

# 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





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**133**

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**edited by  
PIOTR BAJOR**




**Kraków**

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Piotr Bajor

Jagiellonian University in Kraków, Poland

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

 [piotr.bajor@uj.edu.pl](mailto:piotr.bajor@uj.edu.pl)

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OLESIA TKACHUK 

*Jagiellonian University in Kraków*

## Successes and Failures in the Implementation of the Eastern Partnership Objectives in a Changing Security Environment

**ABSTRACT:** The Eastern Partnership (EaP) is a Polish-Swedish initiative to strengthen cooperation between the European Union (EU) and its eastern neighbours in both bilateral and multilateral dimensions. The programme was inaugurated in May 2009; as the eastern dimension of the European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP), it was intended to help initiate or accelerate the political and economic transformation of the partner countries and bring them closer to the EU, thus stabilising the eastern neighbourhood of the EU and strengthening European security. However, over the past twelve years, the security environment of the EU and the region of Eastern Europe and the South Caucasus have undergone significant transformations, and new challenges and threats have emerged requiring active measures to counteract them effectively. Consequently, the initial goals and objectives of the EaP were updated. The aims of this paper are to analyse the new objectives of the Eastern Partnership proposed by the EU in the context of the changing security environment and closer relations with the eastern neighbours of the EU, and to show the prospects for further development of the eastern dimension of the ENP.

KEYWORDS: European Union, Eastern Partnership, partner countries, objectives, successes and failures

## Introduction

Cooperation between the European Union and the six neighbouring countries participating in the Eastern Partnership (EaP) regional programme (Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine) has undergone significant transformations in recent years. First and foremost, this was associated with changes in the realm of European security which occurred as a result of, *inter alia*, the outbreak of the armed conflict in eastern Ukraine and the annexation of Crimea by Russia, the civil wars in Libya and Syria, the increase in illegal migration and refugee flows, successive terrorist attacks in EU Member States, and tensions in Asia and the Middle East. Under the influence of these factors, work was undertaken at the EU forum to adjust the aims, objectives and principles of the European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP), as well as the two programmes defining its southern dimension (Union for the Mediterranean) and the eastern one (Eastern Partnership) to the changing reality.<sup>1</sup> The result of this work became a joint Communication from the European Commission and the High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy entitled 'Review of the European Neighbourhood Policy,' published on 18th November 2015.<sup>2</sup> It stated that the ENP, launched in 2004 to help the EU support and promote stability, security and prosperity in neighbouring countries, should be the focus of a more coherent effort by the EU and the Member States, as the EU is more influential when united

<sup>1</sup> A. Kalicka-Mikołajczyk, *Europejska Polityka Sąsiedztwa. Konstrukcja i charakter prawny*, Wrocław: E-Wydawnictwo 2021, pp. 52–58.

<sup>2</sup> Apart from the Review of the European Neighbourhood Policy in 2015, the evaluation of its functioning and the updating of the objectives and principles of the policy have been carried out three times since its establishment in 2004: in 2006 – European Commission, *Komunikat Komisji do Rady i Parlamentu Europejskiego w sprawie wzmocnienia Europejskiej Polityki Sąsiedztwa*, COM(2006) 726 wersja ostateczna, Bruksela, December 4, 2006. At: <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/PL/LSU/?uri=CELEX:52006DC0726>, last accessed November 20, 2021; in 2007 – European Commission, *Komunikat Komisji do Parlamentu Europejskiego i Rady. Silna Europejska Polityka Sąsiedztwa*, KOM(2007) 774 wersja ostateczna, Bruksela, December 5, 2007. At: <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=COM:2007:0774:FIN:PL:PDF>, last accessed November 20, 2021; and in 2011 – European Council, *Wspólny Komunikat do Parlamentu Europejskiego, Rady, Europejskiego Komitetu Ekonomiczno-Społecznego i Komitetu Regionów. Nowa koncepcja działań w obliczu zmian zachodzących w sąsiedztwie*, KOM(2011) 303 wersja ostateczna, Bruksela, May 25, 2011. At: <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=COM:2011:0303:FIN:pl:PDF>, last accessed November 20, 2021.

in a common approach and communicating a single message.<sup>3</sup> It further underlined that stabilisation is one of the major challenges in many neighbouring countries, and the EU will therefore seek to stabilise the neighbourhood by addressing the causes of instability: poverty, inequality, perceived sense of injustice, corruption, and weak economic and social development. The Communication also points to the need to strengthen the resilience of the EU's partners in the face of external pressures and crises, support their economic development for stability, deepen the cooperation on security, mobility, migration and energy, and to make the partnerships between the EU and each neighbouring country more individualised and differentiated to take account of their different ambitions, capacities and interests, and thus the need to create different models of relations, allowing greater self-responsibility on both sides.<sup>4</sup> It is also worth mentioning that the Multiannual Financial Framework (MFF) for 2021–2027 has significantly increased the funding allocated to the Neighbourhood, International and Development Cooperation Instrument to EUR 70.8b in 2018 prices<sup>5</sup> (in the financial perspective of 2014–2020, the budget of the European Neighbourhood Instrument was approx. EUR 15.4b).<sup>6</sup> These changes should make the implementation of the main objectives of the ENP more flexible and effective.

