

EASTERN PARTNERSHIP

The Role and Significance
in the Process
of Transformation
of the Countries
of Eastern Europe
and the South Caucasus

EDITED BY
PIOTR BAJOR



EASTERN PARTNERSHIP



SOCIETAS

seria pod redakcją
BOGDANA SZLACHTY

133

EASTERN PARTNERSHIP

**The Role and Significance in the Process
of Transformation of the Countries
of Eastern Europe and the South Caucasus**

**edited by
PIOTR BAJOR**




Kraków

© Copyright by individual authors, 2021

Piotr Bajor

Jagiellonian University in Kraków, Poland

 <https://orcid.org/0000-0003-2569-2552>

 piotr.bajor@uj.edu.pl

Review: Marek Delong

Language editor: Keith Horechka

Cover design: Marta Jaszczuk

ISBN 978-83-8138-641-8 (print)

ISBN 978-83-8138-642-5 (PDF)

<https://doi.org/10.12797/9788381386425>

The publication was co-financed by the Priority Research Area Society of the Future in the framework of the strategic program “Excellence Initiative – Research University” at the Jagiellonian University, in connection with the project implemented in the competition of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Poland “Public Diplomacy 2021”.

The publication is available under the Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International license. Some rights reserved by the authors. The publication was created as part of the “Public Diplomacy 2021” competition. Any use of the work is allowed, provided that the above information is preserved, including information about the license used and about the rights holders.

The opinions expressed in this publication are those of the authors and do not reflect the views of the official positions of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Poland.



Ministry
of Foreign Affairs
Republic of Poland

Public task financed by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs
of the Republic of Poland within the grant competition
“Public Diplomacy 2021”

KSIEGARNIA AKADEMICKA PUBLISHING

ul. św. Anny 6, 31-008 Kraków

tel.: 12 421-13-87; 12 431-27-43

e-mail: publishing@akademicka.pl

Internet bookstore: <https://akademicka.com.pl>

Table of contents

Introduction	7
ADRIAN TYSZKIEWICZ	
The Eastern Partnership as a Structural Actor: A Geopolitical Perspective	9
PIOTR BAJOR	
The Evolution and Functioning Conditions of the Eastern Partnership Programme.....	25
OLEZIA TKACHUK	
Successes and Failures in the Implementation of the Eastern Partnership Objectives in a Changing Security Environment	41
MARKIYAN MALSKYY	
The Ukrainian Transformation Initiatives of Eastern Partnership	59
ROMAN VOVK	
The Eastern Flank of Europe: Ukraine's Place in the Collective Security System.....	69
NATALIA STERCUL	
Evolution of Relations Between the Republic of Moldova and the European Union in the Context of Eastern Partnership (2009–2021): Main Directions.....	87
TATIANA TURCO, VALERIU MOSNEAGA	
Geopolitical Choice of the Republic of Moldova on the Example of Snap Parliamentary Elections (2021)	109
MARIAM LASHKHI, VAKHTANG CHARAIA	
The Role of the Eastern Partnership in Georgian Economic Development.....	125
NINO LAPIASHVILI	
Application of the EU-Georgia Association Agreement by the Georgian Judiciary: A Role Unplayed by the Inert and Under-Reformed Courts	141
NAREK S. GALSTYAN	
Within the EAEU and with the EU: The Evolution of the Attitude of Armenian Ruling Elites Towards the Eastern Partnership	157
SAMVEL HOVHANNISYAN	
The Role and Significance of the Eastern Partnership Program in Achieving Armenian Economic Priorities.....	177
Index.....	191

The Evolution and Functioning Conditions of the Eastern Partnership Programme

ABSTRACT: The key objective of the article is to discuss the evolution of the Eastern Partnership programme from the point of view of its assumptions and key aspects of operation, including formal aspects of cooperation. The article presents the most critical aspects related to the evolution of the programme, as well as key challenges and plans for priority directions of its development. The article also discusses the approach of the Visegrad Group to the Eastern Partnership and analyses the assumptions of the new Associate Trio initiative aimed at deepening the European integration of some of the countries covered by the programme. The article also presents conclusions regarding the functioning of the programme and outlines the assumptions of its further development.

KEYWORDS: Eastern Partnership programme, Visegrad Group, European integration

The establishment of the Eastern Partnership programme was an important element in shaping the eastern dimension of the European Union and was addressed to Eastern Europe and the South Caucasus. The programme contained a wide range of political and economic goals aimed at supporting the processes of reform, social and political transformation in individual countries and strengthening the European integration process. The purpose of the presented article is to analyse the functioning of the Eastern Partnership programme from the current perspective of its existence, taking the pandemic into account.

Conditions and premises of the programme

The enlargement of the European Union to include the new eastern European countries in 2004 changed the geopolitical conditions and structure of the international system in the Central and Eastern European region. One of the effects of enlargement was the initiation of an internal discussion in the European Union on shaping relations with the countries bordering the European Union as part of activities going beyond the implemented European Neighbourhood Policy. From the Polish point of view, an important direction and factor was developing a unique programme of cooperation and support for the interested states located beyond the eastern border of the European Union. Another area discussed, about which the creation of new cooperation mechanisms was debated, was the countries bordering the European Union to the south. The adoption of the special 'Union for the Mediterranean' programme during the French presidency was also an important aspect of achieving a consensus among EU countries related to the establishment of a special programme aimed at cooperation with countries in Eastern Europe and the Southern Caucasus. Two important events also influenced the internal discussion in this respect in 2008, the NATO summit in Bucharest and the Georgian-Russian war.

