

Eastern Partnership: The Opening Report

**Edited by
Beata Wojna and Mateusz Gniazdowski**



THE POLISH INSTITUTE
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INTRODUCTION

The May 7 inauguration of the Eastern Partnership of the European Union and its Eastern neighbours in Prague, during the Czech presidency, is an event of symbolic significance. The collapse of communism in Eastern and Central Europe ushered in hope for peace, security and the sovereign right of every nation to choose its own path of development. Today, through the Eastern Partnership, the enlarged European Union, which integrates nations from both sides of the former “Iron Curtain,” seeks to offer similar opportunities to its Eastern neighbours.

The Eastern Partnership is a new regional cooperation proposal addressed to Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine. It is related to the European Neighbourhood Policy pursued since 2004 and is based on the same principles and methods of action. Its principal objective is to bring the Eastern neighbours closer to the EU. This is essentially 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. EU’s cooperation with its Eastern neighbours is to lead to the transfer of good EU practices in the fields of trade, economy and politics, and its pace will depend on the changes taking place in those countries and the partners’ expectations.

The architects of the Eastern Partnership are Poland and Sweden, which in May 2008 proposed a deepening of relations with the Eastern neighbours embraced by the European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP). 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. A similar position was taken by Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia. In the first half of 2006, the Austrian presidency proposed the building of a joint energy policy, of which dialogue with Ukraine and Belarus, as the transit countries for fuels shipment, would be one element. When it held the presidency in the first half of 2007, Germany came up with the “ENP Plus” project. 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. 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 a multilateral plane, became a sign of the evolution of the EU’s approach to the neighbourhood policy.

The Eastern Partnership is seen by many member states as a continuation of their prior endeavours to strengthen the ENP in its Eastern dimension, as well as a new opening in the EU’s relations with the countries to which it is addressed. The initiative also met with strong support 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 the Eastern Partnership. 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 was long 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 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 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 sphere of interest of primarily the "new" EU member states. A major role was also played by the European Commission, which in December 2008 issued an ambitious communication serving as a basis for further discussions on the subject in the EU.

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 liberalisation of the visa requirements in relations with the individual partner countries and the development of cooperation in the field of energy security. The deepening of relations with the EU depends on the partners' progress in implementing such values as democracy, rule of law, upholding 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, e.g. by improving their administrative capabilities. 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 that are just interested in close cooperation with the EU and those that aspire to be included in European integration. In addition, Belarus' 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 multilateral dimension of the Eastern Partnership that is a new element. This is connected with regular meetings between EU representatives and the Eastern neighbours at the level of heads of state or government, ministers of foreign affairs, senior officials and experts. 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.

Many EU members and some partners expect that multilateral cooperation will also serve as a confidence building mechanism in the region.

Financing is important, too. In the years 2010–2013, the EU is planning to allocate €600 million to the Eastern Partnership. Of this total, €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 toward 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 ENP. 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.

* * *

What needs to be done so Eastern Partnership is not reduced to symbols and slogans that are not followed by concrete actions? How can the political impulse, which the consent of all the member states to the implementation of this initiative certainly constitutes, be taken advantage of in order to genuinely bring the Eastern neighbours closer to the EU? Many factors will undoubtedly impact the implementation of the Eastern Partnership. It seems, however, that its future will be determined in the largest measure by the commitment and the political will of the states to which this project is addressed and of EU member states. Therefore, this report is to serve a comprehensive analysis of their attitude to Eastern Partnership. On this basis one can also draw conclusions about the role that the EU member states may play in pursuing this initiative and formulate proposals concerning its implementation. The report concerns only marginally the remaining actors, such as the European Commission and third countries that will also exert an influence on the implementation of this EU initiative.

A review of the EU member states' policy toward the Eastern Partnership warrants the opinion that they are aware of the need for 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 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.

Several divergences came to light in the course of discussions on the 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 also included the Southern EU members, which demanded a proportional increase in funds for the Southern dimension of the European Neighbourhood Policy. Also discussed was the proper relationship between the Eastern Partnership and the Black Sea Synergy pursued since 2007, in which most of the Eastern EU neighbours are involved. In many countries one could hear critical opinions about the idea of liberalising 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 population.

The Eastern Partnership initiative also triggered a discussion on the relations between the EU and Russia in the area of Eastern Europe and South Caucasus. Most member states have 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, 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 have emphasised the need of parallel development of the Eastern dimension of the ENP and of EU-Russia cooperation. According to EU members, the contradictions, if any, between the goals of Eastern Partnership and Russia's fears, could be alleviated with the involvement of the latter in individual projects pursued within the framework of the Partnership.

There certainly are some EU member states that could be tentatively described as the "Friends of Eastern Partnership" group on account of their particularly strong interest in cooperation with the addressees of Eastern Partnership. The architects of this initiative, i.e. Poland and Sweden, occupy a special place in this group. The Central European and Baltic EU member states closely cooperated in devising the shape of the Eastern Partnership. Also consultations with Germany played a very important role. German support was central to the building of consensus in the EU. These efforts and support from the European Commission mean that the Partnership meets the requirement of preserving the internal cohesion of the ENP and duly takes into account the experience of that policy toward the partners in the East. It also means that there is a chance for closer cooperation of the Eastern neighbours and a "new quality" in their relations with the EU.