In the case of the Eastern Partnership, the need to update the objectives and principles of the programme – apart from the above considerations – was also dictated by the diversity of the partner countries in terms of their aspirations and progress made. The cooperation of the EU with Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine is based on the implementation of the provisions of association agreements, including the agreements establishing the Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Area (DCFTA). These countries have also shown a willingness to deepen relations with the EU. Cooperation with Azerbaijan, in turn, is based on the Partnership and Cooperation Agreement (PCA), which entered into force in 1999. It is to be replaced by a new comprehensive

<sup>3</sup> European Council, *Wspólny Komunikat do Parlamentu Europejskiego, Rady, Europejskiego Komitetu Ekonomiczno-Społecznego i Komitetu Regionów. Przegląd Europejskiej Polityki Sąsiedztwa*, JOIN(2015) 50 final, Bruksela, November 18, 2015, pp. 2–5. At: <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=JOIN:2015:0050:FIN:PL:PDF>, last accessed November 20, 2021.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 4–25.

<sup>5</sup> However, it should be borne in mind that the thematic scope of the Neighbourhood, Development and International Cooperation Instrument has been considerably extended compared with the European Neighbourhood Instrument, as it combines ten separate instruments and funds existing in the MFF 2014–2020, as well as the European Development Fund, which has so far remained outside the general EU budget.

<sup>6</sup> V. Lilyanova, European Parliament, *Neighbourhood and the World. Heading 6 of the 2021–2027 MFF*, April 2021, pp. 1–12. At: [https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/BRIE/2021/690546/EPRS\\_BRI\(2021\)690546\\_EN.pdf](https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/BRIE/2021/690546/EPRS_BRI(2021)690546_EN.pdf), last accessed September 16, 2021.

agreement, under negotiations since 2017. Moreover, this country is only interested in deepening cooperation in selected economic sectors (primarily mobility and energy). In the case of Armenia, bilateral relations with the EU are based on the Comprehensive and Enhanced Partnership Agreement signed in November 2017, and they mainly focus on developing economic and trade cooperation. As for Belarus, relations with this country are developed in a rather limited scope, which is related to the violation of fundamental freedoms, rule of law and human rights by the Belarusian authorities.<sup>7</sup> Taking the above factors into account, the EU has updated the EaP goals twice in the last four years, first by setting '20 Deliverables for 2020' and later by defining new long-term goals for the post-2020 period.

The aim of this paper is to analyse the new objectives of the Eastern Partnership proposed by the European Union in the context of the changing security environment and closer relations with the eastern neighbours of the EU, as well as to show the prospects for further development of the eastern dimension of the ENP. This requires answering the following research questions: what were the original goals and objectives of the Eastern Partnership and to what extent have they been modified in recent years? What successes and failures can be identified in their implementation? What are the prospects for the development of the EaP, taking into account the aspirations of the individual partner countries? The paper poses a research hypothesis that the EU has set ambitious goals for the Eastern Partnership programme, the implementation of which not only positively influences the political, economic and social transformation of the eastern neighbours of the EU, but also contributes to the stabilisation of the EU neighbourhood and increases the chances of the ENP meeting the current security challenges in the region of Eastern Europe and the South Caucasus.

## Eastern Partnership as part of the European Neighbourhood Policy of the EU – essence, objectives and principles

The Polish-Swedish proposal to establish an Eastern Partnership programme was first presented in May 2008 during a meeting of the General Affairs and External Relations Council. Its primary objective was to deepen cooperation between the EU

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<sup>7</sup> A. Kalicka-Mikołajczyk, *Europejska Polityka Sąsiedztwa...*, pp. 53, 76–77; M. Czermińska, "Europejskie Partnerstwo Wschodnie – wymiar polityczny, ekonomiczny i bezpieczeństwa zacieśniania stosunków ze wschodnimi sąsiadami Unii Europejskiej", *Krakowskie Studia Międzynarodowe*, vol. 2 (2020), pp. 200–208.

and the eastern partner countries in both its bilateral and multilateral dimensions. The European Council, which convened in Brussels on 19th–20th June 2008, welcomed the initiative and asked the European Commission to prepare, by spring 2009, detailed rules and mechanisms for implementing the goals of the EaP programme. However, due to events that took place in the post-Soviet space at that time and in particular due to the outbreak of the Russian-Georgian conflict, the European Commission was asked to accelerate the work on the EaP objectives. Eventually, on 3rd December 2008, a communication entitled ‘Eastern Partnership’ was presented.<sup>8</sup>

