



TEXTS ADOPTED

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Eastern Partnership: November 2017 Summit

European Parliament recommendation of 15 November 2017 to the Council, the Commission and the EEAS on the Eastern Partnership, in the run-up to the November 2017 Summit (2017/2130(INI))

The European Parliament,

- having regard to Articles 2, 3 and 8 and to Title V, notably Articles 21, 22, 36 and 37, of the Treaty on European Union (TEU), as well as to Part Five of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union (TFEU),
- having regard to the launch of the Eastern Partnership in Prague on 7 May 2009 as a common endeavour of the EU and its eastern partners Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, Moldova und Ukraine,
- having regard to the Joint Declarations of the Eastern Partnership Summits of 2011 in Warsaw, of 2013 in Vilnius and of 2015 in Riga,
- having regard to the Declaration of the leaders of 27 Member States and of the European Council, the European Parliament and the European Commission adopted on 25 March 2017 in Rome,
- having regard to the recommendations by and activities of the Euronest Parliamentary Assembly, of the Eastern Partnership Civil Society Forum, and of the Committee of the Regions and the Conference of Regional and Local Authorities for the Eastern Partnership (CORLEAP),
- having regard to the European Commission and European External Action Service (EEAS) communications on the European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP), notably the 2017 report on the implementation of the ENP review (JOIN(2017)0018) and the 2017 revised working document entitled ‘Eastern Partnership – 20 Deliverables for 2020: Focusing on key priorities and tangible results’ (SWD(2017)0300), as well as the 2016 communication on the ‘Global Strategy for the European Union’s Foreign And Security Policy’,
- having regard to the conclusions of the Foreign Affairs Council on the ENP and Eastern Partnership,

- having regard to its recommendation of 5 July 2017 to the Council concerning the 72nd Session of the United Nations General Assembly¹, to its resolutions, notably those of 15 June 2017² on the case of Afgan Mukhtarli and the situation of the media in Azerbaijan, of 6 April 2017³ and 24 November 2016⁴ on the situation in Belarus, of 16 March 2017 on EU priorities for the UN Human Rights Council sessions in 2017⁵, of 13 December 2016 on rights of women in the Eastern Partnership States⁶, of 21 January 2016 on Association Agreements / Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Areas with Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine⁷ and of 9 July 2015 on the review of the European Neighbourhood Policy⁸,
 - having regard to the Joint Statement of the Parliaments of Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine of 3 July 2017,
 - having regard to Rule 113 of its Rules of Procedure,
 - having regard to the report of the Committee on Foreign Affairs (A8-0308/2017),
- A. whereas the Eastern Partnership is based on a shared commitment between Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, Moldova, Ukraine and the European Union to deepening their relations and adhering to international law and fundamental values, including democracy, the rule of law, respect for human rights, fundamental freedoms and gender equality, as well as to the social market economy, sustainable development and good governance;
- B. whereas the Eastern Partnership pursues the common goals of promoting stability, confidence-building and cooperation, supporting democratic reforms, good neighbourly relations, peaceful conflict resolution and regional cooperation, enhancing people-to-people contacts and boosting trade, in order to increase political dialogue and association as well as economic cooperation and integration;
- C. whereas, through its Global Strategy and the revised ENP, the EU seeks to bring its partners closer via accelerated political association and economic integration with the EU, while at the same time aiming to promote political stabilisation, societal resilience and economic prosperity in its neighbourhood, and offering opportunities for privileged political and economic relations in line with the degree of ambition of each partner country;
- D. whereas, given that the EU considers cooperation to be a value in itself and strongly believes that it leads to win-win situations for all parties concerned, there is a commitment on the side of the EU to continue to work with all Eastern Partnership countries as long as core European values are not questioned or undermined;
- E. whereas the EU and its partners need to match resources and instruments to the

¹ Texts adopted, P8_TA(2017)0304.

² Texts adopted, P8_TA(2017)0267.