The "Friends of Eastern Partnership" group 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 chances of integration with the EU for those Eastern neighbours who have articulated such aspirations. For them, the Eastern Partnership is a pragmatic reply to the "enlargement fatigue," its biggest advantage being the fact that it makes it possible to act for the benefit of bringing the neighbour nations closer to the EU and can at the same time be acceptable even to those EU members which are not prepared to discuss new enlargement commitments at this time.

It is necessary to safeguard the involvement of Black Sea cooperation advocates in the implementation of Eastern Partnership. These include, for example, Germany, which came up with the Black Sea Synergy plan, Romania and Bulgaria, as well as Greece, a Mediterranean country. The last three 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. They have been looking at the Eastern Europe and South Caucasus region from the angle of the Black Sea basin, which is why, during the debate on Eastern Partnership, they aired their fears about the sidelining of the Black Sea Synergy and pointed to the need for a complementary nature of both initiatives. They suggested, for example, that Eastern Partnership could concentrate on bilateral cooperation and adaptation of the

neighbour countries to EU standards, while the Black Sea Synergy would focus on multilateral projects and on building confidence and security in the region. In practice, the attainment of the advocated complementarity of these initiatives may turn out to be much more difficult to achieve than theoretical analyses would imply. In order to avoid ambiguities concerning competence and the overlapping of the two initiatives, it would be necessary to develop firm decisions of a political and technical nature in this regard. One solution could be the establishment of a mechanism for coordination of Eastern Partnership and other EU initiatives in the region, another would be the adoption of a more definitive “chart of complementarity” of regional initiatives in order to avoid controversy in the future, all the more so as the emergence of the Eastern Partnership caused a revival of the strivings of some member states to strengthen the existing (the Black Sea Synergy) or advance new concepts of regional cooperation engaging Eastern neighbours.

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 responsible for the fact that they generally act together in favour of greater EU involvement in the region. Even so, it would be an oversimplification to suggest that they take a reluctant view of Eastern Partnership. The countries that have traditionally looked south are showing growing interest in the Eastern neighbours, and especially in economic cooperation or cooperation in the fields of energy, internal security and border management. Besides, Greece and Cyprus have been active in the Black Sea Synergy, while the growing number of immigrants from Eastern neighbourhood countries in Spain and Portugal exerts some influence on the development of political and economic relations of those more distant EU members with the Eastern Europe region. A common denominator of the countries interested in relations with the Southern and the Eastern neighbours is no doubt the interest in the development of the ENP. Despite the differences regarding the type of political and financial involvement of the EU in the East and the South, the promotion of political, legal, institutional and good management standards and democratic norms in the EU neighbourhood is in their common interest.

In order to make full use of the potential of the member states, the most interested members should be able to engage more deeply in particular areas of cooperation or in the implementation of specific Eastern Partnership flagship projects. That idea already appeared in the Polish-Swedish proposal, while in its December communication the European Commission pointed out that member states “with an experience of transition have a particular contribution to make” with regard to the work of thematic platforms. Therefore a lot will depend on the commitment of Germany and the Central and Northern Europe countries, on their cooperation and the ability to build broader coalitions of states willing to participate in specific sectoral projects. It can be assumed, that, for example, it would be possible to recruit the cooperation of the Southern EU members in the field of border management, that the member states dependent on the supplies of fuels from the East would engage in cooperation in the energy sector, or that the Scandinavian countries or the Netherlands would be interested in questions of democracy or the promotion of human rights. Also the UK can be expected to get involved in the implementation of the Eastern Partnership. The countries embraced by the initiative may not be major economic or political partners for that country, but there

is considerable British interest in the region, which reflects the UK's general support for actions serving the broadening of the area of stability, security and free market through a further enlargement of the EU.

In connection with the implementation of the Eastern Partnership, there should be some coordination of the development programmes addressed by the member states to the Eastern neighbourhood so that funds are expended in the most efficient manner. The experience of countries having some significant achievements in granting development and transformation aid could come in handy in this context.

EU members have an important role to play in implementing the Eastern Partnership, although its success 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 demonstrates numerous shortfalls in this regard. Belarus and, to a smaller extent, 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, and, if formal declarations are taken into account, Moldova and Azerbaijan as well), 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. 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 gave 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 liberalisation of visa requirements, the lifting of trade barriers, cooperation in the field of energy and obtaining financial support.

The Eastern Partnership is an initiative of strategic significance for the stability and security of both the countries of the Eastern dimension of ENP and of the EU as a whole. In particular, the South Caucasus countries expect a growth of EU involvement in the solving of the region's conflicts. It should, however, be noted that although some EU members proposed that the Eastern Partnership should also serve the boosting of EU activity in this area, the view that ultimately prevailed was that the initiative should be focused first of all on the EU exerting its influence as a "soft force." According to some member states, the omission of the "hard" security agenda, or "desecuritisation," will effectively contribute to the growth of the level of confidence and an improvement of international security in the region.