The December document stated that the EaP initiative ‘should bring a lasting political message of EU solidarity, alongside additional, tangible support’ for partner countries’ ‘democratic and market-oriented reforms and the consolidation of their statehood and territorial integrity.’ It added that the ‘guiding principle should be to offer the maximum possible in forging closer relations, taking into account political and economic realities and the state of reforms of the partner concerned’. The Communication also stressed that cooperation between the EU and its eastern neighbours would be based on ‘mutual commitments to the rule of law, good governance, respect for human rights, respect for and protection of minorities, and the principles of the market economy and sustainable development.’<sup>9</sup> It is worth noting that the text of the document does not address the question of possible accession of the partner countries to the European Union, but it does mention the intensification of cooperation between the EU and the countries of Eastern Europe and the South Caucasus in the bilateral and multilateral dimensions.

With regard to bilateral relations, it is proposed: to replace the existing Partnership and Cooperation Agreements with Association Agreements; to provide the

<sup>8</sup> A.K. Cianciara, *Partnerstwo Wschodnie 2009–2014. Geneza, funkcjonowanie, uwarunkowania*, Warszawa: ISP PAN 2014, pp. 36–45; A. Kalicka-Mikołajczyk, *Europejska Polityka Sąsiedztwa...*, pp. 135–136; C. Hillion, A. Mayhew, “The Eastern Partnership – Something New or Window-Dressing”, *SEI Working Paper*, vol. 109 (2009), pp. 4–5; K. Ежова, А. Ежов, «Восточное партнерство» – механизм сотрудничества ЕС на постсоветском пространстве. In: П. Байор (ed.), *Восточное Партнерство. Цели – опыт – вызовы. Анализ процесса имплементации в государствах охваченных программой*, Краков: Ксиенгарния Академицка 2013, p. 88 (K. Yezhova, A. Yezhov, ‘Eastern Partnership’ – EU Cooperation Mechanism in the Post-Soviet Area. In: P. Bajor (ed.), *Eastern Partnership. Objectives – Experience – Challenges. Analysis of the Implementation Process in the Countries Participating in the Programme*, Kraków: Księgarnia Akademicka 2013, p. 88); J. Truszczyński, *Partnerstwo Wschodnie – geneza i wstępny bilans*. In: M. Grela, Z. Rapacki (eds.), *Partnerstwo Wschodnie Unii Europejskiej*, Warszawa: Akademia Finansów i Biznesu Vistula 2016, pp. 16–17.

<sup>9</sup> European Commission, *Komunikat Komisji do Parlamentu Europejskiego i Rady. Partnerstwo wschodnie*, KOM(2008) 823 wersja ostateczna, Bruksela, December 3, 2008, pp. 2–3. At: <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=COM:2008:0823:FIN:PL:PDF>, last accessed November 20, 2021.

option of integration into the EU economy through the establishment of Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Areas, ultimately leading to the creation of a network of free trade zones, and in the longer term to the establishment of a Neighbourhood Economic Community; to gradually liberalise the EU visa regime; to deepen cooperation in terms of strengthening energy security; and to provide support in terms of economic and social policies to reduce differences within each partner country and across their borders.<sup>10</sup>

While the above postulates for the development of bilateral relations had been voiced in the EU forum in the context of strengthening the ENP even prior to the Polish-Swedish initiative (e.g. negotiations between the EU and Ukraine on a new Association Agreement began on 5th March 2007), the definition of the multilateral cooperation framework, on the other hand, represented something of a *novum*.<sup>11</sup> The Communication from the European Commission stated that the multilateral dimension of the EaP should consist of the following levels: biennial meetings of the heads of states and governments of the partner countries; annual meetings of the foreign ministers of the EU and the partner countries; four thematic platforms, with senior officials meeting at least biannually, committed to reforms in specific policy areas (it was submitted that these should concern: 1) democracy, good governance and stability; 2) economic integration and convergence with EU policies; 3) energy security; and 4) people-to-people contacts); and panels supporting the work of the thematic platforms. Furthermore, it was added that the goals of the EaP could be pursued through the so-called Flagship Initiatives, which would include integrated border management systems; facilitation for small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs); promotion of regional energy markets, energy efficiency and renewable energy sources; development of the Southern Energy Corridor; and cooperation in responding to natural and man-made disasters. Also worth mentioning is the proposal to involve civil society by setting up a Civil Society Forum and to develop interparliamentary cooperation by making the EuroNest Parliamentary Assembly an integral part of the EaP.<sup>12</sup>

According to the above-mentioned proposals of the European Commission, the EaP was to provide 'a forum for the exchange of information and experience concerning efforts made by partner countries for transition, reform and modernisation, as well as

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 3–10.

