



**COUNCIL OF
THE EUROPEAN UNION**



Brussels, 7 May 2009
8435 (Presse 78)

Joint Declaration of the Prague Eastern Partnership Summit
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The Heads of State or Government and representatives of the Republic of Armenia, the Republic of Azerbaijan, the Republic of Belarus, Georgia, the Republic of Moldova and Ukraine, the representatives of the European Union and the Heads of State or Government and representatives of its Member States have met in Prague to bring their relationship to a new level by establishing the Eastern Partnership and have adopted the following Joint Declaration:

A more ambitious partnership between the European Union and the partner countries

1. The Eastern Partnership is launched as a common endeavour of the Member States of the European Union and their Eastern European Partners (hereinafter the partner countries), founded on mutual interests and commitments as well as on shared ownership and responsibility. It will be developed jointly, in a fully transparent manner.

P R E S S

The participants of the Prague Summit agree that the Eastern Partnership will be based on commitments to the principles of international law and to fundamental values, including democracy, the rule of law and the respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms, as well as to, market economy, sustainable development and good governance.

The Eastern Partnership builds on and is complementary to existing bilateral contractual relations. It will be developed without prejudice to individual partner countries' aspirations for their future relationship with the European Union. It will be governed by the principles of differentiation and conditionality.

The Eastern Partnership will be developed in parallel with the bilateral cooperation between the EU and third states.

2. The main goal of the Eastern Partnership is to create the necessary conditions to accelerate political association and further economic integration between the European Union and interested partner countries. The significant strengthening of EU policy with regard to the partner countries will be brought about through the development of a specific Eastern dimension of the European Neighbourhood Policy. With this aim, the Eastern Partnership will seek to support political and socio-economic reforms of the partner countries, facilitating approximation towards the European Union. This serves the shared commitment to stability, security and prosperity of the European Union, the partner countries and indeed the entire European continent.

The Eastern Partnership should further promote stability and multilateral confidence building. Conflicts impede cooperation activities. Therefore the participants of the Prague summit emphasize the need for their earliest peaceful settlement on the basis of principles and norms of international law and the decisions and documents approved in this framework.

Furthermore, the Eastern Partnership could help to develop closer ties among the partner countries themselves.

3. The Eastern Partnership carries a clear political message about the need to maintain and bolster the course towards reforms. The Eastern Partnership will provide additional impetus to the economic and social and regional development of the partner countries. It will facilitate good governance, including in the financial sector, promote regional development and social cohesion and help to reduce partner countries' socioeconomic disparities. In this way, the Eastern Partnership will be complementary to macro-economic assistance provided through relevant international instruments.

Deeper bilateral engagement

4. The participants of the Prague Summit share the wish to deepen and to intensify bilateral relations between the EU and the partner countries, taking into account the specific situation and ambition of each partner country and respecting existing bilateral relations between the EU and the respective partner country. They agreed that bilateral cooperation under the Eastern Partnership umbrella should provide the foundation for Association Agreements between the EU and those partner countries who are willing and able to comply with the resulting commitments.
5. New Association Agreements, beyond existing opportunities for trade and investment, will provide for the establishment or the objective of establishing deep and comprehensive free trade areas, where the positive effects of trade and investment liberalization will be strengthened by regulatory approximation leading to convergence with EU laws and standards. Open markets and economic integration are essential to the sustainable economic development of the partner countries and to underpin political stabilisation. Establishing bilateral deep and comprehensive free trade areas between the EU and partner countries could in the long-term perspective grow into a network of deep and comprehensive free trade areas.
6. The European Union will develop Comprehensive Institution-Building Programmes individually with each partner country in order to improve their administrative capacity, including through training, technical assistance and any appropriate innovative measures.
7. Supporting mobility of citizens and visa liberalisation in a secure environment is another important aspect of the Eastern Partnership. It will promote mobility of citizens of the partner countries through visa facilitation and readmission agreements; the EU, in line with its Global Approach to Migration, will also take gradual steps towards full visa liberalisation as a long term goal for individual partner countries on a case-by-case basis provided that conditions for well-managed and secure mobility are in place.
8. The Eastern Partnership aims to strengthen energy security through cooperation with regard to long-term stable and secure energy supply and transit, including through better regulation, energy efficiency and more use of renewable energy sources. Provisions on energy interdependence could be included in the new Association Agreements or other bilateral arrangements between the EU and the partner countries. Energy cooperation should take into account the EU's Second Strategic Energy Review and each partner country's energy policy.

Focus on multilateral co-operation

9. The multilateral framework of the Eastern Partnership will provide for cooperation activities and open and free dialogue serving the objectives of the Partnership. It will operate on a basis of joint decisions of the European Union and the partner countries. It will provide a forum to share information and experience on the partner countries' steps towards transition, reform and modernisation and give the EU an additional instrument to accompany these processes. It will facilitate the development of common positions and joint activities. The multilateral framework is aimed at fostering links among partner countries themselves and will be a forum for discussion on further developments of the Eastern Partnership.

