mass media, etc. In fact, the question is about the consistent fulfillment of the European Union's 12 well-known proposals to the Belarusian authorities and society.

After achieving these goals it will become possible to consider the deeper forms of integration. However, it appears that at this moment it is necessary not only to focus on immediate steps, but also not to lose the medium-term and long-term prospects, in particular, related to finding the ways of solving the “**Eastern Partnership Belarusian dilemma**<sup>57</sup>”: transition from the Eastern Partnership as a means of stabilization (conservation) of the existing political regime (version of the current authorities) to the European integration goal comprising the renewal of society and state (version of the strategic future of Belarus).

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Rich potential of opportunities is stipulated in the “Eastern Partnership”. Total fulfillment of this potential is in the interests of each country, and it determines the degree of its participation by itself. For successful preparation, inclusion and participation of Belarus in the Eastern Partnership it is extremely important right now to make a decision on the long-term prospects and objectives of the state in this programme. This is also an urgent task for the Belarusian expert community and the civil society in general. The adequate positive strategy will also significantly promote the solution of immediate problems which are on the agenda in relations between Belarus and the EU.

***Hryhoriy Perepelytsia***  
*Director*

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<sup>57</sup> About some approaches to this “dilemma” see in particular: “Усходняе партнэрства”: сродак умацавання рэжыму ці чыньнік пераменаў? 08.05.2009. <http://www.svaboda.org/content/transcript/1624505.html>; “Eastern Partnership” may bring Belarus to Europe. 20.04.2009. <http://www.dw-world.de/dw/article/0,,4192512,00.html>

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## **NEW EASTERN PARTNERSHIP INSTRUMENTS AND OPPORTUNITIES FOR PARTICIPATING COUNTRIES**

It is impossible to understand the content of the “Eastern Partnership” initiative without clarifying the reasons and preconditions for its appearance. Eastern Partnership was developed by Poland and Sweden for Ukraine. The goal is to create the preconditions which would open Ukraine’s doors for EU membership in the future; however, Poland’s possibilities for reformulating the EU’s Eastern policy are rather limited. This is caused by the fact that before Poland’s accession to the EU, the European Union introduced its own policy concerning its neighboring countries, called the European Neighborhood Policy. In addition, the European Union did not approve the Polish initiatives launched after the EU’s enlargement in 2004. Lack of approval was caused mainly by the character of the proposals. For example, Polish actions initiated in the EU after the Orange Revolution were directed to giving Ukraine the prospect of membership, or when the European Union ignored Poland’s attempts to strengthen the EU’s Eastern policy, mainly because they did not satisfy the position of EU Member States’. Poland’s experience in introducing its own efforts in the European Union proved that all the EU Member States may approve only those initiatives of one EU Member State which really has a European background.

### **Reasons and prerequisites for the emergence of the “Eastern Partnership” initiative**

In 2008 the chances of approval of Poland’s aspirations concerning the EU’s Eastern policy increased, which was caused by France’s activity in the Mediterranean Union. At the beginning of this year the President of France, Nicolas Sarkozy, suggested in the EU the introduction of a new regional platform of cooperation within the EU which would bring together the individual participants from the European Union, as well as from the Mediterranean countries – the EU non-members which are strategic partners for France. The French proposal in its original form was not approved by all the EU Member States: Germany especially protested. Only after the proposal from France had been transformed into a more moderate initiative (the

initiative becoming open for all the EU countries), did the Mediterranean Union get the EU's approval in March 2008. Approval by the European Union of the Mediterranean Union created such a situation in which the EU could hardly reject any other similar regional initiative concerning a specific geographical space, especially if this other initiative were to be approved and were to be within the European Neighborhood Policy, like the French proposal.

Another reason for the introduction of the Eastern Partnership is a lack of the EU's presence in Eastern Europe as a region. The process of the EU's enlargement to the Balkans, the deepening of the EU's integration with the Black Sea countries (introduction of the Black Sea Synergy in 2007 – a regional initiative directed at deepening the EU's cooperation with the Black Sea countries and strengthening relations between the Black Sea Region countries), as well as the process of deepening relations with the EU's Southern neighbors (the Mediterranean Union) create such a situation in which the EU's presence in Eastern Europe, without introducing the effect of these regional initiatives, would be much lower<sup>58</sup>.

