

EASTERN PARTNERSHIP: THE NEW EU'S RESPONSE TO SECURITY CHALLENGES IN THE EASTERN NEIGHBOURHOOD?

AUTHOR: BEATA WOJNA

REVIEWER: ALEXANDER DULEBA

Keywords

Eastern neighbors, Eastern Partnership, EU member states foreign policy, European Neighborhood Policy, soft power

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Introduction

The Eastern Partnership (EaP) is a new regional cooperation proposal addressed by the European Union to Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine. It is related to the European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP) pursued since 2004 and is based on the same principles and methods of action, namely differentiation and positive conditionality. The EU is trying to assist Eastern partners in their modernization efforts via their convergence with the EU standards and rules. The main objective of the EaP is to bring the Eastern partners closer to the EU by exporting the EU *acquis* into the Union's Eastern neighborhood. This is also a plan for the development of relations between the Union and the countries of Eastern Europe and South Caucasus, a plan that offers the latter a possibility of gradually joining in EU policies and programmes and of integration with the common market.

Origin

The architects of the Eastern Partnership are Poland and Sweden, which in May 2008 proposed a deepening of the relations with the Eastern neighbours embraced by the European Neighbourhood Policy.¹ However, the shape of the project was the outcome of actions by many EU members. The necessity of intensification of relations with the Eastern neighbours was raised by the Visegrád Group (V4) countries: the Czech Republic, Poland, Slovakia and Hungary, which were presenting specific proposals in this respect.² A similar

¹ Polish-Swedish Proposal: Eastern Partnership, June 2008, <http://www.ms.gov.pl/Polish-Swedish,Proposal,19911.html>. A draft version of the proposal is dated 23 May 2008.

² See "The Visegrád Group Contribution to the Discussion on the Strengthening of the European Neighbourhood Policy," COREU, Gymnich, March 2007; "The Visegrád Group Position Paper on Governance Facility and Neighbourhood Investment Fund," April 2007; "Joint Political Statement of the Visegrád Group on the Strengthening of the European Neighbourhood Policy" (November 2007); "EU Policy and Assistance to Belarus—General Overview" (January 2008). See also M. Menkiszak, "Enhanced European Neighbourhood Policy Towards Eastern European Partners: A Role for the Visegrád Countries?" *The Foreign Policies of the Visegrád Countries Towards the Eastern Neighbourhood—Areas and Options of Cooperation*, Budapest, 6–9 December 2007, www.hiia.hu.

position was taken by Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia. When it held the presidency in the first half of 2007, Germany came up with the "ENP Plus" plan.³ It proposed presenting an attractive and broad proposal for deeper relations to EU neighbours that would make it possible for the Community to enter into sectoral agreements with states embraced by the ENP and even to open the EU institutions to the neighbours. The idea was materialized in a possibility for the ENP countries to get an access to the selected EU programs and agencies. By opening the EU institutions to ENP countries, Finns and Germans during their consequent presidencies in 2006-2007 contributed to shift the substance of the EU thinking/policy towards ENP beyond the horizon of its original idea of 2003-2004 defined by Romano Prodi like "everything, but institutions."⁴ The launch of the Black Sea Synergy in May 2007 created a good background for thinking more openly about the Eastern dimension of the ENP.⁵ Then the adoption by the European Council, in December 2007, of a Polish-Lithuanian proposal for the development of the Southern and the Eastern ENP dimension not only on a bilateral, but also on the multilateral plane, became a sign of the evolution of the EU's approach to the neighbourhood policy.⁶

The Eastern Partnership proposal met with support of practically all EU member states due to the changing determinants in and around the EU. Five years after the EU enlargement, its member states are no doubt more aware of the challenges and threats existing in Eastern Europe and the South Caucasus. Nowadays all members are more aware than in the past that tension, political and economic instability and "frozen conflicts" in the region can directly affect the EU. Not without reason, work on the Eastern Partnership project gathered momentum after the Russian-Georgian war, and cooperation in the energy sector is an important component of Eastern Partnership.⁷ At the same time, the experience of several years of implementing the ENP showed that in order to improve the effectiveness of that policy it is necessary to adapt its instruments to the specific characteristics of the countries which it concerns, take into account more broadly the aspirations of "European neighbours of the EU" from Eastern Europe and respond to the expectations of "Europe's neighbours" from North Africa and the Middle East. Support for the Eastern Partnership was also helped by the political change in France, which had long been the main opponent of broader relations with the Eastern ENP countries. When Nicolas Sarkozy, the new president, came up with the proposal of a Union for the Mediterranean, it could be expected that, in exchange for consent to the

³ "Europa gelingt gemeinsam" Präsidenschaftsprogramm 1. Januar-30. Juni 2007," www.eu2007.de; The German presidency's programme: "Europe-Succeeding Together," 1 January-30 June 2007, www.eu2007.de.