Legislative and regulatory approximation is crucial to those partner countries willing to make progress in coming closer to the EU. The multilateral framework will provide the setting for the systematic undertaking in this respect, including through dedicated sessions devoted to the presentation and explanation by the European Union of EU legislation and standards, as well as its comparison with national policy and legislation.

10. Meetings of Heads of State or Government of the Eastern Partnership will be held in principle every two years. They should take place in the EU and in the partner countries. The Ministers of Foreign Affairs will meet every year. These high-level meetings will move and shape the Eastern Partnership further.
11. Four thematic platforms currently organised by the European Commission will allow for target-oriented sessions and serve for open and free discussions, on the basis of the main areas of cooperation, namely Democracy, good governance and stability; Economic integration and convergence with EU sectoral policies; Energy security; and Contacts between people.
12. The initial meetings of the four thematic platforms will take place during June 2009. Each platform will adopt a set of realistic, core objectives that should be updated periodically, with a corresponding work programme, and will review the progress achieved. Meetings would be held at least twice a year at the level of senior officials engaged in the reform work in the relevant policy areas. The platforms will report to the annual meetings of Ministers of Foreign Affairs. The work of the platforms may occasionally be promoted through sector-specific Ministerial meetings. There will also be panels to support the work of the thematic platforms in specific areas.

Third states will be eligible for the participation on a case-by-case basis in concrete projects, activities and meetings of thematic platforms, where it contributes to the objectives of particular activities and the general objectives of the Eastern Partnership. Activities within the multilateral framework of the Eastern Partnership should be voluntary and based on the principles of a cooperative approach.

13. The participants of the Prague Summit support the launching of Flagship Initiatives that will give additional momentum, concrete substance and visibility to the Eastern Partnership and are looking forward to an early discussion of the platforms in this regard.
14. Complementarity with regional initiatives between the European Union and relevant partner countries, in particular the Black Sea Synergy, will be ensured. Interaction with other regional initiatives should be considered on a case-by-case basis.
15. High representatives of the European Parliament, the Committee of the Regions, the European Economic and Social Committee, the European Investment Bank and the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development have attended the Prague Summit. The Eastern Partnership will engage a wide range of actors, involving government ministries and agencies, parliaments, civil society, international organisations (such as the OSCE, Council of Europe and OECD), international financial institutions, the private sector, economic and social partners in the framework of the multilateral platforms.

Therefore, the participants of the Prague Summit invite the parliamentarians from the European Union and the partner countries to come forward with ideas regarding the European Parliament's proposal to establish a EU-Neighbourhood East Parliamentary Assembly (EURO-NEST PA), and the European Commission to develop and propose modalities for the establishment of a Civil Society Forum of the Eastern Partnership.

The participants also invite the European Investment Bank to work on investment support in the framework of its Eastern Neighbourhood mandate in favour of small and medium sized enterprises. They invite the European Investment Bank, the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development and other international financial institutions to establish an appropriate joint small and medium-sized enterprise facility.

Funding

16. In line with the March 2009 Eastern Partnership Declaration, adopted by the European Council, increased European Union financial support will be provided serving the goals of the Eastern Partnership and taking into consideration progress made by individual partner countries. The participants of the Prague Summit agree that beyond the Community grant assistance and national co-financing, the implementation of the Eastern Partnership will require additional financial resources and they therefore call on other donors, the international financial institutions and the private sector to provide additional financing in support of reforms, the flagship initiatives and projects.

17. The Eastern Partnership should contain an innovative approach to promote joint ownership and deeper cooperation between the public and private sectors. Pro-active political support and the EU incentives and guarantees for the private sector should create the conditions for motivating the private sector to invest in the concrete projects in the partner countries and thus contributing to the attainment of the Eastern Partnership goals.
18. The participants of the Prague Summit encourage the EIB, EBRD and other International Financial Institutions to step up their efforts to assist all partner countries with the reform and modernisation process and to identify suitable investment projects.

Concluding points

19. The participants of the Prague Summit agree on the necessity to promote key principles and purposes of the Eastern Partnership among the public, mobilise support for and raise awareness of it. The increased visibility of concrete projects and activities will bring the initiative closer to citizens.
20. The participants of the Prague Summit call upon the current and incoming Presidencies of the Council of the European Union as well as the European Commission to intensify their joint efforts with the partner countries in order to define the schedule of ministerial and senior officials meetings within the multilateral dimension of the Eastern Partnership, to define the priorities of the activities of the thematic platforms for the period of 2009-2010, and to prepare proposals on early implementation of Flagship Initiatives.
21. The participants of the Prague Summit are confident that the results of the Prague Summit and the establishment of the Eastern Partnership will advance the cause of democracy, strengthen stability and prosperity, bringing lasting and palpable benefits to citizens of all participating states. The participants of the Prague Summit will work closely to achieve the objectives envisaged by this Joint Declaration.