These reasons promoted the submission of the Initiative for consideration of the EU Foreign Affairs Ministers in Brussels on 26<sup>th</sup> May 2008 during the meeting of the General Affairs and External Relations Council (GAERC) and the approval of this Initiative in June 2008.

However, the European Union saw in the Eastern Partnership an instrument for the realization of another purpose which differed from the initial one offered by the Poles for Ukraine. The main purpose of the Eastern Partnership is the strengthening and deepening of integration between the EU and the Eastern European and Southern Caucasian countries, in parallel with the process of deepening integration between the EU, the Black Sea and Mediterranean countries which is taking place now. In the short term the Eastern Partnership should reduce the differences between the EU's activity in the Black Sea and Mediterranean regions and the EU's policy concerning the Eastern European and Southern Caucasian countries. In the long term the Eastern Partnership plans to deepen integration between the EU and the EU Non-Member States – representatives of the initiative.

The Russian-Georgian war in the South Caucasus considerably accelerated its adoption, as the EU had to react somehow to the spread of instability from this region<sup>59</sup>. After the events in the Caucasus, on 1<sup>st</sup> September 2008 the European Council applied to the European Commission with a request to present its proposal earlier than was expected. Having held consultations with its Eastern partners, the European Commission suggested deepening bilateral relations with them and introducing the new multilateral framework for cooperation.

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<sup>58</sup> *Anna Kozlovska*. Eastern Partnership is an instrument for full integration with the EU. // *International Review*, 2008, No. 2 – P.47.

<sup>59</sup> *Ibid.*

The Russian-Georgian war became the beginning of the process of the formation of the multipolar world which means the division of the sphere of influence in Europe. By this war Russia showed to Europe the borders of the Russian sphere of influence which is the post-Soviet space pointing out that Europe has no right to pretend to relations with it. On the other hand, the European Union itself marked its Eastern borders by its Schengen zone beyond which it is not going to enlarge. So the line dividing spheres of influence in Europe was effectively formed between the EU and Russia. Therefore, if such borders appeared and the process of the EU's enlargement to the East was stopped, then it is necessary to make a secure environment, to create such a stable zone around the European Union, that there would be no terrorists, and no other problems concerning its security would arise from this territory. So security issues became the common interest for the EU countries in the Eastern Partnership initiative. The EU considers that this initiative will help it on the one hand to defend itself from Russia by a zone of neighboring countries more or less secure and loyal to the EU, and on the other hand – to neutralize the new dividing line in Europe.

It is no accident that the Eastern Partnership initiative is interpreted by the European Union as an integral part of the European Neighborhood Policy. The Neighborhood Policy was adopted in order to calm the new applicants for membership in the European Union, including Ukraine, and to avoid their joining the European Union. However, the question emerged: how to deal with the neighboring countries which turned out to be outside the European integration area. It became clear that the Neighborhood Policy had no concrete content. Instruments of this policy were the same ones in relation to all the EU neighbors. The Neighborhood Policy had no prospect because each EU country has its own neighbors. France's neighbors are the Mediterranean countries, Britain's neighbors are Europe and America, the Germans' top priority is Russia, the new EU Member States' neighbor is Ukraine (and these are weaker in their political and economic weight than the old members). The Eastern Partnership has taken note of this disadvantage of the European Neighborhood Policy as it contains a set of concrete instruments which take into account the specificity of the region of this eastern periphery of Europe. However, the disadvantage remains because the general approach to all the countries of the region, without regard to peculiarities of their development, is preserved. Assessments of the interests and positions of six countries covered by the "Eastern Partnership" initiative are rather different. In the meantime, in order to implement successfully the "Joint Partnership" initiative, the harmony of the countries' interests which would be united in this initiative is necessary as well as the appropriate political will of the national governments. Depending on these two factors, the participating countries may be divided into several groups.

The first group is represented by Ukraine which is an absolute leader in the realization of the European integration aspirations in the post-Soviet space. As a matter of fact, the European integration projects such as the Association Agreement, the Visa Facilitation Agreement and the mechanism for implementing the free trade area are offered to the other five countries based on Ukraine's experience.