⁴ On Strengthening the European Neighbourhood Policy, COM(2006)726 final, 4.12.2006, http://ec.europa.eu/world/enp/pdf/com06_726_en.pdf.

⁵ Black Sea Synergy - a new regional cooperation initiative, COM 2007 (160) final, adopted 11. 04. 2007, http://ec.europa.eu/world/enp/pdf/com07_160_en.pdf.

⁶ Brussels European Council, Presidency Conclusions, 14 December 2007, p. 21. http://www.consilium.europa.eu/ueDocs/cms_Data/docs/pressData/en/ec/97669.pdf.

⁷ After the Russian-Georgian war the extraordinary European Council that met in September 2008 asked the European Commission to submit proposals on the EaP in December 2008 and not in the spring of 2009, as had been decided earlier at the June European Council. Due to the importance of the energy issues, the European Commission promoted the inclusion of energy sector cooperation in the EaP project. In the initial Polish-Swedish proposal this area of cooperation was not considered.

enlivening of the Southern dimension of ENP, he would back the Eastern Partnership, all the more so as at the same time France was seeking closer relations with new EU member states, notably Poland. Consequently, in March 2008, after the European Council meeting which passed the decision to go ahead with the Union for the Mediterranean, Poland's Foreign Minister Radosław Sikorski promised to present a new initiative for the Eastern neighbours embraced by ENP. The acceptance of the Eastern Partnership was also facilitated by the fact that right from the start the "old" member states joined in the project. Thanks to Sweden's involvement, the development of an independent EU Eastern policy ceased to be perceived as a domain of first of all the "new" EU member states.

A very important role in the shaping of the EaP was also played by the European Commission, which, in December 2008, issued an ambitious communication on Eastern Partnership serving as a basis for further discussions on the subject in the EU.⁸ Had it not been for the concretization of the project by the European Commission, the EaP would not have gained the support of the whole EU. Moreover, the Czech presidency contributed to the launch of the EaP significantly by listing it among its priorities.⁹ The Central European and Baltic EU member states closely cooperated in devising Eastern Partnership, and consultations with Germany played a very important role as well. German support was central to the building of consensus in the EU. Finally, in March 2009, thanks to the support of all EU member states, the European Council agreed to launch the Eastern Partnership.¹⁰ The symbolic introduction of the new initiative with the participation of the heads of states and governments of the EU members and the six Eastern neighbours took place in Prague in May, under the Czech presidency.¹¹

The EU Proposal

In its bilateral dimension the Eastern Partnership assumes the development of new legal bases of the relations between the EU and its Eastern neighbours in the form of association agreements and the establishment of deep and comprehensive free trade areas. The implementation of the Eastern Partnership signifies, among other things, the embarking on efforts for the benefit of a full liberalization of the visa requirements in relations with the individual partner countries and a possibility to conclude Mobility and Security Pacts with the EU. The development of cooperation in the field of energy security is one of the most important areas of cooperation. The EaP

⁸ Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament and the Council: Eastern Partnership COM(2008) 823 final, Brussels, 3 December 2008, <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=COM:2008:0823:FIN:EN:PDF>.

⁹ See E. Tulmets, "Preparing the EU Presidency: the Czech Contribution to the Project of 'Eastern Partnership,'" *The Polish Quarterly of International Affairs*, No. 4/2009, pp. 79–98.

¹⁰ Declaration by the European Council on the Eastern Partnership, Brussels European Council, Presidency Conclusions, Annex 2, 19–20 March 2009, http://www.consilium.europa.eu/uedocs/cms_data/docs/pressdata/en/ec/106809.pdf.