³ Texts adopted, P8_TA(2017)0126.

⁴ Texts adopted, P8_TA(2016)0456.

⁵ Texts adopted, P8_TA(2017)0089.

⁶ Texts adopted, P8_TA(2016)0487.

⁷ Texts adopted, P8_TA(2016)0018.

⁸ OJ C 265, 11.8.2017, p. 110.

commitments made and whereas the partners need to focus more on the implementation of existing agreements;

- F. whereas the participants in the 2015 Riga Summit called for progress to be made by the time of the next Summit in the areas of (1) strengthening institutions and good governance, (2) mobility and people-to-people contacts, (3) economic development and market opportunities, and (4) connectivity, energy efficiency, the environment and climate change;
- G. whereas significant progress has been made since the last Summit, notably with the conclusion and entry into force of three Association Agreements (AAs) including a Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Area (DCFTA) with Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine, as well as visa-free regimes with Georgia and Ukraine since 2017 (and with Moldova since 2014), the conclusion of negotiations on a Comprehensive and Enhanced Partnership Agreement with Armenia (which serves as an example of how membership of the Eurasian Economic Union and participation in the EU's neighbourhood strategies can coexist), the launching of negotiations on a new comprehensive agreement with Azerbaijan, the adoption of major reforms in a number of these countries with the political, technical and financial support of the European Union, and the continuation of the critical engagement policy towards Belarus;
- H. whereas since the launch of the Eastern Partnership in Prague, some founding members have experienced an overall deterioration of the human rights situation and a reversal of democratisation trends; whereas one of the main challenges will be to facilitate the ongoing transition towards inclusive, accountable, stable and viable democracies;
- I. whereas increased mobility and the enhancement of people-to-people contacts between the partner countries and the EU remain an indispensable instrument for the promotion of European values;
- J. whereas a new strategic work plan proposed by the Commission and the EEAS that combines both bilateral and regional cooperation aims to guide the future work of the EU and the six partner countries by focusing on twenty deliverables by 2020;
- K. whereas the independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity of the EU's eastern partners remains under threat from unresolved regional conflicts, including some that were initiated and are still actively sustained by the Russian Federation in contradiction with its international commitments to uphold the international legal order; whereas the EU should play a more active role in the peaceful resolution of all ongoing conflicts in its neighbourhood; whereas Russian aggression towards Ukraine, the annexation of the Crimean peninsula and the continued occupation of two Georgian regions, as well as Russian hybrid threats including destabilisation activities and propaganda, threaten European security as a whole;
- L. whereas the Eastern Partnership policy is based on the sovereign right of each partner to choose the level of ambition to which it aspires in its relations with the EU; whereas partners seeking closer relations with the EU should be able to count on more support and assistance in achieving mutually set goals if they fulfil existing reform commitments, in line with the 'more for more' principle;
- 1. Recommends the following to the Council, the Commission and the European External

Action Service:

On the future of the Eastern Partnership

- (a) to ensure that the November 2017 Summit will be forward looking, injecting new dynamism and setting a clear political vision for the future of the Eastern Partnership as a long-term policy; to ensure that the outcomes of this Summit will, as a first priority, provide the basis for upholding the core values of the European Union, in particular respect for democracy, human rights, fundamental freedoms, the rule of law, good governance, civil rights, non-discrimination and gender equality, on which the Eastern Partnership is based, underlining that these values are at the heart of the AAs and recognising the commitment of the partners concerned to implement and promote these values;
- (b) to live up to the high expectations of citizens in all the partner countries as regards eradicating corruption, fighting organised crime and bolstering the rule of law and good governance; to therefore seek a renewed commitment by the partners to adopt and fully implement reforms related to the judiciary, public administration and the fight against corruption and organised crime, on the basis of adequate roadmaps with clearly defined objectives and deadlines;
- (c) to strengthen civil society in the partner countries and its vital role within the Eastern Partnership, both as an indispensable actor in the process of democratic consolidation and as a platform for regional cooperation, by uncompromisingly opposing all legislation and measures that seek to curtail its legitimate activities and by encouraging its deeper involvement in drawing up, scrutinising and monitoring the implementation of reforms related to the Partnership as well as by promoting the transparency and accountability of public institutions;
- (d) to encourage electoral reforms that ensure that legal frameworks are in line with international standards, recommendations by OSCE-led international observation missions and Venice Commission opinions and that are achieved through a transparent process, and are the subject of broad consultation and, as far as possible, consensus with opposition and civil society, in order to improve electoral frameworks without any bias towards ruling parties; to ensure the strict application by the EU of existing conditionality related to electoral reforms;
- (e) to ensure that the outcomes of the November 2017 Summit take stock of what has already been achieved, emphasise the need to deliver on all commitments already made and provide a new impetus for the future of the Partnership including the delivery of tangible results for citizens, notably in terms of employment, reducing socioeconomic disparities, transport, connectivity, energy independence, mobility and education, noting that a new European External Investment Plan (EEIP) is an important instrument in this regard;
- (f) to pursue efforts aimed at tackling unemployment, especially youth unemployment, including through a package of support measures for young people such as the EU4Youth programme, and developing skills adapted to the evolving needs of the labour market, including through vocational education and training, fostering entrepreneurship and local industries, supporting sustainable agriculture, developing tourism and the digital economy, and expanding social

infrastructure and the public and private services sector, inter alia in the field of health and care;

- (g) to promote and actively support the implementation of anti-discrimination policies in all sectors of society; to ensure gender equality in public policies and support for the employability and entrepreneurship of women, with policy continuity being guaranteed beyond the 2020 target date;
- (h) to commit to working jointly on increased mobility between the EU and partner countries; to support Moldova, Georgia and Ukraine in implementing the visa liberalisation agreement and to ensure that suspension mechanisms are not triggered in the future, notably through close cooperation in the areas of police and customs to safeguard against security threats, criminality and overstays; to open visa dialogues with Armenia, to encourage progress by Azerbaijan in the implementation of Visa Facilitation and Readmission Agreements (VFA/RA) with a view to opening a visa dialogue in the future, and to finalise negotiations on VFA/RA with Belarus for the benefit of its citizens, should these countries make significant progress in the area of fundamental values and meet the precise conditions defined in visa liberalisation action plans;
- (i) to further increase opportunities for closer cooperation in the fields of education, research and innovation, notably through facilitating participation in programmes such as Erasmus+, Spreading Excellence and Widening Participation and EU4Innovation as well as the provision of loan guarantees by the European Investment Bank Group as part of its InnovFin programme; to provide support in order to reform education and address the research and innovation gap;
- (j) to ensure that the outcomes of the November 2017 Summit will also provide a renewed impetus to boost sustainable economic growth, the modernisation of existing sectors, trade and investment opportunities, including intra-regional opportunities for cross-border cooperation and with a particular emphasis on entrepreneurship and Small and Medium-sized Enterprises (SMEs);
- (k) to call for recalibrated EU support to the Association agendas and to the related structural reforms, notably those allowing for improved competitiveness, a more favourable business environment and adequate access to sources of financing, including through the EU4Business initiative; to monitor closely the implementation of DCFTAs in order to avoid social and environmental dumping; to devise targeted assistance for SMEs to help them to fully absorb the potential of DCFTAs; to promote and support a genuine reform of the economic system aimed at phasing out monopolies and circumscribing the role of oligarchs through the introduction of adequate laws, as well as a major reform of the banking and financial sector aimed at combating money laundering and tax evasion;
- (l) to support the development of the necessary transport and connectivity infrastructure, including through an ambitious investment plan for the TEN-T core network, and to also promote intra-regional trade; to support infrastructure projects that will provide new opportunities for trade and enable more communication and exchanges between the EU and the partner countries as well as among the partners;