The most general criterion for the division of the countries to which the Initiative is offered is the attitude towards it: perception or imperception. Refusal of the Presidents of Belarus and Moldova to participate in the first Prague Eastern Partnership Summit may be considered as a sign of imperception. So Moldova and Belarus may be referred to as the countries that have not shown their absolute willingness to participate in the Initiative. And the reasons for such unwillingness on the part of the two countries are fundamentally opposite. Moldova both at the level of the ruling elite and the opposition considers that this Initiative will become an obstacle to the rapid accession of their country to the EU. In particular, the President of Moldova, V. Voronin, compared it with an attempt to create another CIS only under the EU's control. "Eastern Partnership" is a proposal first of all for Armenia, Georgia and Azerbaijan for which the European prospect is very distant", – he said<sup>60</sup>.

For Belarus, the political regime of which does not aspire to be in Europe and is nervous about the democratic standards, an invitation to take part in the initiative turned out to be unexpected. However, its President, A. Lukashenko, saw in this initiative a certain possibility for maneuvering in difficult relations with Moscow. That is why he sent to the Prague Summit the First Vice-Prime Minister, Vladimir Semashko. Based on such positions as those of Moldova and Belarus, it is quite possible that the Initiative will be actually implemented not in the format of six, but in the format of four countries: Ukraine, Azerbaijan, Georgia and Armenia. It should be mentioned that these countries are also rather different in the context of positions and interests concerning the "Eastern Partnership" initiative. These differences, as well as the general features may be determined from their attitude towards the forms of relations, platforms and objectives of the "Eastern Partnership".

In general, the Eastern Partnership, both on the part of the EU and of the participating countries, stipulates the realization of two groups of objectives: *ideological and pragmatic*.

The ideological dimension ultimately obliges these countries to make their civilization choice: that is orientation to Europe and European structures, not towards Eurasia and Russia. This ideological dimension also includes the formation of democratic regimes in the countries joining the Initiative, respect for human rights and competent administrative management.

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<sup>60</sup> Expert, № 17-18. – 2009. – May 11. <http://expert.ua/articles/8/0/6786/>

The pragmatic objectives stipulate, first of all, an opportunity for obtaining financial and technical assistance from the EU, as well as an opportunity for implementing their own policy by balancing between the interests of the EU and Russia. Another evaluation criterion is the priority of a multilateral or bilateral format of cooperation in the framework of the “Eastern Partnership” initiative, as well as their attitude towards the four multilateral political platforms and key initiatives.

## **Georgia**

For Georgia ideological objectives are the priority. First of all, this is integration into the European Community and implementation of democratic reforms. It is obvious that at another time Georgia, which was considered the favorite of the West in the Caucasus, could count on the weightier integration prospect. However, after defeat in the Russian-Georgian war, the authority of Georgia and of its President for official Brussels and the EU countries turned out to be considerably undermined. In such a difficult geopolitical, economic and internal political situation the “Eastern Partnership” for Georgia is a real opportunity to improve its relations with the West. The European Union will not risk giving the greater prospect to Georgia, considering its confrontational relations with Russia and being afraid of the sharp reaction of the latter. That is why it is no wonder that the President of Georgia, the opposition and Georgian society consider optimistically their country’s participation in the “Eastern Partnership” initiative. The President of Georgia, M. Saakashvili, has stated: “It is the first time Georgia is getting involved in the European Union in an orderly manner and institutionally, which it was difficult even to dream of a year ago. This is the result of circumstances that changed after the August invasion of Russia”<sup>61</sup>. In order to retrieve its positive perception by Europe and the United States of America, Georgia will give preference to the multilateral format of cooperation in this Initiative. It is obvious that among the platforms the first platform will become the key one for Georgia – democracy, good governance and stability. Contacts between people are not so important for Georgia as the Georgian diaspora lives mainly in Russia and the former Soviet countries, but not in Europe. Regarding energy security, Georgia has already been involved in the international energy transport corridors which pass through its territory and have been implemented mainly with the support of the USA, but not the EU.

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<sup>61</sup> Ibid.

Regarding the pragmatic objectives of participation in the Initiative, Georgia may count on EUR 120 million within the framework of the European Neighborhood and Partnership Instrument for 2007-2010, while for Moldova this sum amounts to EUR 209.7 million.