¹¹ Joint Declaration of the Prague Eastern Partnership Summit Prague, Council of the European Union, 7 May 2009, http://www.consilium.europa.eu/uedocs/cms_Data/docs/pressdata/en/er/107589.pdf.

is also connected with the cohesion policy. In this context, for the first time in its history, the EU considers to finance pilot projects of the regional development and to support cross-border cooperation projects outside the EU borders. The realization of the aims of the EaP will be supported by the flagship initiatives such as Integrated Border Management Programme; an Small and Medium Enterprises Facility; promotion of Regional electricity markets, energy efficiency and renewable energy sources, development of the Southern energy corridor; and cooperation on Prevention of, preparedness for, and response to natural and man-made disasters.

The deepening of relations with the EU depends on the partners' progress in implementing such values as democracy, rule of law, upholding of human rights and the implementation of the principles of market economy, sustainable development and good governance. At the same time, the EU undertakes to support reform efforts in the neighbour states. In this context, the comprehensive institution-building programme for improving administrative capacity in all relevant sectors of cooperation will be developed and co-financed through the European Neighbourhood and Partnership Instrument.

The Eastern Partnership is not an enlargement strategy, although it is not ruled out that the states which it concerns could become EU members at some point in time. The model of relations with the EU defined in the Eastern Partnership appears to be sufficiently flexible and attractive to be acceptable both to those countries which are just interested in close cooperation with the EU and to those that aspire to be included in European integration. In addition, Belarus's participation could open up space for dialogue with lower and middle structures of the Belarusian establishment, contributing to changes in that country.

Compared to the European Neighbourhood Policy, it is the deeply institutionalized multilateral dimension of the Eastern Partnership that is a new element, at least in the EU relations with its Eastern neighbours. This is connected with regular meetings between EU representatives and the Eastern neighbours at the political level of heads of state or government (once within two years) and ministers of foreign affairs (annually). The operational level of EaP consists of meeting with the participation of senior officials (twice a year) and experts in the framework of so called thematic platforms and specific panels. In addition, EaP Civil Society Forum and EaP Local and Regional Assembly do complete a picture of a new institutional design of the EaP which crates institutional channels for participation of civil society and non governmental organizations.

The multilateral dimension of the Eastern Partnership is to contribute to the supporting of political and economic transformations in the countries of Eastern Europe and South Caucasus, becoming a forum for an exchange of information and partners' experience in such areas as democracy, good governance and stability, economic integration and convergence with regard to EU policies, energy security and people-to-people contacts. Taking into account conflicts and tensions existing between the states embraced by the ENP, multilateral cooperation could probably serve as a confidence-building mechanism in the region. It might also contribute to the shaping of the identity of the region independently from Russia. I should be borne in mind, however, that the hard security connected with conflict resolution and the launching of the EU civilian and military missions are the domain to the European Security and Defence Policy. The role of the EaP in this area is marginal.

Financing is important, too. In the years 2010–2013, the EU is planning to allocate €600 million to the Eastern Partnership. Out of that amount, €350 million are new funds, while €250 million was set aside from ENP regional cooperation for the needs of the Eastern Partnership. While this is not an amount that could solve the region's problems, the acknowledgement alone that EU policies towards the Eastern neighbours require additional funding is a step towards bigger funding in a not-too-distant future. An opportunity to discuss this matter will first be provided by a budget review, followed by negotiations concerning the new financial perspective for the years 2014–2020. It should be noted that these are not the only funds that the EU is now allocating to aid to the Eastern neighbours embraced by the EaP. In the years 2007–2013 they will receive more than €1 billion from the European Neighbourhood and Partnership Instrument, in addition to loans from the European Investment Bank and the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development.¹²

Eastern Neighbours' Expectations

The implementation of the Eastern Partnership depends on the Eastern neighbours' commitment to the project. The level of upholding of the rules of democracy, civil rights and liberties and of the rule of law varies among the countries to which EaP is addressed. In practice, it is chiefly possible to speak about democracy, understood as the upholding of election procedures, the rights of the opposition and freedom of the media in the case of Ukraine. The situation of Georgia and even more so that of Armenia and Moldova demon-

¹² See European Neighbourhood and Partnership Instrument (ENPI), Funding 2007-2013, http://ec.europa.eu/world/enp/pdf/country/0703_enpi_figures_en.pdf; J. Muś, J. Kamińska, "Implikacje wymiaru finansowego polityki UE wobec sąsiadów," UKIE Bulletin No. 21, December 2008.

strates numerous shortfalls in this regard. Belarus and Azerbaijan, are ruled in an authoritarian way. The six countries' expectations toward the EU also differ. Some want to join the EU (Ukraine and Georgia), while others have not voiced such demands, even though there are pro-Europe forces of various strength in those countries (Armenia, Belarus).