The North Atlantic Alliance summit decided to grant a membership perspective to Ukraine and Georgia and include these countries in the Membership Action Plan. The authorities of these countries made efforts to confirm the declared aspirations and priority directions of foreign and security policy, which were Euro-Atlantic integration and joining the North Atlantic Alliance. However, there was no consensus among the member states on this matter. Granting the membership perspective to Ukraine and Georgia was supported by the United States, and such support was publicly declared by President George W. Bush, who was ending his second term. However, some European countries – including France and Germany – were cautious in this respect. In the end, during the summit, the Membership Action Plan was not granted to Ukraine and Georgia, but the declaration adopted at that time confirmed the Euro-Atlantic aspirations of both countries and stressed that Ukraine and Georgia would be admitted to NATO in the future.¹ It should be emphasised that an essential factor influencing such a solution and the decision of the North Atlantic Alliance was the position of Russia, which categorically protested against granting MAP to Ukraine and Georgia

¹ NATO, *Bucharest Summit Declaration Issued by the Heads of State and Government Participating in the Meeting of the North Atlantic Council in Bucharest on 3 April 2008*, April 3, 2008. At: https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natolive/official_texts_8443.htm, last accessed November 30, 2021.

and accused NATO of consistent anti-Russian actions and military expansion in the eastern direction.²

The second major international event, which influenced geopolitical conditions and the perception of the region's key processes, was the Georgian-Russian war in August 2008. As a result, a direct armed conflict broke out between Georgia and the Russian Federation, in the resolution of which the European Union and France, the then-president(s) of the community, were involved. This conflict resulted in the violation of Georgia's territorial integrity and sovereignty and the creation of the separatist states of Abkhazia and South Ossetia, operating under the aegis and with the support of the Russian Federation.³

The above events were significant from the point of view of international security and the geopolitical situation in Central and Eastern Europe, but they also resulted in the intensification of internal discussions within the European Union on the preparation of a special programme aimed at eastern partners. Poland played a key role in this aspect, for which the launch of an additional support mechanism for the countries of Eastern Europe and the South Caucasus was one of the priorities of foreign policy. Cooperation with Sweden and joint promotion of this initiative in individual countries and at the EU level was important in this respect.

Ultimately, after many months of talks and negotiations, it was possible to achieve a consensus in the European Union regarding the launch of the Eastern Partnership programme, and during the first summit held in Prague in 2009, to outline the most important directions and principles of cooperation with the countries covered by this programme.⁴

The document indicates that the Eastern Partnership is a European Union programme and the EU partner countries based on joint projects, commitment, actions and shared responsibility. The goal of the programme was to deepen European integration and cooperation between the interested states. An important element of the programme was also economic aspects and deepening cooperation between the countries of Eastern Europe and the South Caucasus in this aspect. Taking into account

² Cf.: President of Russia, *Press Statement and Answers to Journalists' Questions Following a Meeting of the Russia-NATO Council*, April 4, 2008. At: <http://en.kremlin.ru/events/president/transcripts/24903>, last accessed November 30, 2021.

³ European Council, *Press Release. Extraordinary Meeting General Affairs and External Relations*, no. 12453/08 (Presse 236), August 13, 2008. At: http://eeas.europa.eu/archives/delegations/georgia/documents/eu_georgia/13august2008_en.pdf, last accessed November 30, 2021.

⁴ Europe Council, *Wspólna deklaracja przyjęta podczas szczytu partnerstwa wschodniego w Pradze*, no. 8435/09 (Presse 78), Prague, May 7, 2009. At: https://www.consilium.europa.eu/uedocs/cms_data/docs/pressdata/PL/er/107647.pdf, last accessed November 30, 2021.

the different approach to the matters of European integration and rapprochement with the European Union as well as the different level of advancement in the projects implemented so far, it was emphasised that the tools and mechanisms of cooperation proposed under the Eastern Partnership would be flexible concerning the level of interest and will to deepen cooperation between individual countries.⁵

20 Deliverables for 2020

The flexibility indicated as a feature of the programme reflected the different levels of cooperation and interest in deepening European integration. One of the key elements in this respect in the following years was the negotiation and signing of association agreements and the establishment of deep free trade zones. In the case of Ukraine, these actions, related to President Yanukovich's refusal to sign the association agreement before the Eastern Partnership summit in Vilnius, led to protests in Kiev and the outbreak of the Orange Revolution. As a result, the government in Ukraine changed and the Kiev authorities returned to talks on the signing of this document. Georgia and Moldova also expressed their will to deepen European integration and to sign these documents. Their finalisation in the following years, supplemented with the introduction of visa liberalisation for citizens of these countries, was an important moment in the functioning of the Eastern Partnership and the achievement of important programme goals.