<sup>11</sup> A.K. Cianciara, *Partnerstwo Wschodnie 2009–2014...*, pp. 33–35, 40–41, 46–47; O. Lugina, „O krok bliżej do Unii – Nowa Umowa Stowarzyszeniowa między Ukrainą a UE”, *Rocznik Integracji Europejskiej*, vol. 3 (2009), pp. 219.

<sup>12</sup> European Commission, *Komunikat Komisji do Parlamentu Europejskiego i Rady. Partnerstwo wschodnie...*, pp. 10–15.

an additional EU instrument to support these processes'. It was also stressed that the multilateral cooperation framework outlined above would ensure the organisation of meetings between the relevant services of the European Commission and experts from the Member States aimed at presenting and explaining EU legislation and standards and comparing them with national policies and legislations. Thus, the EaP will initiate a gradual process of structured approximation of the partner countries to the EU.<sup>13</sup>

The inaugural Eastern Partnership Summit took place on 7th May 2009. The final declaration of the summit stressed that the main goal of the programme was to 'create the necessary conditions to accelerate political association and further economic integration between the European Union and interested partner countries.'<sup>14</sup> In subsequent years, this objective was supplemented and modified, taking into account new challenges and threats to European security and developments in the neighbourhood of the EU. Worthy of note are the measures taken to update the EaP objectives over the past four years, as they reflect the current shape of the programme and outline the immediate perspective on its development. First of all, it is important to mention the results of the latest Eastern Partnership Summit, which took place on 24th November 2017 in Brussels. At that time, 20 key goals were approved, which should be achieved by 2020, in the four priority areas agreed on at the EaP Summit in Riga on 21st–22nd May 2015.<sup>15</sup> These are: 1) a stronger economy (improving the investment and business environment, unlocking the growth potential of SMEs; creating new jobs at local and regional levels; promoting trade between parties; harmonising digital markets, etc.); 2) better governance (strengthening the rule of law and anti-corruption mechanisms; supporting implementation of key reforms in the judiciary and public administration; reinforcing cooperation on security); 3) greater connectivity (expanding the core TEN-T networks and transport; enhancing security of energy supply and the use of renewable energy, and reducing greenhouse gas emissions; ensuring environmental protection and mitigating the effects of climate change); and 4) a stronger society (advancing the dialogue on visa liberalisation, providing support for the implementation of partnerships for mobility; increasing investments in young people's skills as well as their entrepreneurship and employability; establishment of

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 10–11.

<sup>14</sup> Council of the European Union, *Joint Declaration of the Prague Eastern Partnership Summit Prague, 7 May 2009*, 8435/09 (Presse 78), Brussels, May 7, 2009, p. 6. At: [https://www.consilium.europa.eu/media/31797/2009\\_eap\\_declaration.pdf](https://www.consilium.europa.eu/media/31797/2009_eap_declaration.pdf), last accessed November 20, 2021.

<sup>15</sup> European Council, *Wspólna deklaracja ze szczytu Partnerstwa Wschodniego, Bruksela, 24 listopada 2017 r.*, 14821/17, Bruksela, November 24, 2019, pp. 1, 11. At: <https://data.consilium.europa.eu/doc/document/ST-14821-2017-INIT/pl/pdf>, last accessed November 20, 2021.



the European School for Eastern Partnership; and integration of the EU and EaP research and innovation systems). These were supplemented with three cross-cutting objectives: greater outreach to civil society organisations; enhancing gender equality and non-discrimination; and strengthening strategic communication while supporting media pluralism and independence.<sup>16</sup>

As for the ongoing armed conflicts in the partner countries, the final declaration of the last EaP summit in Brussels only called for their peaceful resolution in accordance with the principles and norms of international law. With regard to the EU's involvement in resolving these conflicts and building trust between the conflicting parties, the summit welcomed the EU's 'efforts and strengthened role' in this matter.<sup>17</sup>

The implementation of the above objectives and the strengthening of cooperation between the European Union and the Eastern neighbours – conditional on the level of ambition, objectives and needs of the partners and the pace and quality of the reforms, and based on the EU's use of the incentive instrument ('more for more')<sup>18</sup> – was expected to lead to the strengthening of the resilience of states, economies and societies in both the EU and the partner countries. That statement was in line with the appeals contained in the 2015 ENP Review and the 2016 Global Strategy for the European Union's Foreign and Security Policy.<sup>19</sup> The emphasis on strengthening resilience also featured in the Communication of 18th March 2020 entitled 'Eastern Partnership policy beyond 2020: Reinforcing Resilience – an Eastern Partnership that delivers for all.' It defines five policy objectives for the EaP, stressing that in the long-term perspective, the European Union, its Member States and partner countries will work together towards: 1) resilient, sustainable and integrated economies; 2) accountable institutions, rule of law and security; 3) environmental resilience and resilience to climate change; 4) resilient digital transformation; and 5) resilient, equitable and inclusive societies.<sup>20</sup> With regard to the implementation of the above objectives, the Communication confirmed that this would be facilitated by the existing bilateral

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 11–19; 20 celów na 2020 rok, 2017. At: <https://www.consilium.europa.eu/pl/policies/eastern-partnership/20-deliverables-for-2020/>, last update June 16, 2020, last accessed September 23, 2021.