However, Georgia's primary interest for today is actually concentrated in the sphere of security, where it feels the largest deficit. But in this security sphere and within the framework of the "Eastern Partnership" initiative the European Union may offer little to Georgia. The EU's initiative represented by the Medvedev-Sarkozy plan was of great importance for ceasing the Russian-Georgian war and preserving the state sovereignty of Georgia in August 2008. However, it did not solve the strategic problems of Georgia in the sphere of ensuring its national security and territorial integrity. NATO and the USA will play a key role in solving these problems in the sphere of Georgia's security. As a result, NATO membership will remain the main objective of Georgia's foreign and security policy. All this gives reasons to speculate that relations between the EU and Georgia in the "Eastern partnership" initiative will not be as intensive and comprehensive as for example with Ukraine.

### **Azerbaijan**

The President of Azerbaijan, I. Aliyev, considers the "Eastern Partnership" project as a new and important format that may and should strengthen relations between Azerbaijan and the EU, in the framework of which the implementation of new joint projects for the purpose of solving the problems in the political, social and economic and humanitarian spheres (vital for Azerbaijan and the Azerbaijanian society) is necessary.

The main objectives of the new EU project completely coincide with the principal vector of internal and foreign policy of the President I. Aliyev. This is the strengthening of reforms within the country and the achieving of the level of strategic partnership in relations with the EU and its Member States. The above-mentioned represents the basis of Azerbaijan's interests in the "Eastern Partnership" project and, at the same time, this is the reason for the EU's interest in cooperation with Azerbaijan.

Regarding the press and other mass media, the EU's new initiative is extensively reported both in opposition and in pro-government periodic publications and electronic media. The attitude of all mass media towards this issue is expressly positive. The exception is some publications in which the fact is stated that not enough financial assistance is provided to Azerbaijan in the framework of the project, and the EU's policy concerning the South Caucasus is subjected to criticism. In particular, the criticism is supported by the lack of the EU's pragmatic regional approach and an active integrated energy policy of the leading European

countries. The “Eastern Partnership” is considered by the official Baku as a serious project, participation in which may significantly strengthen the international and regional positions of Azerbaijan.

According to the Azerbaijanian party, the unreasonably angry reaction of some representatives of Russia’s political elite who consider this initiative to be anti-Russian is quite negative.

Azerbaijan’s subject participation in the implementation of this initiative may also influence the solution of internal problems related to carrying out the reforms in different sectors of the economy and social sphere, including the adaptation of legislation and introduction of European standards in Azerbaijan. This task is considered by the President of the country, I. Aliyev, as a strategic one, as he has continually declared at all levels.

Azerbaijan considers the bilateral format as a priority because it excludes for itself any cooperation with Armenia. Azerbaijan’s position in this issue will not change until the Armenian armed forces leave the occupied territories of Azerbaijan. Cooperation with Armenia, with the best will in Brussels and other European capitals, is not possible without this condition, whether it is under the auspices of the European Neighborhood Policy, the Eastern Partnership or any other project. However, this is not a reason for ignoring the beneficial cooperation in this format with other countries, such as the countries of the Black Sea and Baltic regions, with which Azerbaijan has really friendly, mutually beneficial and trusting relations.

Within the framework of the “Eastern Partnership” Azerbaijan would like, first of all, to intensify the process of European integration and to resolve the Armenian-Azerbaijani Nagorno-Karabakh conflict as soon as possible. All the basic documents which the EU signed with Azerbaijan, first of all the Partnership and Cooperation Agreement (PCA) of 1996, unambiguously confirm the sovereignty, territorial integrity and inviolability of the borders of Azerbaijan. Moreover, in the EU-Azerbaijan Action Plan adopted in November 2006 which is an original “road map” of bilateral cooperation between the EU and Azerbaijan, the European Union undertook a concrete commitment “to strengthen the political support for the efforts of the OSCE Minsk Group on the settlement of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict on the basis of the appropriate UN Security Council Resolutions and OSCE documents and decisions”.