Therefore, in the following years, a discussion on the development of new forms and directions of cooperation with Eastern partners continued on the forum of the European Union. In this respect, the Eastern Partnership summit, held on November the 24th, 2017 in Brussels, was an important event. During the summit, the results of this programme until then were summarised, and priority directions for cooperation were set, assuming the implementation of the "20 goals for 2020." The plan adopted at that time contained several priority areas of cooperation, which were cross-cutting goals, a strong economy, better governance, greater connectivity and a stronger society.⁶

⁵ *Ibid.*

⁶ Europe Council, *20 Deliverables for 2020*. At: <https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/policies/eastern-partnership/20-deliverables-for-2020/>, last accessed November 30, 2021. See also: Eastern Partnership, *Eastern Partnership. 20 Deliverables for 2020: State of Play in 2018*. At: https://www.euneighbours.eu/sites/default/files/publications/2018-10/EAP%20GENERIC%20FACTSHEET%20ENG_WEB_0.pdf, last accessed November 30, 2021.

The summit also adopted a declaration confirming the great importance of the Eastern Partnership programme for the countries involved. In turn, the countries participating in this summit emphasised the importance of the Eastern Partnership as an ambitious and strategic programme and expressed the will to jointly commit to its further development, taking into account support in the scope of implemented reforms, which are a key factor influencing the “long-term success” of the Eastern Partnership.⁷

A decade of partnership

Another important event related to the analysis of the achievements of the Eastern Partnership, as well as further directions of activities, was the 10th anniversary of this programme. On this occasion, a meeting between the European Union authorities with the Foreign Ministers of the Eastern Partnership countries was held on May the 13th, 2019, discussing the implementation of the “20 goals for 2020,” as well as debating the priorities in cooperation in the coming years.⁸ The High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, Federica Mogherini, also presented a special document in connection with this meeting, containing conclusions and assessments on the functioning of the Eastern Partnership programme from a 10-year perspective.⁹

The above-mentioned issues were also discussed at the European Council meeting on June the 20th, 2019. The leaders then assembled underlined the role of the Eastern Partnership and its strategic importance in relations with Eastern partners and obliged the European Union Commission and the High Representative for For-

⁷ European Council, *Joint Declaration of the Eastern Partnership Summit*, Brussels, November 24, 2017. At: <https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/press/press-releases/2017/11/24/eastern-partnership-summit-joint-declaration/>, last accessed November 30, 2021.

⁸ European Council, *Eastern Partnership Foreign Ministers Meeting*, May 13, 2019. At: <https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/meetings/international-ministerial-meetings/2019/05/13/>, last accessed November 30, 2021. See also: M. Kubiak, “Jaka będzie przyszłość Partnerstwa Wschodniego?” (“What will be the future of the Eastern Partnership?”), *The Warsaw Institute Review*, October 26, 2019. At: <https://warsawinstitute.org/pl/jaka-bedzie-przyszlosc-partnerstwa-wschodniego/>, last accessed November 30, 2021.

⁹ European Council, *Eastern Partnership Foreign Ministers’ Meeting: Chair’s Conclusions on the Occasion of the Eastern Partnership 10th Anniversary*, May 13, 2019. At: <https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/press/press-releases/2019/05/13/eastern-partnership-foreign-ministers-meeting-chair-s-conclusions-on-the-occasion-of-the-eastern-partnership-10th-anniversary/>, last accessed November 30, 2021.

eign Affairs and Policy Security to propose long-term and strategic priorities for the further development of the Eastern Partnership.¹⁰

Therefore, further discussions on this issue continued within the European Union, after which the Commission presented its proposals on March the 18th, 2020. At that time, a special communication was issued on this matter, entitled “The Eastern Partnership beyond 2020: Reinforcing Resilience – an Eastern Partnership that delivers for all.”¹¹

This document indicates the priority political directions and goals developed as part of broad consultations, which include: functional, sustainable and integrated economies, transparent public institutions, security and the rule of law, activities in the field of counteracting climate change, digital transformation, as well as support for an egalitarian and inclusive society of individual countries.¹²

The above assumptions were adopted in the initial period of the coronavirus pandemic, which had a significant impact on their implementation as well as limiting cooperation with the Eastern Partnership countries. During this period, cooperation in combating the pandemic and its consequences was a key aspect. It was mainly related to the supply of equipment, covid tests and financial support for the implementation of various forms of social programmes. According to data from May 2021, the total value of aid (including the EIB) amounted to over 2.5 billion EUR.¹³

It should be emphasised that due to pandemic conditions, this factor is currently one of the most important aspects influencing cooperation within the Eastern Partnership and the plans to be implemented. In this aspect, it is worth mentioning the

¹⁰ European Council, *European Council Conclusions on the MFF, Climate Change, Disinformation and Hybrid Threats, External Relations, Enlargement and the European Semester*, June 20, 2019. At: <https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/press/press-releases/2019/06/20/european-council-conclusions-20-june-2019/>, last accessed November 30, 2021.

¹¹ Eastern Partnership, *The Eastern Partnership Beyond 2020: Reinforcing Resilience – an Eastern Partnership that Delivers for All*, 2018. At: https://eeas.europa.eu/sites/eeas/files/eap_joint_communication_factsheet_18.03.en_.pdf, last accessed November 30, 2021.

¹² *Ibid.* See also: Eastern Partnership, *Eastern Partnership Policy Beyond 2020: Council Approves Conclusions*, 2020. At: <https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/press/press-releases/2020/05/11/eastern-partnership-policy-beyond-2020-council-approves-conclusions/>, last accessed November 30, 2021; Eastern Partnership, *Council Conclusions on Eastern Partnership Policy Beyond 2020*, 2018. At: https://eeas.europa.eu/sites/eeas/files/eap_joint_communication_factsheet_18.03.en_.pdf, last accessed November 30, 2021.