<sup>17</sup> European Council, *Wspólna deklaracja ze szczytu Partnerstwa Wschodniego...*, p. 3.

<sup>18</sup> The 'more for more' principle makes the amount of EU financial support to partner countries conditional on their progress in implementing internal democratic and economic reforms.

<sup>19</sup> European Council, *Wspólna deklaracja ze szczytu Partnerstwa Wschodniego...*, pp. 2–11.

<sup>20</sup> European Council, *Wspólny Komunikat do Parlamentu Europejskiego, Rady Europejskiej, Rady Europejskiego Komitetu Ekonomiczno-Społecznego i Komitetu Regionów. Polityka Partnerstwa Wschodniego po 2020 r. Wzmacnianie odporności – Partnerstwo Wschodnie, które służy wszystkimi*, JOIN(2020) 7 final, Bruksela, March 18, 2020, p. 5. At: <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/PL/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:52020JC0007&from=EN>, last accessed November 20, 2021.



cooperation framework and the new multilateral architecture of the EaP adopted at the 2017 Summit.<sup>21</sup> Furthermore, it was acknowledged that the incentive instrument used so far requires ‘clearer guidance on specific reform priorities’ with objective, precise, detailed and verifiable benchmarks. It was stated that the progress achieved by the partner countries in implementing the reforms should result in an increase in the amount of EU financial support. On the other hand, in the event of any serious or prolonged stagnation or even backsliding in reform implementation, the amount of EU financial support should be decreased ‘with the exception of support to civil society.’<sup>22</sup>

## Implementation of Eastern Partnership Objectives – successes and failures

*‘In the European Union, we value the Eastern Partnership enormously. Notwithstanding difficulties and problems that we still face in the region, our partnership has managed to take forward our common work on trade, economic development, human rights, the role of civil society, visa liberalisation and in many other fields.’<sup>23</sup>*

– Federica Mogherini,  
High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy

In assessing the implementation of the Eastern Partnership Objectives, attention should first be paid to change of the contractual basis for the development of bilateral relations between the EU and the partner countries. Admittedly, this goal has only been achieved in part, as only three out of the six partner countries have signed Association

<sup>21</sup> The revised EaP multilateral cooperation structure includes four platforms transformed into cross-sectoral forums in line with the four priority areas adopted at the Riga Summit in 2015. They act as a link between the panels where in-depth discussions take place (the platforms provide them with political guidelines) and the meetings of high-level officials that provide general guidance, identify synergies and monitor the whole process (the platforms prepare reports for them). During the EaP Riga Summit it was accepted that such a structure ‘will be operationalised through an inclusive and results-oriented process’ – see further: European Council, *Wspólna deklaracja ze szczytu Partnerstwa Wschodniego...*, pp. 20–21.

<sup>22</sup> European Council, *Wspólny Komunikat do Parlamentu Europejskiego, Rady Europejskiej, Rady Europejskiego Komitetu Ekonomiczno-Społecznego i Komitetu Regionów. Polityka Partnerstwa Wschodniego po 2020...*, pp. 4, 19.

<sup>23</sup> *10 lat Partnerstwa Wschodniego*, 2019. At: <https://www.consilium.europa.eu/pl/policies/eastern-partnership/ten-years-of-the-eastern-partnership/>, last update August 11, 2021, last accessed November 20, 2021.

Agreements (including DCFTA): Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine. Armenia, however, despite finalising the Association Agreement with the EU, eventually opted out of signing an Association Agreement and later joined the Eurasian Economic Union – a regional economic integration organisation that also includes Belarus, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Russia.<sup>24</sup> Nevertheless, since 2017, the Comprehensive and Enhanced Partnership Agreement has been the basis for relations between the European Union and Armenia. In the case of Azerbaijan, negotiations on a new comprehensive agreement started in 2017. As for Belarus, it is the only EaP country with which relations are still based on the Agreement on Trade and Commercial and Economic Cooperation concluded on 18th December 1989 between the European Communities and the Soviet Union.<sup>25</sup> This is due to the continued violation of democratic principles and human rights by the Belarusian authorities, which has prevented the ratification of the Partnership and Cooperation Agreement between the EU and Belarus signed in 1995 and the adoption of the ENP Action Plan containing plans for political, economic and social reforms in the neighbouring countries.<sup>26</sup>