Azerbaijan expects that this principled position of the EU and its Member States will also be preserved during the implementation of the “Eastern Partnership” program which is considered as the development of the provisions of the Partnership and Cooperation Agreement and the Action Plan.

The second priority objective of Azerbaijan's participation in the "Eastern Partnership" is the integration of its national economy, especially of its non-oil sector, into the European economic system so that the products made in Azerbaijan will correspond to European standards and have free access to the West's markets.

Thus, regarding the "Eastern Partnership", Azerbaijan will pursue the pragmatic objectives. Among the political spectrum of objectives the first is to approach the EU and use this as an additional resource in balancing with Russia. Such an objective absolutely corresponds to Azerbaijan's multi-vector foreign policy, which its President I. Aliyev has been trying to implement lately. The pragmatic objectives also include an effort to reach European standards in the system of public administrative management and in the social sphere.

Regarding the platforms, only two of them will be important for Azerbaijan: energy security and convergence with the EU sectoral economy. Agreements of "Mobility and security pacts" and contacts between people will not be vital for Azerbaijan because of the lack of a common border with the EU. The real, but not declarative democracy does not exactly fit in the model of development of the state which is formed in Azerbaijan.

It is obvious that Azerbaijan will not take part in the multilateral format of cooperation. Armenia's participation in the "Eastern partnership" initiative limits Azerbaijan's participation to the format of bilateral cooperation.

## **Armenia**

For Armenia an invitation to take part in the "Eastern Partnership" initiative became an attractive project under pressure from difficult internal and external circumstances in which the country is now. As a result of the occupation of part of Azerbaijan's territory during the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict, Armenia actually faced international isolation. Armenia has very difficult relations with its neighbors. In the East its neighbor Azerbaijan is unfriendly towards it, in the South its neighbor is Turkey, diplomatic relations with which have not been established so far. Concerning Iran, there are a lot of difficult cultural, religious and political differences between Armenia and Iran. In the North the neighbor is Georgia which has confrontational relations with Russia because of which Armenia feels increased pressure from Russia.

Unilateral military and political and economic orientation towards Russia did not bring the desired results. Armenia remains alone in solving its geopolitical, military and political, economic and social problems. In addition, Armenia has no common border with Russia and relations between the two countries are realized through the territory of Georgia. The Armenian

elite does not have any hopes of a final settlement of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict with the help of Moscow. The recent visit of the President of Armenia to Russia has confirmed once again the Kremlin's intention to play the card of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict in its own interests. Unilateral orientation towards Russia in the economic sphere led to the complete stagnation of the country's economy and increase of its economic dependence. In fact, Armenia faced not only foreign policy isolation but also economic. There are neither international nor internal investments. It is to Russia's advantage to keep the country dependent rather than to invest in its development. The international energy corridors were also laid out by the territory of Armenia. In these circumstances, the "Eastern Partnership" initiative may become a significant opportunity for Armenia to overcome both international foreign policy isolation and economic isolation.

Therefore, Armenia has an objective need for enhancing the level of political cooperation with the European Union, approaching the European Economic Space, participating in ensuring energy security on the border between Europe and Asia, and obtaining financial assistance. As the Head of Delegation of the European Commission in Armenia, H.E. Ambassador Raul de Luzenberger stated: "The country's involvement into the new EU "Eastern Partnership" initiative may become an additional incentive for the republic's closer cooperation with the European structures. For Armenia, which is situated in an unstable region, the new initiative may become a guarantor of stability and security"<sup>62</sup>.

And why is Armenia important for the EU and why was it invited to take part in this initiative? As a matter of fact, its realization will depend not only on Armenia but also on those interests which are pursued by the European structures in relations with this country. It is obvious that such a proposal was preconditioned, first of all, by the fall of authority of Georgia as a predictable partner and a guarantor of the security of international energy transport corridors passing through its territory. Thus, the leading EU countries started paying attention to Armenia, realizing the need for extension of this Caucasian corridor located between Russia and Turkey. Armenia is also important for the EU in the context of strengthening the European periphery. It is pointed out in the text of the Initiative: "Promoting stability, good governance and economic development in its Eastern neighborhood is of strategic importance for the European Union". So, as it is stated in the comment of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Armenia "... the new format of cooperation with the EU contains a significant potential, and Armenia intends to take an active part in this program"<sup>63</sup>.