Despite the big differences in the position of the neighbouring countries regarding the Eastern Partnership, the EU initiative has on the whole been received well.¹³ Aside from open criticism by the Moldovan president and comments by some diplomats to the effect that the European Council's March decision was less ambitious than the European Commission proposal, the plan has given rise to hopes for a new opening in relations with the EU. All the partners positively assessed the proposed scope of development of relations with the EU, voicing particularly large interest in the liberalization of visa requirements, the lifting of trade barriers, cooperation in the field of energy and obtaining financial support.

The countries interested in integration with the EU, especially Ukraine, welcomed the fact that "European neighbours of the EU," i.e., six countries located in Eastern Europe, some of which have openly articulated the will of acceding to the Union, were distinguished among all the countries embraced by the European Neighbourhood Policy. It is worth bearing in mind that at the time that the European Neighbourhood Policy was proclaimed, they were highly critical of the fact that the EU was treating them on the same footing as the culturally distant countries of North Africa and the Middle East, which have no possibility of EU membership.

The South Caucasus countries expect a growth of EU involvement in the solving of the region's conflicts. It should, however, be noted that the Eastern Partnership will focus first of all on the EU exerting its influence as a "soft force." According to the official position of some member states, the omission of the "hard" security agenda, or "desecuritization," will more effectively contribute to the growth of the level of confidence and an improvement of international security in the region. Some analysts emphasize, however, that without deeper involvement in conflict resolution there the EU will not be able to achieve its own interests in the Eastern neighborhood. In this context the EaP could only play a supporting role, providing a forum for dialogue and instruments for the Europeanization of the six countries.¹⁴

The Eastern Partnership also meets public expectations halfway in that it draws attention to the role of people-to-people contacts in bringing the Eastern neighbors closer to the EU. This area of co-

¹³ A detailed analysis of the Eastern neighbours' reactions to the EaP in: B. Wojna, M. Gni-azdowski (eds.), *Eastern Partnership: The Opening Report*, Polish Institute of International Affairs, Warsaw, 2009, p. 59-70, http://www.pism.pl/zalaczniki/Report_EP_2009_eng.pdf.

¹⁴ S. Cornell, K. Benes, "Un-resolved Conflicts and Eastern Partnership," a paper submitted by the Institute for Security and Development Policy, Policy Recommendation for Eastern Partnership Summit" formulated by participants of workshops of the conference "Eastern Partnership: Towards Civil Society Forum" on 5 May 2009, http://www.pism.pl/zalaczniki/policy_recommendations.pdf.

operation, including student exchange, joint cultural and research projects and actions promoting the building of an information society and independent mass media, should become one of the pillars of Eastern Partnership developed regardless of the will of the political elites. Its aim, after all, is to strengthen civic society, which is a foundation of an efficient democratic state. The Eastern Partnership Civic Society Forum, a plan promoted under the auspices of the Czech Presidency in Prague, is a pioneering initiative in this respect. The first Civil Society Forum will take part in November 2009. Meetings of this kind should be of a periodic nature so that representatives of the civic society of the states invited to the Eastern Partnership could actively contribute to the implementation of that initiative through the exchange of experience and through presenting their observations, proposals and expectations to the EU.¹⁵

When assessing prospects for Eastern Partnership implementation it is important to bear in mind that it is an auxiliary instrument, not a package that will serve the EU to solve all the problems of its Eastern neighborhood. Giving substance to the framework of cooperation defined by the EaP will to a large extent depend on the countries it is addressed to, on their political will, readiness and progress in strengthening ties with the EU. Therefore, it is worth looking at the multilateral dimension of cooperation, whose functioning gives rise to justified fears due to the conflicts prevailing in the region. Multilateral cooperation is a value in itself and the EU is interested in promoting it in its vicinity. However, its significance should not be overestimated and the success of the entire concept of Eastern Partnership should not be contingent on its development. The principal limiting factor is the need for reaching consensus, which is difficult when dealing with countries that are so different or that are actually at loggerheads with one another. Closer cooperation between those beneficiaries of Eastern Partnership which are most interested in specific projects could be a step in the right direction. Nonetheless, multilateral cooperation should only complement bilateral relations between the EU and the Eastern neighbourhood countries. The pace and scope of political and economic changes that will bring those countries closer to EU and could actually lead to their accession in the future, will depend first and foremost on bilateral relations and individual involvement of the neighbour states.