Significant progress has been made in the bilateral visa dialogue. Visa-free regimes between the EU and these countries have been in place with Moldova since 2014 and with Georgia and Ukraine since 2017. These partner countries have also fully implemented the readmission agreements. There are also visa facilitation and readmission agreements in force between the EU and the three remaining EaP countries (for Armenia and Azerbaijan since 2014, and for Belarus since 2020).<sup>27</sup>

As regards sectoral cooperation between the EU and its eastern neighbours, it is worth noting the intensification of trade between the parties. Taken together, the partner countries rank 10th among the EU's largest trading partners. The EU is the most

<sup>24</sup> *The Eurasian Economic Union*. At: <http://www.eaeunion.org/?lang=en#about>, last accessed November 20, 2021; *Armenia and the EU*, 2016. At: [https://eeas.europa.eu/delegations/armenia/896/node/896\\_ky](https://eeas.europa.eu/delegations/armenia/896/node/896_ky), last update May 11, 2016, last accessed November 20, 2021.

<sup>25</sup> European Union, *Umowa między Europejską Wspólnotą Gospodarczą i Europejską Wspólnotą Energii Atomowej a Związkiem Socjalistycznych Republik Radzieckich w sprawie wymiany handlowej i współpracy handlowej i gospodarczej*, Dz.U. UE L, nr 68 (1990), pp. 3–20.

<sup>26</sup> O. Tkachuk, *Reakcja Unii Europejskiej na sytuację na Białorusi po wyborach prezydenckich w 2020 r.* In: Я. Турчин, Т. Астратович-Лейк, О. Горбач (eds.), *Східна політика Європейського Союзу: здобутки, виклики та перспективи*, Львів–Оlsztyn: Instytut Nauk Politycznych UWM w Olsztynie 2021, (Ya. Turchyn, T. Astramowicz-Leyk, O. Horbach (eds.), *Eastern Policy of the European Union: Achievements, Challenges and Prospects*, Lviv–Olsztyn: Instytut Nauk Politycznych UWM 2021), pp. 94–95.

<sup>27</sup> European Council, *Wspólny Komunikat do Parlamentu Europejskiego, Rady Europejskiej, Rady Europejskiego Komitetu Ekonomiczno-Społecznego i Komitetu Regionów. Polityka Partnerstwa Wschodniego po 2020...*, p. 3.

important trading bloc for four countries, Azerbaijan, Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine, while for Belarus the EU is the second largest trading partner.<sup>28</sup> For Armenia, trade with the EU accounted for approx. 18% of the total trade of this country in 2020.<sup>29</sup> Moreover, the number of companies exporting from Georgia to the EU has increased by 35% since 2015, from Moldova by 40% and from Ukraine by 26%.<sup>30</sup> The progress in implementation of the '20 Deliverables for 2020' adopted in the final declaration of the EaP Summit held on 24th November 2017 in Brussels is presented in Table 1.

**Table 1. Progress in implementation of the 20 Deliverables for 2020 specified as part of the EaP**

CROSS-CUTTING DELIVERABLES	STATUS	CHANGE
1 – More engagement with civil society organisations	++	↑
2 – Increase gender equality and non-discrimination	+	↑
3 – Strengthen strategic communications and support plurality and independence of media	+	↑
<b>STRONGER ECONOMY</b>		
4 – Improve the investment and business environment and unlock Small and Medium-sized Enterprises' growth potential	+	↑
5 – Create new job opportunities at the local and regional levels	++	↑
6 – Address gaps in access to finance and financial infrastructure	++	~
7 – Harmonise digital markets	++	~
8 – Support trade among partner countries and between them and the EU	++	~
<b>STRONGER GOVERNANCE</b>		
9 – Strengthen the rule of law and anti-corruption	+	~
10 – Support the implementation of key judicial reforms	+	~
11 – Support the implementation of public administration reform	++	↑
12 – Stronger security cooperation	++	~
<b>STRONGER CONNECTIVITY</b>		
13 – Extend TEN-T core networks transport	++	↑

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 6.

<sup>29</sup> *Countries and Regions. Armenia*. At: <https://ec.europa.eu/trade/policy/countries-and-regions/countries/armenia/>, last update June 15, 2021, last accessed November 20, 2021.

<sup>30</sup> *Top 10 Achievements of the Eastern Partnership in the Last 10 Years*, p. 2. At: [https://www.eu-neighbours.eu/sites/default/files/publications/2019-05/Factsheet\\_EAP\\_10Years\\_2019\\_EN\\_0.pdf](https://www.eu-neighbours.eu/sites/default/files/publications/2019-05/Factsheet_EAP_10Years_2019_EN_0.pdf), last accessed November 20, 2021.

