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THE EASTERN PARTNERSHIP

When Rumania and Bulgaria became part of the European Union, its eastern borders were rapidly extended, reaching towards the Black Sea. This situation created new chances for cooperation, but also caused new challenges and problems. Consequently, a sort of uncertainty appeared. The basic problem grew up from the obvious differences of interests among Member States. Germans tended to build the optimal conditions for free trade with ENP countries. They also tried to focus on strengthening such sectors as: good governance, international security, transport, rule of law, and protection of environment. The most fundamental objectives for France were: good relationships with the ENP countries in the context of energy supply and of course better migration control. The United Kingdom recognized the ENP as an instrument against international terrorism. Poland put a strong emphasis upon building a community of mutual values and well-built civil society in the countries of eastern neighbourhood.¹

So there was a great need to establish a more stable and practical vision for the neighbourhood policy. On 20 May 2008, Polish and Swedish ministers of foreign affairs – Radoslaw Sikorski and Carl Bildt – proposed, during the EU General Affairs and External Relations Council, to set up the Eastern Partnership Initiative.² The idea was greatly welcomed. Frank Walter-Steinmeier – the German foreign minister - called the project an *example of how, working together, we can take Europe forward*.³ He even suggested a uniting of the European Neighbourhood Policy, Eastern Partnership Initiative and Black Sea Synergy. While exposing the idea of the Eastern Partnership Initiative, R. Sikorski said: *To the South, we have neighbours of Europe. To the East, we have European neighbours <...> they all have the right one day to apply [for EU membership]*.⁴ Two months later, the European Commission was ordered to prepare concrete proposals for further steps in developing bilateral and multilateral relationships. On 7 May 2009, during the EU Summit in Prague, the Eastern Partnership was officially launched. There was an indispensable need for building a more ambitious plan of cooperation than ever before. It was agreed that the Member

¹P. Świeżak, *Europejska polityka sąsiedztwa. Bilans funkcjonowania na przykładzie Ukrainy (European Neighbourhood Policy. The Assessment of Operation on the Example of Ukraine)*, "Bezpieczeństwo Narodowe", 2007 (3 – 4), p. 118.

²*Polish-Swedish Proposal: Eastern Partnership*, Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Poland, June 2008, <http://www.ms.gov.pl/Polish-Swedish,Proposal,19911.html> (the date of access: 05. 06. 2015).

³Quoted after: M. Łapczyński, *The European Union's Eastern Partnership: Chances and Perspectives*, *Caucasian Review of International Affairs*, Spring 2009, Vol. 3 (2), p. 148.

⁴Renata Goldirova, *"Eastern Partnership" could lead to enlargement, Poland says*, "EUObserver", May 27, 2008, <http://euobserver.com/9/26211> (the date of access: 06. 06. 2015).

States, which had the experience of undertaking transformation changes, should play a key role for the EaP project which was supposed to take into account: a responsibility and commitment towards the principles of the international law and fundamental values such as democracy, rule of law, respect for human rights, basic freedoms (applying also to the free market economy), good governance and sustainable development. The following diagram presents the evolution of the EaP within the structure of the EU.

As demonstrated, the EaP was built upon the bilateral and multilateral dimensions. The bilateral track is an instrument which is used to create the EU's relations with individual countries of the EaP. First of all, it is meant to prepare optimal ground for achieving the Association Agreement, establishing the Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Agreements, guarding energy security and visa liberation. Presently, all the EaP countries, except Belarus and Armenia, are at a certain level of the Association process. Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine have already fulfilled the EU's expectations to sign the Association Agreement and have completed negotiations with the Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Agreements.⁵

The multilateral dimension was something new for the EaP. It was meant to improve political and economical changes within the partnership countries. It was expected that this dimension would become a platform for mutual information and the experience of prime ministers, foreign affair ministers, high-level officials and other experts. The multilateral track was founded upon four platforms: democracy, rule of law, stability; economic integration and convergence of the EU political sectors; contacts between people; and energy security. Relating to each platform there were adequate panels in order to make the work more effective within the specific areas. For the meetings, which were supposed to be organized at least twice a year, there were chosen special senior officials who worked for certain policy areas reform. Moreover, to achieve tangible effects in cooperation, so called flagship initiatives were initiated. They were focused upon actions which could give concrete substance to the Partnership and, most importantly, could be recognized internationally. Among them were: a program of integrated border management; support for the development of small and medium-sized business; energy efficiency; disaster (civil) protection; environmental governance. The EU puts a strong emphasis upon a proper implementation of these initiatives.