- (m) to improve both energy independence and efficiency through specific investments and the diversification of energy sources, in particular with regard to renewable energy and reducing dependence on fossil fuels, through strengthened cooperation in all priority areas covered by the EU Energy Union and closer integration of the partners' energy markets with the European energy market, with a particular focus on interconnectivity and infrastructure; to ensure that onshore and offshore sections of new pipeline infrastructure within the region, including the Nord Stream 2 pipeline, are fully in line with EU legislation and the energy union strategy and that they do not undermine regional energy security; to work with the eastern partners to support the households most affected by rising energy prices;
- (n) to ensure full respect for international nuclear safety and environmental protection agreements and obligations; to increase efforts towards the fulfilment of climate change commitments, including through public awareness-raising and a gradual and sustainable phase-out of obsolete power plants in Armenia and Ukraine; to follow closely the development of new projects such as the nuclear power plant in Ostrovets, Belarus;
- (o) to ensure that the outcomes of the November 2017 Summit also address the security threats and conflicts that affect the independence, sovereignty, territorial integrity, fundamental human rights, and political, social and economic stability and development of the partners and of the region as a whole;
- (p) to commit to sustaining the unity of action among EU Member States in maintaining collective pressure on Russia, whose military presence in the region has nevertheless grown over the past years, in particular through strengthened targeted restrictive measures, to solving the conflict in eastern Ukraine through full and genuine implementation of the Minsk agreements and by maintaining the OSCE monitoring mission, to solving the conflict between Russia and Georgia through tangible outcomes of the Geneva International Discussions and full implementation by Russia of the 2008 ceasefire agreement, to re-establishing Ukraine's full sovereignty in Crimea, and that of Georgia in its occupied territories of Abkhazia and South Ossetia and of Moldova in Transnistria, to paying adequate attention to the dangerous ecological situation in eastern Ukraine, to supporting its partners in strengthening their resilience, and to putting an end to the additional threats of state-sponsored assassinations, cyber warfare, disinformation and other types of destabilisation;
- (q) to underline that the participation of an eastern partner in military exercises aimed at the EU and/or some of its partners, such as the Russian-led Zapad 2017 exercise in Belarus, is unacceptable; to ensure that a partner does not engage in such exercises again in the future;
- (r) to call for an immediate end to military hostilities between Armenian and Azerbaijani forces which unnecessarily claim the lives of civilians and soldiers whilst hampering socioeconomic development; to reaffirm support to the OSCE Minsk Group co-Chairs' efforts to solve the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict and to their 2009 Basic Principles, which include territorial integrity, self-determination and the non-use of force; to call on Armenia and Azerbaijan to re-launch negotiations in good faith with a view to implementing these principles to solve the conflict, which cannot be solved using military force; to call on the

Governments of Armenia and Azerbaijan to hold high-level talks and commit to genuine confidence-building measures and dialogue between Armenian and Azerbaijani civil society; to make the ratification of new agreements between the EU and each of the parties conditional on meaningful commitments to and substantial progress towards solving the conflict, such as maintaining the ceasefire and supporting the implementation of the 2009 Basic Principles;