14 – Mitigate climate change: Enhancing energy efficiency and the use of renewable energy and reducing Greenhouse Gas emissions	++	↑
15 – Increase energy supply security	+	↑
16 – Support the environment and adaptation to climate change	++	↑
<b>STRONGER SOCIETY</b>		
17 – Make progress on Visa Liberalisation Dialogues and Mobility Partnership	++	~
18 – Strengthen investment in young people's skills, entrepreneurship and employability	++	↑
19 – Establish an Eastern Partnership European school	+++	↑
20 – Integrate Eastern Partnership and EU research and innovation systems and programmes	++	~
<b>IMPLEMENTATION SINCE 2016</b>	+++ COMPLETED	++ ON TRACK
<b>CHANGES SINCE FEBRUARY 2020</b>	~ NO CHANGE	↑ PROGRESS
	+ LIMITED PROGRESS	

Source: *Joint Staff Working Document. Recovery, Resilience and Reform: Post-2020 Eastern Partnership Priorities*, SWD(2021) 186 final, p. 51.

As can be seen in Table 1, the most progress has been made on the cross-cutting deliverables and improving connectivity, with partial progress in the areas of stronger economy and stronger society, and the least progress in improving governance. As regards the goals set out in the Communication from March 2020, the European Commission and the High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy prepared a working document in July 2021 entitled 'Recovery, resilience and reform: post 2020 Eastern Partnership priorities', in which they set out 10 goals for EaP by 2025 on topics such as reducing energy consumption, providing support to health workers, and combating hybrid and cyber threats. In addition, an economic and investment plan was presented, worth EUR 2.3b in the form of grants, blended finance and guarantees, with the possibility of mobilising up to EUR 17b for private and public investments. At the same time, it was added that this plan would support the economic and social recovery of partner countries after the COVID-19 pandemic, as well as investment in competitive and resilient economies and societies.<sup>31</sup> These proposals will be discussed at the next EaP Summit, scheduled for December 2021.

<sup>31</sup> Council of the European Union, *Joint Staff Working Document. Recovery, Resilience and Reform: Post 2020 Eastern Partnership Priorities*, SWD(2021) 186 final, Brussels, July, 2, 2021, pp. 1–51. At:

## Summary and recommendations

In summary so far, it is important to emphasise that the basic purpose of the EaP, which was to deepen and strengthen relations between the EU and the partner countries, thereby bringing the six post-Soviet republics closer to the European Union, has been accomplished. In May 2019, at a gala dinner celebrating the 10th anniversary of the EaP, then-President of the European Council Donald Tusk assessed the implementation of the EaP as follows: *'There is more Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine in the EU and ... there is more EU in all of your countries than ever before. ... We are not only neighbours – we are members of the same European family.'*<sup>32</sup> Furthermore, it is worth noting that important political, economic and social reforms have been initiated or intensified in the respective countries, although there remains the problem of their slow implementation (first and foremost in the area of governance, especially in the context of the rule of law, the fight against corruption and organised crime, as well as the role of independent media and civil society)<sup>33</sup> or selective implementation of the EaP objectives by the authorities of neighbouring countries.<sup>34</sup> The 'more for more' principle has proven to be an insufficient incentive for the partner countries to actively pursue the necessary reforms. In the countries most interested in closer relations with the EU (Ukraine, Georgia and Moldova), such a political incentive could be provided by the prospect of membership,<sup>35</sup> and not merely recognition of the European aspirations and European choice of the individual partners. The authorities of these countries have repeatedly touched upon this issue in their statements. For example, at the beginning of 2021 Georgian Prime Minister Giorgi Gacharia said that *'Georgia is preparing to apply for full EU membership in 2024.'*<sup>36</sup> With regard to the other EaP countries (Belarus, Armenia and Azerbaijan),

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[https://eeas.europa.eu/sites/default/files/swd\\_2021\\_186\\_f1\\_joint\\_staff\\_working\\_paper\\_en\\_v2\\_p1\\_1356457\\_0.pdf](https://eeas.europa.eu/sites/default/files/swd_2021_186_f1_joint_staff_working_paper_en_v2_p1_1356457_0.pdf), last accessed November 20, 2021.

<sup>32</sup> 10 lat Partnerstwa Wschodniego...

<sup>33</sup> European Council, *Wspólny Komunikat do Parlamentu Europejskiego, Rady Europejskiej, Rady Europejskiego Komitetu Ekonomiczno-Społecznego i Komitetu Regionów. Polityka Partnerstwa Wschodniego po 2020...*, p. 4.

<sup>34</sup> B. Piskorska, "Partnerstwo Wschodnie po 10 latach: sukces czy porażka, realizm czy iluzja?", *Rocznik Instytutu Europy Środkowo-Wschodniej*, vol. 17, no. 2 (2019), pp. 24–25.