¹³ European Commission, *EU Support to Eastern Partnership Countries in Tackling COVID-19*, 2021. At: https://ec.europa.eu/neighbourhood-enlargement/system/files/2021-09/coronavirus_support_eap.pdf, last accessed November 30, 2021.

publication on July the 2nd, 2021 by the European Union of assumptions for developing priorities in a 5-year perspective.¹⁴

In line with the assumptions adopted at that time, an important element of the planned activities will be the implementation of the Economic and Investment Plan in the amount of 2.3 billion EUR. These funds are to be allocated to support activities by individual countries in the form of various grants and financial guarantees in the scope of the activities carried out. It is also worth emphasising the proposal to allocate up to 17 billion EUR for investments in various forms of activity of the public and private sectors. The aim of the measures proposed by the European Union is to provide comprehensive support in combating the impact of the pandemic, as well as strengthening trade, economic growth, employment and support for the democratic model of socio-political transformation.

In this aspect, it is also worth noting that the European Union emphasises the importance of the Eastern Partnership in its agenda, which – according to the declarations presented – remains one of the most important EU programmes. Therefore, the European Union has declared that it will implement measures that are adequate and respond to the challenges and opportunities of contemporary conditions.¹⁵

Eastern Partnership as perceived by the Visegrad Group

When analysing the functioning of the Eastern Partnership, it should be stressed that this programme is one of the crucial aspects of the consultations and activities of the Visegrad Group, within which various proposals and activities in this area are developed. Therefore, it is worth highlighting the official position that was issued on the occasion of the decade of operation Eastern Partnership by the countries of the Visegrad Group. A summary of the programme's functioning was to be the subject of a special meeting of the foreign ministers of the Visegrad Group countries, the Eastern Partnership and Croatia, Germany and Sweden, with the participation of European Union authorities, which was scheduled for April 2020. Due to pandemic conditions and the postponement of this meeting, the heads of diplomacy of the Visegrad Group

¹⁴ European Commission, *Eastern Partnership: A Renewed Agenda for Recovery, Resilience and Reform Underpinned by an Economic and Investment Plan*, Brussels, July 2, 2021. At: https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/IP_21_3367, last accessed November 30, 2021. A vision drawn on the basis of the discussed document from 2020.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*

countries decided to issue a special statement on the future of the Eastern Partnership programme on April the 8th, 2020.¹⁶

In the document, Poland, the Czech Republic, Slovakia and Hungary underlined their appreciation of the programme's achievements to date over the past ten years and confirmed their willingness to adopt an ambitious plan and implement further actions, prepared in cooperation and on the basis of consultations with their partners. The Visegrad countries have also declared their efforts to ensure that the Eastern Partnership programme retains its "strategic importance and priority significance" within the European Union. In this aspect, Poland, the Czech Republic, Slovakia and Hungary pointed out that the Eastern Partnership must focus on and preserve its inclusive character and remain a mechanism for supporting the European integration policies of individual countries. In this respect, however, the differences related to the different level and advancement of cooperation with the European Union must be preserved, which should constitute the basis for a flexible formula of cooperation and implemented activities. The Visegrad Group also came up with the idea of analysing the possibility of justified changes and updating of association agreements as well as the agreements on the Deep Free Trade Area.¹⁷

To implement individual tasks and projects, it was also declared that financial resources would be set aside in the perspective of the next Multiannual Financial Framework. In connection with the outbreak and the ongoing pandemic, the temporary Visegrad Group supported the allocation of additional financial aid by the EU at the level of 140 million EUR, as well as an additional amount of 700 million EUR to fight the social and economic effects of the pandemic. In order to directly support the Eastern Partnership countries in this aspect, the Visegrad Group has also launched a special programme for Eastern Partnership countries called "V4EastSolidarity" aimed at combating the effects of the coronavirus pandemic.¹⁸

The above activities reflect one of the key aspects of the Eastern Partnership, which is the pursuit of economic development and improvement of the economic situation

¹⁶ Ministerstwo Spraw Zagranicznych RP, *The Visegrad Group Joint Statement on the Future of the Eastern Partnership*, April 8, 2020. At: <https://www.gov.pl/web/dyplomacja/wideokonferencja-ministrow-spraw-zagranicznych-v4-poswiecona-partnerstwu-wschodniemu>, last accessed November 30, 2021.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁸ *Ibid.* See also: S. Czarnecki, "Grupa Wyszehradzka i jej rozwój – wspólne inicjatywy, podejścia, stanowiska" ("The Visegrad Group and Its Development – Joint Initiatives, Approaches, Positions"). In: A. Tatarenko (ed.). *Grupa Wyszehradzka w 30. rocznicę powstania. Idea, historia, współpraca* (*The Visegrad Group on Its 30th Anniversary: Idea, History, Cooperation*), Lublin: Instytut Europy Środkowej 2020, p. 93.

of citizens. In this aspect, financial investment plays an important role, the level of which is limited due to various conditions. Hence, one of the aspects of stimulating economic activities on the part of the Visegrad Group in this regard was support for the idea of creating a special agency responsible for investment issues under the Eastern Partnership.¹⁹