- (s) to call for continued support to the work carried out by the EU and OSCE missions in Georgia, Moldova and eastern Ukraine as essential operations to ensure peace and security first and foremost for the benefit of the citizens on the ground; to ensure effective implementation of these missions' mandates and urge Russia to guarantee their unimpeded access; to consider supporting the deployment of an armed OSCE police mission in eastern Ukraine; to reflect, jointly with the partner countries, on the prospect of an enhanced role for the EU in solving these conflicts, including by launching ambitious fully-fledged Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP) missions tasked with enhancing security and stability;
- (t) to call on the EU's partners to fully cooperate with the EU in tackling challenges such as illegal migration, terrorism, cybercrime, human trafficking, smuggling and illicit trade;
- (u) to consider, within the EaP policy, an attractive longer-term 'EaP+' model for associated countries that have made substantial progress in implementing AA/DCFTA-related reforms, that could eventually lead to joining the customs union, energy union, digital union and Schengen area, further EU internal market access, integration into EU transport networks, industrial partnerships, increased participation in other EU programmes and agencies, further cooperation in the field of the CSDP, and more immediate measures such as additional unilateral tariff preferences, a concrete timeframe for the abolition of roaming tariffs between the partners and the EU, and the development of high-capacity broadband; to open the 'EaP+' model to other Eastern Partnership countries once they are ready for such enhanced commitments and have made significant progress towards implementing mutually agreed reforms;
- (v) to consider, for non-associated countries, new means of supporting civil society, businesses, the academic and independent media communities and young people, including through additional funding and mobility partnerships;
- (w) to ensure that, in both cases, the common goals are both medium and long-term when necessary, encouraging some of the partner countries to move beyond the logic of electoral cycles to more strategic visions;

On the implementation of the Eastern Partnership

- (x) to reiterate the principle of differentiation and that the scope and depth of cooperation with the EU is determined by its ambitions and those of the partners, as well as by the pace and quality of reforms to be evaluated based on their full and effective implementation, notably as regards respect for democracy, human rights, fundamental freedoms, the rule of law and good governance;

- (y) to underline that the Eastern Partnership aims to create the necessary conditions for close political association and economic integration, including participation in EU programmes; to reiterate that AAs with Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine do not constitute the final goal in their relations with the EU; to acknowledge once again the European aspirations of these countries; to point out that, pursuant to Article 49 of the TEU and in line with the Rome Declaration of 25 March 2017, any European state may apply to become a member of the EU, provided it adheres to the Copenhagen criteria and the principles of democracy, that it respects fundamental freedoms and human rights including those of minority groups and that it upholds the rule of law; to urge the Member States, in this regard, to agree to an ambitious declaration for the 2017 Summit that sets relevant long-term goals;
- (z) to invite Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine to focus on the full implementation of the Association agendas in order to unlock all the opportunities available through the AAs, to engage also in the joint discussions on the progress, opportunities and challenges relating to the AA/DCFTA-related reforms; to reiterate the importance of genuine implementation of the abovementioned reforms for the future stability and development of the countries and the wellbeing of their societies; to reaffirm that the deepening of relations within the 'EaP+' model as well as any prospect of EU membership requires substantial progress in terms of the implementation of these reforms, notably as regards the rule of law, respect for human rights and good governance;
- (aa) to ensure that strict conditionality is always attached to current and further levels of cooperation and support for the partners, and that it is also observed; to underline that EU financial support to its partners will be conditional on concrete reform steps and their effective implementation, and that the EU's incentive-based approach will continue to benefit those partners most engaged in ambitious reforms; to envisage paying out grants in smaller instalments to enable the EU to better respond to unexpected crises or a lack of reforms; to emphasise in particular that no comprehensive agreement will be ratified with a country that does not respect EU values, notably through the non-implementation of decisions by the European Court of Human Rights and the harassment, intimidation and persecution of human rights defenders, NGOs and journalists; to also highlight that clear benchmarks need to be met before any new dialogue on visa-free regimes is launched and concluded; to reiterate that backsliding on prior achievements will systematically lead to the suspension of agreements, including in the area of visa-free regimes and EU funding;
- (ab) to support the multilateral dimension of the Eastern Partnership as a means of increasing multilateral confidence-building, notably in conflict-affected areas, and creating opportunities for regional cooperation, including through transnational civil society platforms, cooperation between local and regional authorities, and cross-border projects such as people-to-people programmes involving intercultural dialogue and the younger generation as factors for change;
- (ac) to highlight the importance of communicating policies related to the Eastern Partnership coherently and effectively, internally as well as externally, and of providing communication activities tailored to specific regions, notably so as to bridge the knowledge gap as regards the EU and its relations with its partners; to

acknowledge the excellent work done so far by the East StratCom Task Force and to support its activities with additional funding; to address the challenge of better information about the concrete benefits and goals of the Eastern Partnership, to target disinformation through fact-based and accessible quality information in all languages of the partner countries, and to ensure full respect for the freedom of expression;