EU cooperation with the countries of the EaP has also been realized through non-governmental organizations. It is questionable whether they can function effectively within civil society where values such as freedom, democracy, independent judiciary are unquestionable rights of citizens. The integral elements of civil society are family and the private sector which are different to business and government. In this aspect, civil society plays an indispensable role as a desirable ground for implementation of the necessary reforms. It also provides an effective control for making political decisions. For that reason in 2009 the Eastern Partnership Civil Society Forum was created.⁶

It is obvious that the functioning of the EaP would be impossible without financial support. The European Neighbourhood and Partnership Instrument (ENPI) is one of the biggest sources of financing most of the EaP programmes. The ENPI is focused especially on sponsoring:

(1) Political reforms which may include: establishing and adjusting of institutional and administrative competences; good governance; respect of human rights; rule of law; contribution to civil society; fight against fraud, organized crime, corruption and terrorism.

(2) Economic reform which can consider: establishing market economy; accelerating economic development; increasing of trade and regulatory links with the EU.

(3) Social reform which may be focused on: integration among individual people or different segments of the society, reducing unemployment; fighting against poverty; undertaking projects in

⁵The EU's Association Agreements with Georgia, the Republic of Moldova and Ukraine, http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release_MEMO-14-430_en.htm (the date of access: 08. 06. 2015).

⁶ H. Kostanyan, *The Civil Society Forum of the Eastern Partnership: Four Years on Progress – Challenges and Prospects. Report commissioned by the Eastern Partnership Civil Society Forum*, Centre for European Policy Studies, Brussels 2014.

the area of non-discrimination.

(4) Sectoral cooperation which usually covers the following areas: protection of natural resources, implementation the idea if sustainable development; strengthening energy security; developing transport and telecommunications; improving citizen’s health; guarantying food security; empowering quality of education and training; intensifying scientific research and innovation.

(5) Regional or local development including regional integration (e.g. Euro-Mediterranean Eastern Europe regions).

(6) Engagement within the Community projects or agendas.⁷

The ENPI budget for the period of 2007 – 2013 was established on 11,18 billion euro even if the EaP had not been launched. Of course, the share of the funds depended upon the conditions for democracy stability, respecting the rule of law, and implementing good governance. It is often said that the basic principle for delivering financial support to EaP countries should respect the idea *more for more*, which is understood as more will and real reforms in particular countries should release more the EU’s offers in the financial and political sense. In fact, only 10% of all ENP has been shared this way.⁸

Financing the projects of the EaP comes also through other multiple financial institutions and instruments functioning within the EU. The European Instrument for Democracy and Human Rights sponsors projects which improve the principles of civil society and human rights. The Neighbourhood Investment Facility is focused upon financing the initiatives concerning the development of an infrastructure for energy and transport, protection of the environment, private sector (especially development of small and medium-sized business), and the social sector. Also, the European Investment Bank created the Eastern Partners Facility program which has offered 1,5 billion euro for credits and assurances to the EU’s business activity in Eastern European countries.⁹

In 2014 most of the funds were mobilized to stabilize Ukraine’s economy. There were also plans to develop new investments in Georgia and Moldova, especially in the area of strengthening small business and opening up those countries to more of a market economy in the context of the opportunities given by the Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Areas project. Working together with the European banks and other financial institutions, the EU tended to press on making more accessible loans for small entrepreneurs and even families. Some of those programs have already started, others will be realized in 2015 with the proposed concrete activities.

The EaP has a great potential to play a fundamental role in a future cooperation between the EU and its Eastern neighbor countries. The involvement of Brussels has been an invaluable achievement for building more predictable development in the region. The EaP has achieved a lot. But still there is much to be done. Comparing with the EU’s Southern Neighbourhood, which received more funds, the EaP official meetings are very regular. Although many cultural and national varieties and differences, there is a visible readiness to be close to the EU, concerning Ukraine, Moldova and Georgia.

⁷ *European Neighbourhood and Partnership Instrument (2007 - 2013)*, http://europa.eu/legislation_summaries/external_relations/relations_with_third_countries/eastern_europe_and_central_asia/r17101_en.htm (the date of access: 08. 06. 2015).

⁸ P. D. Wiśniewski, *The Eastern Partnership – It is High Time to Start a “Partnership”*, Real Carnegie Moscow Center, Moscow 2013, p. 6

⁹ *Eastern Partnership/Partnerstwo Wschodnie*, Ministerstwo Spraw Zagranicznych, Warszawa 2011, p. 44.