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<sup>62</sup> Raul de Luzenberger: "Eastern Partnership" may help to develop cooperation in the South Caucasus. PanARMENIAN.Net. <http://www.panarmenian.net/interviews/rus/print/?nid=127>.

<sup>63</sup> Hamlet Matevosyan: Armenia intends to take an active part in the "Eastern Partnership". YEREVAN, May 7 – RIA Novosti, 07/ 05/ 2009 [http://rian.com.ua/CIS\\_news/20090507/78147499.html](http://rian.com.ua/CIS_news/20090507/78147499.html).

Which directions of cooperation and platforms of the Initiative are important for Armenia? In the “Eastern Partnership” initiative Armenia will pursue both the ideological and pragmatic groups of objectives.

Among the ideological groups of objectives for Armenia approaching the European civilization space is the most attractive one. The Armenian elite explains Armenia’s belonging to this space by Christianity which emerged in their country in the 4<sup>th</sup> century after Christ when the orthodox Moscow did not exist. In this religious Christian context the Armenians understand European integration as a return to their roots.

Among the pragmatic political objectives which the Armenian political elite is interested in is an aspiration to create some counterbalance to Russia’s and the USA’s impacts in the region using the European Union<sup>64</sup>.

The economic pragmatic objectives which will be pursued by Armenia in the “Eastern Partnership” initiative will include the signing of an agreement on a free trade area with the EU in prospect, development of regional markets through involvement in the free trade network with the countries participating in the Initiative, improvement of local governance and administrative management, and the fight against corruption.

Certainly, Armenia is interested in financial assistance. However, a sum of EUR 98.4 million which is assigned to it within the framework of the *European Neighborhood and Partnership Instrument* does not seem to be substantial. Armenia is ready to take part in the Initiative programs on determined subjects both in multilateral and in bilateral formats. There are no significant obstacles in Armenia for doing this. Regarding the platforms, it is obvious that Armenia and its government are not equally interested in all of them. Keeping in mind the existing ruling regime in Armenia, the first platform will not attract any interest. Moreover, imposing democratic standards on it may considerably slow down this country’s participation in implementing the “Eastern Partnership” initiative. Democracy in this country may be interesting only for the opposition. Contacts between people are not of considerable interest for Armenia either as the Armenian diaspora mainly lives in the USA and Russia, but not in Europe. The signing by Armenia of the “Mobility and security pacts” stipulating the establishment of integrated border management structures, bringing the system of *asylums* to refugees into correspondence with the EU standards that will promote the facilitating of the legal border crossing with the Schengen zone countries does not seem to be real. It is known that Armenia has no common border with the EU. It is obvious that energy security will attract the greatest interest in Armenia among all four platforms. In this subject Armenia sees itself as a transiter of

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<sup>64</sup> Igor Taro. Is the Eastern Partnership a lost battle in advance? // Postimees, 2009, May 7. <http://www.inosmi.ru/text/translation/248941.html>.

energy resources of the Central Asian region to Europe<sup>65</sup>. Within the framework of this platform Armenia will be interested in projects on renewable energy sources and creation of the Southern Energy Corridor. However, Russia is and will be the main external factor that will have a dominant influence on Armenia's participation in the above mentioned projects and the "Eastern Partnership" initiative in general.

### **Factor of Russia**

The Eastern Partnership concept seemed to be a [compromise decision](#) in relations between the EU and Russia. What is this compromise from the EU's point of view? On the one hand, it seems that the EU [recognizes](#) the reality that the countries covered by the Eastern Partnership remain in Russia's sphere of influence. European officials repeat all the time that the Eastern Partnership is not against Russia, remembering the Russian reaction to NATO enlargement. But Russia regards this [initiative](#) as the EU's invasion of the Russian sphere of influence. Why? Because in introducing the Eastern Partnership, the EU tries to preserve the European orientation of [participating countries](#) which are in the Russian "[sphere of influence](#)". The Eastern Partnership is directed at supporting the internal transformations in the direction of affinity with the EU which will secure the EU countries against [external challenges and threats](#) on its Eastern border. As a matter of fact, this is the extension of influence through "Soft Power". Therefore, the Eastern Partnership will objectively promote these countries' attempts to reduce Russia's influence on them. However, in this context it is necessary to mention that the concept of Four common spaces offered by the European Union to Russia within the framework of [strategic](#) partnership relations affords much more opportunities for approaching the EU and the Russian Federation than the similar four platforms represented in the Eastern Partnership initiative for six participating states.