- (ad) to maintain that EU support should be tailor-made to match the level of shared ambition regarding cooperation with each partner following the principles of both 'more for more' and 'less for less'; to call in particular for the EU to align budgetary instruments such as the European Neighbourhood Instrument and the European Fund for Sustainable Development with political tasks and implementation strategies, notably within its annual and multiannual budgetary procedures;
- (ae) to welcome the Commission proposals to provide the partners with macro-financial assistance (MFA) while insisting on strict and effective conditionality attached to the proposals, notably in terms of upholding the rule of law (including an independent judiciary and multi-party parliamentary system), ensuring good governance (including combating corruption effectively), and defending human rights and the freedom of the media; to provide Parliament and the Council with a detailed written report every six months on the progress made in these three areas for partners already benefiting from such assistance; to call on the Commission to draw up new MFA programmes for partner countries that have successfully completed past programmes, to make systematic provision for the abovementioned conditionality in future proposals for such assistance, and to ensure that it is strictly applied, notably in the case of Moldova;
- (af) to ask the Commission, the European Investment Bank and other multilateral financial institutions to work towards the successful implementation of the Investment Plan for Europe and of a dedicated support mechanism for Eastern Partnership countries committed to implementing the AAs; to request the establishment of a trust fund for Ukraine, Georgia and Moldova based on the best practices of multi-donor instruments, while stressing that this trust fund should focus on private and public investments, in particular those in social and economic infrastructure and aimed at boosting investment absorptive capacity, and on the coordination of international financial institutions and international donor support on the ground; to consider holding a donors' conference for Ukraine in support of the country's humanitarian needs induced by the conflict in the East and the annexation of Crimea; to ensure that the use of all these funds is also strictly scrutinised in order to prevent any misuse;
- (ag) to reiterate its strong support for parliamentary input towards and scrutiny of the Eastern Partnership policy, notably as regards the impact of the policy on citizens' lives; to enhance, in this respect, the role of the Euronest Parliamentary Assembly within the new multilateral architecture of the Eastern Partnership, as well as of the Parliamentary Association or Cooperation Committees (PAC/PCC) within the Association or Cooperation Councils; to welcome the Comprehensive Democracy Support Approach (CDSA) programmes that are being implemented; to invite parliamentarians from the partner countries to work together to scrutinise implementation and exchange best practices; to step up the involvement of the

Eastern Partnership Civil Society Forum in this process;

- (ah) to take note of Parliament's resolve to increase its monitoring of the implementation of international agreements with the eastern partners and to increase its scrutiny of EU support provided in this respect; to respond to Parliament's call on the partners and on the Commission to increase the transparency of all EU funding beneficiaries; to call on the Commission and the EEAS to transmit to Parliament and the Council a detailed written report on the implementation of these agreements every six months;
 - (ai) to take note of Parliament's resolve to increase its scrutiny of the negotiation of future international agreements with the eastern partners; to call on the Council to provide Parliament without delay with all relevant negotiating directives in line with the relevant Interinstitutional Agreement¹; to welcome the effective cooperation of the Commission and the EEAS with Parliament in providing information on these negotiations, but to call on them to also provide, without delay, the draft negotiating texts and initialled agreements, in line with the relevant Framework Agreement²;
2. Instructs its President to forward this recommendation to the Council, the European Commission and the European External Action Service, and, for information, to the EU Special Representative for the South Caucasus and the crisis in Georgia, the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly, the Council of Europe Parliamentary Assembly and the governments and parliaments of the Eastern Partnership countries.

¹ OJ C 95, 1.4.2014, p. 1.

² OJ L 304, 20.11.2010, p. 47.