

Eastern partnership, in the run-up to the November 2017 summit. Recommendation to the Council, the Commission and the EEAS

2017/2130(INI) - 16/10/2017 - Committee report tabled for plenary, single reading

The Committee on Foreign Affairs adopted a report prepared jointly by Laima Liucija ANDRIKIEN (EPP, LT) and Knut FLECKENSTEIN (S&D, DE) on a European Parliament recommendation to the Council, the Commission and the EEAS on the Eastern Partnership, in the run-up to the November 2017 Summit.

As a reminder, the Eastern Partnership is based on a shared commitment between Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, Moldova, Ukraine and the European Union to deepen their relations and to respect international law and fundamental values, including democracy, the rule of law, human rights, fundamental freedoms and gender equality, as well as to the social market economy, sustainable development and good governance.

Members called on Parliament to make the following recommendations to the Council, the Commission and the EEAS.

1) The future of the Eastern Partnership: Members called to ensure that the November 2017 Summit **injects new dynamism** into the Eastern Partnership and set a clear political vision for the future of the Eastern Partnership as a long-term policy.

The Partnership should in particular:

- meet the high expectations of citizens in all the partner countries as regards eradicating **corruption**, fighting organised crime and bolstering the rule of law and good governance;
- strength **civil society** in the partner countries and encourage electoral reforms;
- ensure that the outcomes of Summit provide a new impetus including the delivery of tangible results for citizens, notably in terms of **employment, reducing socioeconomic disparities, transport, connectivity, energy independence, mobility and education**;
- pursue efforts aimed at **tackling unemployment**, especially youth unemployment;
- promote the implementation of **anti-discrimination policies** in all sectors of society; to ensure gender equality in public policies;
- **increase mobility between the EU and partner countries** (support Moldova, Georgia and Ukraine in implementing the visa liberalisation agreement, open visa dialogues with Armenia, encourage progress by Azerbaijan in the implementation of Visa Facilitation and Readmission Agreements (VFA/RA) and finalise negotiations on VFA/RA with Belarus);
- create a more favourable business environment and adequate access to sources of financing, including through the EU4Business initiative;
- ensure full respect for international law and agreements on **nuclear safety** and environmental protection;
- commit to sustaining the **unity of action** among EU Member States in **maintaining collective pressure on Russia**, whose military presence in the region has nevertheless grown over the past years, in particular through strengthened targeted restrictive measures;
- **solve the conflict in eastern Ukraine** through full and genuine implementation of the Minsk agreements, solve the conflict between Russia and Georgia, re-establishing Ukraine's full sovereignty in Crimea;

- fully cooperate with the EU in tackling challenges such as illegal migration, terrorism, cybercrime, human trafficking, smuggling and illicit trade.

2) Implementation of the Eastern Partnership: the objectives should be, *inter alia*, to:

- reiterate the **principle of differentiation** and emphasise that the partnership aims to create the necessary conditions for close political association and economic integration, including participation in EU programmes;
- **acknowledge the European aspirations of Moldova, Georgia and Ukraine**, recalling that any prospect of accession to the EU requires progress in the implementation of reforms, notably in the areas of the rule of law, respect for human rights and good governance;
- ensure that cooperation and support to partners are subject to strict and controlled conditionality, and that EU financial assistance is conditional on the development and implementation of reforms;
- support the **multilateral dimension** of the Eastern Partnership through transnational civil society platforms, cross-border projects such as people-to-people programmes involving intercultural dialogue and the younger generation;
- maintain that EU support should be **tailor-made** to match the level of shared ambition regarding cooperation with each partner following the principles of both ‘more for more’ and ‘less for less’;
- ask the Commission, the European Investment Bank and other multilateral financial institutions to work towards the successful implementation of the Investment Plan for Europe and of a **dedicated support mechanism** for Eastern Partnership countries committed to implementing the association agreements;
- request the establishment of a **trust fund** for Ukraine, Georgia and Moldova and consider holding a donors’ conference for Ukraine in support of the country’s humanitarian needs induced by the conflict in the East and the annexation of Crimea;
- reiterate its strong support for **parliamentary scrutiny** of the Eastern Partnership policy.

Lastly, Parliament's willingness to increase its monitoring of the implementation of international agreements with the eastern partners and to increase its scrutiny of EU support provided in this respect.