It should also be noted that the authorities of the Visegrad Group countries also underlined the aspect mentioned above of the significant change in international conditions and the growing threat to the security of individual countries. In this aspect, the complicated international situation was indicated, which determines the necessity of special action and individual countries' resilience. Therefore, it was emphasised that under the Eastern Partnership, there should be a formula and dedicated tools to help and support in the field of implementation of specific actions aimed at "building resilient societies." This formula includes a broad vision of complementary activities in the field of political, social, economic and security sector processes aimed at strengthening internal regional stability and security. Because of this, the existing threats were also highlighted, including those of a hybrid nature – which should be jointly counteracted thus enhancing the effectiveness and efficiency.²⁰

Association Trio

One of the aspects of the Eastern Partnership programme was the different level of European integration and interest in its further development. Recently, these processes have been deepened and have been reflected in formal institutional decisions. At the beginning of February 2021, the foreign ministers of Ukraine, Georgia and Moldova sent a joint letter to the authorities in Brussels and the European Union Member States, in which they reaffirmed their will to join the community and the vision of the future operation of the Eastern Partnership programme. The ministers of diplomacy emphasised that the Eastern Partnership programme should adequately take into account the will of the European direction of the foreign policy of these countries and propose an "ambitious approach" in the framework of bilateral and multilateral cooperation of those most interested in deepening European integration of states.

¹⁹ Ministerstwo Spraw Zagranicznych RP, *The Visegrad Group Joint Statement...*

²⁰ *Ibid.*

Ukraine, Georgia and Moldova also announced the coordination of activities in the development of a joint package of activities and goals of the Eastern Partnership.²¹

The consequence of the declarations mentioned above were further actions taken by the authorities of Ukraine, Georgia and Moldova related to the establishment of the Association Trio. This initiative was launched during a meeting between the Ukrainian Minister of Foreign Affairs, Dmytro Kuleba, the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs of Georgia, David Zalkaliani, and the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Moldova, Aureliu Ciocoi, which took place in Kiev on May the 17th, 2021.²²

During this meeting, a special memorandum was signed in which Ukraine, Georgia and Moldova underlined the strategic importance of the Eastern Partnership programme and expressed their will to continue to engage in its development. These countries also confirmed their European identity and European choice and their will to obtain membership in the European Union in the future.²³

The document adopted at that time in Kiev can be called both a political declaration of the three countries and a road map for actions and coordination of cooperation in the field of European integration. As for the declarations and goals, the intention of establishing the Association Trio was to create a platform for deepened cooperation and dialogue in the field of European integration between Ukraine, Moldova and Georgia, on the one hand, and the European Union on the other. One of the critical aspects of this cooperation is the Eastern Partnership programme and its activities aimed at further rapprochement of these countries with the European Union. In this

²¹ Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Ukraine, *Україна, Грузія та Молдова висловили спільне бачення подальшого розвитку Східного партнерства у листі до ЄС (Ukraina, Gruzia ta Moldova vislovili spil'ne bachennâ podal'shogo rozvitku Shidnogo partnerstva u listi do ÊS)*, February 2, 2021. At: <https://mfa.gov.ua/news/ukrayina-gruziya-ta-moldova-vislovili-spilne-bachennya-podalshogo-rozvitku-shidnogo-partnerstva-u-listi-do-yes>, last accessed November 30, 2021. See also: "Україна, Молдова і Грузія заявили ЄС про бажання глибокої інтеграції в рамках Східного партнерства" ("Ukraina, Moldova i Gruzia zaâvili ÊS pro bažannâ gliboi integracii v ramkah Shidnogo partnerstva"), *Evropejska Pravda*, February 2, 2021. At: <https://www.eurointegration.com.ua/news/2021/02/2/7119307/>, last accessed November 30, 2021.

²² Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Ukraine, *Дмитро Кулеба: Україна, Грузія та Молдова започаткували Асоційоване Тріо (Dmitro Kuleba: Ukraina, Gruzia ta Moldova zapochatkuvali Asocijovane Trio)*, May 17, 2021. At: <https://mfa.gov.ua/news/dmitro-kuleba-ukrayina-gruziya-ta-moldova-zapochatkuvali-asocijovane-trio>, last accessed November 30, 2021.

²³ Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Ukraine, *Association Trio: Memorandum of Understanding Between the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Ukraine, Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Georgia and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and European Integration of the Republic of Moldova*, May 17, 2021. At: <https://mfa.gov.ua/en/news/association-trio-memorandum-understanding-between-ministry-foreign-affairs-georgia-ministry-foreign-affairs-and-european-integration-republic-moldova-and-ministry-foreign-affairs-ukraine>, last accessed November 30, 2021.

aspect, it was highlighted that the contribution of these countries to cooperation under the programme would take place in parallel with the bilateral form of cooperation with the European Union.²⁴

In terms of the declared will to join the European Union, the Associate Trio countries reaffirmed their engagement and commitments in the scope of further activities aimed at implementing the currently binding association agreements. It should be underlined that, in the opinion of Ukraine, Georgia and Moldova, an important aspect of deepening the European integration process of these countries would be the optimisation of instruments and available tools to the needs and capabilities of these countries. In this aspect, the Associate Trio countries consider it justified to introduce the “more for more” mechanism, which would reflect the progress in the next stages of European integration and objectives measurable for the societies of these countries.²⁵