### **Eastern Partnership instrumental advantages**

An obvious advantage of the Eastern Partnership is the principle of differentiation and instrumentalization. *The concrete instruments* of implementation of these principles are:

- new association agreements, including the deep and comprehensive agreements on a free trade area for those countries which aspire to and are willing to undertake the appropriate forward-looking obligations with the EU;

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<sup>65</sup> Mikhail Aghajanyan. "Eastern Partnership" programme: Armenia is "destined" to European success. <http://www.noravank.am/ru/?page=analitics&nid=1629>.

- comprehensive programs for improving the administrative capacity of the partner countries with financial support from the EU;
- gradual integration into the EU economy (maintaining the asymmetry necessary for the partner countries' economies), including the legal obligations concerning regulatory convergence;
- encouraging the partner countries to develop the free trade network between them;
- signing the “Mobility and security pacts” which will promote facilitation of the legal crossing of the EU [border](#), strengthening the measures directed to fight against corruption, organized crime and illegal migration. These agreements will also stipulate the bringing of the system of *asylums* to refugees into correspondence with EU standards and the establishing of integrated border management structures, with the final goal of introducing a visa free regime for all the partner countries;
- the European Commission will learn the possibilities for [development](#) of labor mobility with the prospect of greater openness of the EU labor markets;
- programs directed to social and economic development of the partner countries, in particular, in the direction of overcoming the sharp social and economic differences between these countries;
- creating the four multilateral political platforms: democracy, good governance and stability; economic integration and convergence with the EU sectoral policies; energy security; contacts between people for further support of certain reforms of the partner countries;
- key initiatives: Integrated Border Management Program; Small and Medium-size enterprise (SME) Facility; Regional energy markets, energy efficiency and renewable energy sources; the Southern Energy Corridor; Prevention of, preparedness for, and response to natural and man-made disasters;
- strengthening social and cultural contacts and greater involvement of the civil society and other parties concerned, including the European Parliament<sup>66</sup>.

So the Eastern Partnership is a framework of specific instruments, and there are no obligations in it that Ukraine will become an EU Member State; there is no membership prospect in the Eastern Partnership, but there are some instruments by using which we can open the channels of the European Union for implementing the integration projects in Ukraine. In other

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<sup>66</sup> Eastern Partnership is an intensification of relations between Ukraine and the EU. // Bureaucrat, № 23-24 (76-77) of 27/12/2008. / <http://www.center.gov.ua/ua/publication/content/812.htm>.

words, Ukraine may be encouraged by specific projects which are not clearly outlined today, but the format of such relations will promote their filling as the common interests between the European Union and Ukraine will be found. Such format will be [offering an opportunity](#) to fill this initiative with the concrete instruments, and specific projects. So as a matter of fact, this is a strategy for European integration realized by small steps, when the final general goal is not set (and, certainly, there are some disadvantages in it), but the issue is set to bring Ukraine closer to the European Union's economic and political climate.

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For Ukraine, which has already launched the negotiation processes on the Agreements on association, free trade area, abolition of visa regime and joining the Energy Community, the Eastern Partnership is an opportunity to fix the planned and the new prospects for integration into the European Union within the new regulatory framework. Ukraine also has all the opportunities to become the leading country in the Eastern Partnership, and in such a way as to get the role of a regional leader under the auspices of the EU. Considering the obvious progress of Ukraine towards European integration from among the partner countries, our country may expect increased attention from the EU. But the only possible way for Ukraine to become an EU Member State in prospect is through the successful fulfillment of hard work at home on reforming all life activity spheres, [favorable](#) conditions for which may be created in the framework of the Eastern Partnership<sup>67</sup>.

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<sup>67</sup> Eastern Partnership: final straight to the adoption. – / Ukrainian Center for Independent Political Research, № 5/565, March 2, 2009 / <http://eu.prostir.ua/library/233052.html>.