Approach of EU Member States

Apart from the commitment of the EU neighbours embraced

¹⁵ See more on <http://www.eu2009.cz/scripts/file.php?id=34027&down=yes>; Policy Recommendation for Eastern Partnership ..., op. cit. and Eastern Partnership Civil Society Forum. Concept paper, European Commission proposal, May 2009, http://ec.europa.eu/external_relations/eastern/civil_society/docs/concept_en.pdf.

by the ENP, many other factors will impact the implementation of the Eastern Partnership. Its future will depend undoubtedly on the attitude and the political will of the EU member states.¹⁶ A review of the EU member states' attitude toward the Eastern Partnership warrants the opinion that they are aware of the need of the EU's greater involvement in the Eastern Europe and South Caucasus region. They support the idea of establishing a deepened free trade zone and of association agreements between the EU and the Eastern Partnership addressees. For the most part, they are also interested in cooperation in the field of energy, which was distinguished in the project as one of the main areas of cooperation between the EU and its Eastern neighbours.

A number of differences came to light in the course of discussions on Eastern Partnership. It was the proposal for the allocation of additional funds for the Eastern Partnership that aroused particular controversy. It was viewed reluctantly by most of the net payers, who feared the costs of this new initiative. Its opponents included the Southern EU members, who demanded a proportional increase in funds for the Southern dimension of the European Neighbourhood Policy. There were also discussions concerning the proper relationship between the Eastern Partnership and the Black Sea Synergy pursued since 2007, in which all the Eastern EU neighbours, but Belarus, were involved. In many countries one could hear critical opinions about the idea of liberalizing the visa requirements, which was largely due to fears of an uncontrolled influx of immigrants to those member states in which they already account for a significant proportion of the total population¹⁷.

Criticized by Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov as an attempt of the EU "to enlarge its sphere of influence," the Eastern Partnership initiative has triggered a discussion among member states on the relations between the EU and Russia in the area of Eastern Europe and South Caucasus. Most of them acknowledged that its implementation should not lead to a rivalry between the EU and Russia, let alone the isolation of that country in the region. Some states were opposed to perceiving EU initiatives addressed to the Eastern neighbourhood from the angle of Russia's interests. In their opinion, the Eastern Partnership should serve a *rapprochement* between the Partnership countries and the EU, regardless of the position held on that matter by Russia, which views Eastern Europe and South Caucasus as a zone of its influence. All the member states emphasized the need for parallel development of the Eastern dimension of the ENP and EU-Russia cooperation. According to EU members, the

¹⁶ A detailed analysis of the EU member states reactions to the EaP and their participation in the shaping of this initiative in: B. Wojna, M. Gniazdowski (eds.), *op. cit.*, pp. 13–55.

¹⁷ More about the attitude of each member states towards issues like additional financing for the EaP, the participation of Russia, the relation between EaP and Black Sea Synergy, migrations, etc. in B. Wojna, M. Gniazdowski (eds.), *op. cit.* pp. 15–55.

contradictions, if any, between the goals of the Eastern Partnership and Russia's fears, could be alleviated by the involvement of the latter in individual projects implemented within the framework of the Partnership¹⁸.

There is no doubt a group of EU member states particularly interested in the implementation of Eastern Partnership. They will be responsible in the future for maintaining the EU's political support for that initiative, for securing funds for financing it and for persuading the Eastern neighbours to implement the indispensable political and economic reforms. Significantly, both the Central European and the Baltic members support the creation of opportunities for integration with the EU for those Eastern neighbours that have articulated such aspirations. For them, the Eastern Partnership is a pragmatic reply to the "enlargement fatigue," its biggest advantage being that it makes it possible to act for the benefit of bringing the neighbour nations closer to the EU, while at the same time being acceptable even to those EU members that are not prepared to discuss new enlargement commitments at this time.

In the EU there are states that take a friendly view of "Black Sea cooperation" involved in the implementation of Eastern Partnership. These include, for example, Germany, which came up with the Black Sea Synergy plan, Rumania and Bulgaria, as well as Greece, a Mediterranean country. The three last-named countries are interested in cooperation with the countries to which the Eastern Partnership is addressed, owing to their geographical location and to ties of a cultural, political, economic and social nature. However, they have been looking at the Eastern Europe and South Caucasus region from the angle of the Black Sea basin, criticizing the Polish-Swedish proposal of the EaP¹⁹.