With the aim of further strategic development of the Eastern Partnership and deepening European integration, the signatories defined the key spheres of cooperation between themselves and with EU structures and member states. These included the expansion of dialogue and cooperation areas aimed at deepening activities in the areas of energy, digital transformation, transport, justice and home affairs and issues of the health care system, which are important in the pandemic period. Ukraine, Georgia and Moldova also spoke out in favour of developing new tools for entering the European Single Market, going beyond the Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Area and joining the framework programmes and agencies of the European Union.²⁶

Taking into account the security conditions and threats to Ukraine, Georgia and Moldova, as well as the experience of the existence of separatist regions, these countries also indicated this aspect of cooperation with the European Union and the area of activities of the Association Trio. Therefore, these three countries emphasised their will to deepen cooperation with the European Union in the field of defence and security policy. In this regard, the interest in joint action aimed at combating hybrid threats, as well as participation in Common Security and Defence Policy operations and ongoing PESCO projects, was stressed.²⁷

²⁴ *Ibid.*

²⁵ *Ibid.*

²⁶ “Україна, Грузія та Молдова створили новий формат співпраці для спільного руху в ЄС” (“Ukraina, Gruzia ta Moldova stvorili novij format spivpraci dla spil'nogo ruhu v ES”), *Evropejska Pravda*, May 17, 2021. At: <https://www.eurointegration.com.ua/news/2021/05/17/7123240/>, last accessed November 30, 2021.

²⁷ Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Ukraine, *Association Trio: Memorandum of Understanding...*

When analysing the assumptions and goals of the Associate Trio, it is also worth noting that within the created formula, specific mechanisms of multilateral cooperation have been provided aimed at implementing activities related to the political goals and the practical dimension. Cooperation within AT will take place based on regular tripartite consultations on current processes and specific activities related to the implemented policy of European integration and activities under the Eastern Partnership programme. Coordination meetings of the Foreign Ministers of the Associate Trio countries are planned before important meetings related to the implementation of the Eastern Partnership activities. However, the Associate Trio Coordinators, who are based in the foreign ministries of the respective countries, are responsible for day-to-day activities in this area.²⁸

It is worth noting that the activities of the Associate Trio were one of the topics of the talks during the last 23 Ukraine-European Union summit, which took place on October the 12th, 2021. In a statement adopted at that time, politicians supported the creation and functioning of this structure as a new format for Euro-Atlantic integration and coordination of the cooperation by Ukraine, Georgia and Moldova. In this aspect, it was announced that a new platform for talks in the European Union-Associate Trio format would be organised in the near future.²⁹

The future of the Eastern Partnership – summary and recommendations

When analysing the functioning of the Eastern Partnership programme, it is necessary to underline the difficulty of having an unambiguous opinion as to its operation and effects. From today's perspective, we are dealing with completely different geopolitical conditions in the region of Central and Eastern Europe and the South Caucasus than at the time of its creation. A different situation also applies to the internal conditions in individual countries, related to socio-political processes, as well as generational

²⁸ *Ibid.*

²⁹ Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Ukraine, “Дмитро Кулеба: Асоційоване тріо створює нові європейські можливості для України, Грузії та Молдови” (“Dmitro Kuleba: Asocijovane trio stvorue novi yevropejs'ki mozhlivosti dla Ukraïni, Gruziï ta Moldovi”), October 13, 2021. At: <https://mfa.gov.ua/news/dmitro-kuleba-asocijovane-trio-stvoryuye-novi-yevropejski-mozhlivosti-dlya-ukrayini-gruziyi-ta-moldovi>, last accessed November 30, 2021. See also: President of Ukraine, “Спільна заява за підсумками 23-го Саміту Україна – Європейський Союз” (“Spil'na zaâva za pidsumkami 23-go Samitu Ukraïna – Êvropejs'kij Soûz”), October 12, 2021. At: <https://www.president.gov.ua/news/spilna-zayava-za-pidsumkami-23-go-samitu-ukrayina-yevropejsk-71037>, last accessed November 30, 2021.

change and the emerging transformational pressure on the part of societies. These processes determine the necessity to change the tools and objectives of the Eastern Partnership as well. As mentioned, the signing of association agreements with three countries and the liberalisation of the visa regime was an important element related to the implementation of the programme's assumptions. The adoption and implementation of these documents, however, did not bring closer the membership prospects of the countries most interested in joining the European Union, which is often mentioned by the authorities of Ukraine, Georgia and Moldova as a significant limitation of the programme.

From today's perspective, one can clearly indicate the existence of two speeds of the programme, related to the intensity and interest in deepening cooperation and joining the European Union in the future. Such a strategic goal in their foreign and security policy is declared by the present authorities of Ukraine, Georgia and Moldova. The appointment of the Associate Trio was certainly an important impetus in this process and the confirmation of the strategic direction of the European policy of these countries. The second group includes the remaining countries whose cooperation within the Eastern Partnership is limited or suspended. Repeated attempts to include Belarus in implemented projects have failed, and the political crisis in that country and the repression of the opposition following the rigged elections in 2020 led to the freezing of cooperation. The current crisis on the border with Belarus has exacerbated the current tense situation and difficult relations due to the confrontational policy of the authorities in Minsk towards Poland and the European Union.