<sup>35</sup> A. Harasimowicz, "Europejska polityka sąsiedztwa – pechowa pierwsza dekada", *Studia Europejskie*, vol. 2 (2016), pp. 26–27.

<sup>36</sup> V. Maksimov, "Georgian President Visits Brussels in Push for 2024 EU Membership Application", *EURACTIV*, January 22, 2021. At: <https://www.euractiv.com/section/eastern-europe/news/georgian-president-visits-brussels-in-push-for-2024-eu-membership-application/>, last accessed November 20, 2021.

the drawback of the said principle is that it could be counterproductive, encouraging the authorities of these countries to strengthen their cooperation with Russia, which 'does not require' them to carry out political reforms that would threaten their hold on power. As well, in terms of the multilateral dimension of the EaP, despite a number of changes to the structure of the multilateral cooperation within the EaP, the political factor preventing its effective functioning remains a problem (including the imposition of sanctions on Belarusian President Alexander Lukashenko and his regime and the subsequent resumption of armed hostilities between Armenia and Azerbaijan in Nagorno-Karabakh in autumn 2020).<sup>37</sup>

All the above determinants as well as the lack of cohesion among the EU Member States regarding the target for the development of relations with their eastern neighbours, the lack of a strategic approach to relations with Russia (given its ambitions in the region) and inconsistency in actions towards Moscow (on the one hand, due to the annexation of Crimea and the conflict in Donbass, sanctions have been imposed on Russia,<sup>38</sup> while on the other – despite opposition from some states including Ukraine and Poland – construction of the Nord Stream 2 gas pipeline<sup>39</sup> was completed in September 2021) translate into the weakness of the EaP. The region of Eastern Europe and the South Caucasus continues to be characterised by a high degree of internal instability; the existing security threats have not only not been eliminated, but have intensified (mass protests following the August 2020 presidential elections in Belarus and violations of human rights and fundamental freedoms by the Belarusian authorities; the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict, etc.).<sup>40</sup> In conclusion, the hypothesis posed in the introduction of the paper has been confirmed only in part. The implementation of the goals of the EaP programme, which have been updated in recent years, does indeed contribute to the initiation or intensification of reforms in partner countries, and thus it strengthens their resilience, but the process of this implementation has been relatively slow. As a result, the eastern neighbourhood of the European Union remain fragile and poorly developed. In order to meet these challenges and effectively counteract all security threats, the EU should make the offer of cooperation more attractive to partner countries (especially those that are interested in closer cooperation with the EU), as well

<sup>37</sup> B. Deen, W. Zweers, I. van Loon, *The Eastern Partnership. Three Dilemmas in a Time of Troubles*, Clingendael Report, January 2021, p. 4. At: <https://www.clingendael.org/sites/default/files/2021-01/the-eastern-partnership.pdf>, last accessed November 20, 2021.

<sup>38</sup> European Council, *Unijne sankcje w odpowiedzi na kryzys na Ukrainie*, 2021. At: <https://www.consilium.europa.eu/pl/policies/sanctions/ukraine-crisis/>, last accessed November 20, 2021.

<sup>39</sup> "Nord Stream 2 gotowy. Triumf Putina", *Deutsche Welle*, September 10, 2021. At: <https://www.dw.com/pl/nord-stream-2-gotowy-triumf-putina/a-59147172>, last accessed November 20, 2021.

<sup>40</sup> O. Tkachuk, *Reakcja Unii Europejskiej...*, pp. 91–93.

as redefine the instruments for the implementation of the EaP and ENP by introducing 'hard' security measures because – as experience has shown – the existing mechanisms have not contributed to strengthening the security of the EU and the neighbouring region. In short-term perspective, primary consideration should be given to establish instruments to support implementation of the DCFTAs and proper use of EU funds. On the other hand, in the medium term, the EU should adopt a strategy for development of cooperation with associated and non-associated countries, which would take greater account of the partners' national interests and their integration aspirations. In the case of Ukraine, Georgia and Moldova, a good solution would be a new mechanism for multilateral cooperation. Participation of respective country representatives in that mechanism together with the European Union would improve joint action. On top of that, a proposal should be considered, to further reinforce integration of these neighboring countries into the EU internal market, beyond the framework set out in the current Association Agreements and DCFTAs. Unless these measures are taken, it is highly likely that the interest of the partner countries in continued implementation of the reforms will diminish, while the eastern dimension of the ENP may stagnate. As far as the long-term perspective is concerned, the necessary step seems to be to increase the EU's ability to respond to crises in its vicinity and to strengthen EU's role in resolving armed conflicts in the EaP countries. An important event in the further development of EaP will be the upcoming December summit, which will discuss the objectives of cooperation between the EU and the partner countries for the coming years.

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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.



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