France, Spain, Portugal, Italy and Greece and, since the 2004 enlargement, also Cyprus and Malta, have often been referred to as the Mediterranean EU members. They do not constitute a formal group within the EU, but such threats and challenges as migrations, terrorism or energy security and economic interests connected with the Mediterranean basin are behind the fact that they generally act together in favor of greater EU involvement in the region. They take a more reluctant view of Eastern Partnership, although they could be interested in cooperation in the field of border management or energy security²⁰.

In order to capitalize on the potential of the member countries, conditions ought to be created for the coalescence of groups of states aimed at closer cooperation and deeper involvement in the pursuit

¹⁸ More about the attitude of each member states towards the participation of Russia in B. Wojna, M. Gniazdowski (eds.), *op. cit.*, pp. 15-55

¹⁹ See: Bulgaria, Greece and Rumania in B. Wojna, M. Gniazdowski (eds.), *op. cit.*, pp. 18-19, 31-32, 46-47.

²⁰ About the Mediterranean EU member states as an informal group of cooperation and the attitude towards the Eastern EU policy see B. Wojna: *Południowi członkowie UE a Europejska Polityka Sąsiedztwa*, in A. Staszczuk, J. Jartyś (ed.), *Wymiar wschodni UE*.

Wielowymiarowość integrującej się Europy, Instytut Politologii i Europeistyki Uniwersytetu Szczecińskiego, 2007, p. 99-111 and B. Wojna, *Polityka wschodnia państw śródziemnomorskich*, in A. Gil, T. Kapuśniak (eds.), *Polityka wschodnia Polski. Uwarunkowania, koncepcje, realizacja*, IEŚW, Lublin-Warszawa 2009, p. 395-408

of certain EaP flagship projects. This idea was initially included in the Polish-Swedish proposal, whereas the European Commission in its December 2008 communication highlighted the special role to be played by member states with experience in transformation processes. Another challenge in the course of the EaP's implementation will be the coordination of member states and the Commission's development aid for the Eastern neighborhood so as to safeguard that financial resources are allocated in the most efficient manner.

Conclusions

The Eastern Partnership is an initiative focused first of all on the EU exerting its influence as a "soft power." As a proposal built on the European Neighbourhood Policy, it is probably not a very original response to the security challenges in the Eastern neighbourhood because in fact it is a continuation of the ENP which was launched some years ago. EU's cooperation with its Eastern neighbours is to lead to the transfer of good EU practices and standards in the fields of trade, economy and politics, and its pace will depend on the changes taking place in those countries, and on the partners' expectations. The "hard" security issues related to regional conflicts (Nagorno-Karabakh, Abkhazia, South Ossetia and Transnistria) are not included in the agenda. However, as an initiative designed to contribute to the transformation of the Eastern neighbours into democratic states with transparent and reliable market economies, the Eastern Partnership could have a strategic significance for the stability and security of both the countries of the Eastern dimension of the ENP and of the EU as a whole.

After the symbolic launch of the Eastern Partnership, its implementation, especially at the time of an economic crisis, will pose a serious challenge. Enhancement of the Eastern neighbours' relations with the EU rests upon their will and progress in the pursuit of democratic values and the application of market economy principles. There is also an important role to play for those member countries that are particularly interested in cooperation with the EaP addressees (Visegrád Group members, Baltic states and Sweden). They will be responsible for upholding political support for this initiative within the EU and the acquisition of funds to finance it, but also for persuading the Eastern neighbors to introduce the essential political and economic reforms. The consent of all EU members to pursue the EaP is a political impulse, which the countries especially interested in developing the initiative should duly cata-

lyze. In time these countries' ability to collaborate with Germany and other countries like United Kingdom, Rumania and Bulgaria, will determine the preservation of political support for the initiative, the acquisition of funds for its financing, as well as assistance for EU's Eastern neighbors in implementing indispensable political and economic reforms. Finally, defining the correlation between the EaP and EU's relations with Russia, as well as the inclusion of Russia in certain projects and safeguarding EaP's complementarity to other regional initiatives—all these will prove a challenge for the EU as a promoter of the Eastern Partnership.

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