Armenia and Azerbaijan have quite limited forms of cooperation under the programme. The complex relations between these states, resulting from the territorial conflict and the war over Nagorno-Karabakh, have – from the very beginning – affected the usefulness of various multilateral activities. The new outbreak of fighting in 2020 has deepened this process and increased the risk of further phases of conflict in the future, affecting the security situation in the region and cooperation with the European Union. It is also worth noting that in terms of security, other countries are struggling with the existence of separatist regions, and in the case of Ukraine, an ongoing low-intensity conflict, which also affect individual projects under the Eastern Partnership.³⁰

³⁰ “Безпека Східного партнерства: які перспективи відкриті для України” (“Bezpeka Shidnogo partnerstva: âki perspektivi vidkriti dlâ Ukraïni”), *Evropejska Pravda*, March 5, 2021. At: <https://www.eurointegration.com.ua/articles/2021/03/5/7120304/>, last accessed November 30, 2021.

As previously mentioned, the coronavirus pandemic is a vital factor influencing the present shape of the Eastern Partnership and the activities implemented. Therefore, these conditions will be one of the most important in determining the priority directions of the programme development in the coming years.

From today's perspective, it can be concluded that the Eastern Partnership has confirmed its role as a tool for influencing and implementing various forms of cooperation, conducive to the transformation of interested states and building a stable and pro-European neighbourhood. Therefore, the European Union should confirm its will to develop further the Eastern Partnership programme as well as active involvement and support in activities related to combating the effects of the pandemic. In this aspect, it will be necessary to develop further various forms of cooperation adjusted to the level of interest of individual countries. This practical form of cooperation will be accompanied by increasing political pressure from the Association Trio to grant the membership perspective, but taking into account the current internal conditions in the European Union, making such a decision seems unrealistic in the near future. Thus, it is crucial in this aspect to adapt the instruments and tools of the Eastern Partnership to the needs and effectiveness of these countries, as well as to effectively apply the "more for more" formula, indicating specific progress in the transformation process and stages of European integration. Taking into account the current international situation in the region of Central and Eastern Europe, the threats of hybrid war and various interests on the European Union forum, it will also be of key importance to maintain the Eastern Partnership as one of the priority directions of the European Union. It will also be crucial to develop an ambitious cooperation programme in the coming years, which is a real instrument of change for countries interested in rapprochement and further deepening of the European integration process.

References

- Czarnecki S., "Grupa Wyszehradzka i jej rozwój – wspólne inicjatywy, podejścia, stanowiska" ("The Visegrad Group and Its Development – Joint Initiatives, Approaches, Positions"). In: A. Tatarenko (ed.). *Grupa Wyszehradzka w 30. rocznicę powstania. Idea, historia, współpraca* (*The Visegrad Group on Its 30th Anniversary: Idea, History, Cooperation*), Lublin: Instytut Europy Środkowej 2020, pp. 79–97.
- Eastern Partnership, *20 Deliverables for 2020: State of Play in 2018*, 2018. At: https://www.eu-neighbours.eu/sites/default/files/publications/2018-10/EAP%20GENERIC%20FACTS-HEET%20ENG_WEB_0.pdf.

- Eastern Partnership, *Council Conclusions on Eastern Partnership Policy Beyond 2020*. At: https://eeas.europa.eu/sites/eeas/files/eap_joint_communication_factsheet_18.03.en.pdf.
- Eastern Partnership, *The Eastern Partnership beyond 2020: Reinforcing Resilience – an Eastern Partnership that Delivers for All*, 2018. At: https://eeas.europa.eu/sites/eeas/files/eap_joint_communication_factsheet_18.03.en_.pdf.
- European Commission, *Eastern Partnership: A Renewed Agenda for Recovery, Resilience and Reform Underpinned by an Economic and Investment Plan*, Brussels, July 2, 2021. At: https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/IP_21_3367.
- European Commission, *EU Support to Eastern Partnership Countries in Tackling COVID-19*, 2021. At: https://ec.europa.eu/neighbourhood-enlargement/system/files/2021-09/coronavirus_support_eap.pdf.
- Europe Council, *20 Deliverables for 2020*. At: <https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/policies/eastern-partnership/20-deliverables-for-2020/>.
- European Council, *Eastern Partnership Foreign Ministers Meeting*, May 13, 2019. At: <https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/meetings/international-ministerial-meetings/2019/05/13/>.
- European Council, *Eastern Partnership Foreign Ministers' Meeting: Chair's Conclusions on the Occasion of the Eastern Partnership 10th Anniversary*, May 13, 2019. At: <https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/press/press-releases/2019/05/13/eastern-partnership-foreign-ministers-meeting-chair-s-conclusions-on-the-occasion-of-the-eastern-partnership-10th-anniversary/>.
- European Council, *Eastern Partnership Policy Beyond 2020: Council Approves Conclusions*, May 11, 2020. At: <https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/press/press-releases/2020/05/11/eastern-partnership-policy-beyond-2020-council-approves-conclusions/>.
- European Council, *European Council Conclusions on the MFF, Climate Change, Disinformation and Hybrid Threats, External Relations, Enlargement and the European Semester*, June 20, 2019. At: <https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/press/press-releases/2019/06/20/european-council-conclusions-20-june-2019/>.
- European Council, *Press Release. Extraordinary Meeting General Affairs and External Relations*, no. 12453/08 (Presse 236), August 13, 2008. At: http://eeas.europa.eu/archives/delegations/georgia/documents/eu_georgia/13august2008_en.pdf.
- Europe Council, *Wspólna deklaracja przyjęta podczas szczytu partnerstwa wschodniego w Pradze*, no. 8435/09 (Presse 78), Prague, May 7, 2009. At: https://www.consilium.europa.eu/ueDocs/cms_Data/docs/pressdata/PL/er/107647.pdf.
- Europe Council, *Wspólna deklaracja ze szczytu Partnerstwa Wschodniego*, Brussels, November 24, 2017. At: <https://www.consilium.europa.eu/pl/press/press-releases/2017/11/24/eastern-partnership-summit-joint-declaration/>.
- Kubiak M., "Jaka będzie przyszłość Partnerstwa Wschodniego?" ("What will be the future of the Eastern Partnership?"), *The Warsaw Institute Review*, October 26, 2019. At: <https://warsawinstitute.org/pl/jaka-bedzie-przyszlosc-partnerstwa-wschodniego/>.
- Ministerstwo Spraw Zagranicznych RP, *The Visegrad Group Joint Statement on the Future of the Eastern Partnership*, April 8, 2020. At: <https://www.gov.pl/web/dyplomacja/wideokonferencja-ministrow-spraw-zagranicznych-v4-poswiecona-partnerstwu-wschodniemu>.

Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Ukraine, *Association Trio: Memorandum of Understanding Between the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Ukraine, Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Georgia and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and European Integration of the Republic of Moldova*, May 17, 2021. At: <https://mfa.gov.ua/en/news/association-trio-memorandum-understanding-between-ministry-foreign-affairs-georgia-ministry-foreign-affairs-and-european-integration-republic-moldova-and-ministry-foreign-affairs-ukraine>.

Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Ukraine, “Дмитро Кулеба: Асоційоване тріо створює нові європейські можливості для України, Грузії та Молдови” (“Dmitro Kuleba: Asocijovane trio stvorue novi evropejs’ki možlivosti dla Ukraïni, Gruzii ta Moldovi”), October 13, 2021. At: <https://mfa.gov.ua/news/dmitro-kuleba-asocijovane-trio-stvoruyue-novi-yevropejski-mozhlivosti-dlya-ukrayini-gruziyi-ta-moldovi>.

Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Ukraine, *Дмитро Кулеба: Україна, Грузія та Молдова започаткували Асоційоване Тріо (Dmitro Kuleba: Ukraïna, Gruziâ ta Moldova za-počatkuvali Asocijovane Trio)*, May 17, 2021. At: <https://mfa.gov.ua/news/dmitro-kuleba-ukrayina-gruziya-ta-moldova-zapochatkuvali-asocijovane-trio>.

Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Ukraine, *Україна, Грузія та Молдова висловили спільне бачення подальшого розвитку Східного партнерства у листі до ЄС (Ukraïna, Gruziâ ta Moldova vislovili spil’ne bačennâ podal’shogo rozvitku Shidnogo partnerstva u listi do ÊS)*, February 2, 2021. At: <https://mfa.gov.ua/news/ukrayina-gruziya-ta-moldova-vislovili-spilne-bachennya-podalshogo-rozvitku-shidnogo-partnerstva-u-listi-do-yes>.

NATO, *Bucharest Summit Declaration Issued by the Heads of State and Government Participating in the Meeting of the North Atlantic Council in Bucharest on 3 April 2008*, April 3, 2008. At: https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natolive/official_texts_8443.htm.

President of Russia, *Press Statement and Answers to Journalists’ Questions Following a Meeting of the Russia-NATO Council*, April 4, 2008. At: <http://en.kremlin.ru/events/president/transcripts/24903>.

President of Ukraine, “Спільна заява за підсумками 23-го Саміту Україна – Європейський Союз” (“Spil’na zaâva za pidsumkami 23-go Samitu Ukraïna – Êvropejs’kij Soûz”), October 12, 2021. At: <https://www.president.gov.ua/news/spilna-zayava-za-pidsumkami-23-go-samitu-ukrayina-yevropejsk-71037>.

“Безпека Східного партнерства: які перспективи відкриті для України” (“Bezpeka Shidnogo partnerstva: âki perspektivi vidkriti dlâ Ukraïni”), *Evropejska Pravda*, March 5, 2021. At: <https://www.eurointegration.com.ua/articles/2021/03/5/7120304>.

“Україна, Грузія та Молдова створили новий формат співпраці для спільного руху в ЄС” (“Ukraïna, Gruziâ ta Moldova stvorili novij format spivpraci dlâ spil’nogo ruhu v ÊS”), *Evropejska Pravda*, May 17, 2021. At: <https://www.eurointegration.com.ua/news/2021/05/17/7123240/>.

“Україна, Молдова і Грузія заявили ЄС про бажання глибокої інтеграції в рамках Східного партнерства” (“Ukraïna, Moldova i Gruziâ zaâvili ÊS pro bažannâ gliboïï integracii v ramach Shidnogo partnerstva”), *Evropejska Pravda*, February 2, 2021. At: <https://www.eurointegration.com.ua/news/2021/02/2/7119307/>.

The publication contains a collection of articles devoted to the most important aspects related to the process of transformation of the countries of Central and Eastern Europe and the South Caucasus under the Eastern Partnership program. The book covers the results of a research project by an international team of scientists who present their findings on the policy of European integration, the role and importance of the Eastern Partnership in the process of change, and give recommendations for its implementation and activities in the future.



<https://akademicka.pl>