The countries interested in integration with the EU welcomed the fact that from among all the countries embraced by the European Neighbourhood Policy "European neighbours of the EU" were distinguished, i.e. six countries located in Europe as per the political definitions, some of which have openly articulated the will to accede to the Union. It is worth remembering that when the European Neighbourhood Policy was proclaimed, these states were highly critical that the EU was treating them on the same

footing as the culturally distant countries of North Africa and the Middle East, which were denied a possibility of EU membership.

The Eastern Partnership also meets halfway public expectations in that it draws attention to the role of people-to-people contacts in bringing the Eastern neighbours closer to the EU. That area of cooperation, which includes, for example, student exchange, joint cultural and research projects, actions promoting the building of an information society and independent mass media, should become one of the foundations of Eastern Partnership that is developed regardless of the will of the political elites. Its aim, after all, is to strengthen the civic society, which is the foundation of an efficient democratic state. The Eastern Partnership Civic Society Forum, a plan launched under the auspices of the Czech presidency in Prague, is a pioneering initiative in this respect. 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.

When assessing the prospects for Eastern Partnership implementation, it is important to bear in mind that this is an auxiliary instrument, and not a package through which the EU will be solving all the problems of Eastern neighbourhood. While it meets the expectations of the EU's European neighbours and is consulted with them, the Partnership is an EU decision. However, the filling of the framework defined by Partnership with concrete action will depend in a much bigger measure on the states to which it is addressed, their political will, readiness and progress in strengthening their 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 whole concept of Eastern Partnership should not be contingent on its development. The principal limiting factor is the need for consensus, which is difficult when dealing with countries that are so different or that actually are at loggerheads with one another. Closer cooperation between those beneficiaries of Eastern Partnership that 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 the 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.

* * *

This report is divided into two parts. The first presents the involvement of individual member states in defining the Eastern Partnership, in particular their attitude toward the initiative and the actions of EU members that promote it. Chapter II deals with the reactions of Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine to the proposal for Eastern Partnership and their expectations regarding that initiative. An annex to the report contains references to the major documents related to the creation of Eastern Partnership.

The report was prepared based on declarations of ministers of foreign affairs and statements by representatives of the bodies taking part in defining foreign policy in individual countries. The authors also talked to officials from some foreign ministries and diplomatic missions. The country-by-country reports bear the imprint of their authors as the idea of putting the individual country reports in the rigid framework of a uniform research questionnaire was dropped. This did not prove to be very productive in view of significant differences in problems of the Eastern Partnership in individual countries, the diversity of sources and oftentimes also a lack of clear views of the authorities on individual matters that the debate concerns. As, following a unanimous decision of the European Council, the EaP became a community project, the authors could forego a literal description of the position of individual EU countries regarding the matters on which a general consensus exists, attempting to focus instead on the specific features of national involvement in devising the Eastern Partnership and the way it has been perceived.

The Report was prepared by the staff of the Research Office of the Polish Institute of International Affairs: Łukasz Adamski (ŁA), Ryszarda Formuszewicz (RF), Mateusz Gniazdowski (MG), Marcin Koczor (MK), Radosław Kołatek (RK), Aleksandra Kreczmańska (AK), Rafał Morawiec (RM), Andrzej Szeptycki (ASze), Adam Szymański (ASzy), Robert Śmigielski (RŚ), Rafał Tarnogórski (RT), Beata Wojna (BW), Ernest Wyciszkiewicz (EW), Bartłomiej Znojek (BZ). It is an abridged version of a bigger study on the subject of the Eastern Partnership that is being prepared by the Polish Institute of International Affairs. In addition to the attitude of EU member states and the neighbours' approach to Eastern Partnership, that study will review relations between individual member states and the countries of Eastern Europe and South Caucasus as well as the involvement of the member states in the development of the European Neighbourhood Policy so far.

Beata Wojna

CHAPTER I

EUROPEAN UNION MEMBERS ON EASTERN PARTNERSHIP

Austria

Austria has well established relations with countries of Eastern Europe, where its most important partners are Russia and Ukraine. Those relations are less developed in the case of the South Caucasus, although, given energy related issues, this region plays an increasingly important role in Austrian policy. The Austrian government, which supported the implementation of the ENP, promotes a vision of neighbourhood in keeping with which the EU should conclude agreements on partnerships with neighbours, thus forming a “circle of friends.” The ENP is treated as an alternative to EU membership, allowing only closer relations between the EU and its Eastern neighbours, but not their accession.

Austria reacted positively to the Eastern Partnership initiative,¹ which—according to this state—would allow a more active development of the ENP in a period of economic crisis. It also pointed out that the EU should take greater responsibility for the stability of its Eastern neighbours in these especially difficult times. In connection to the Polish-Swedish proposal, the former Austrian minister of foreign affairs, Ursula Plassnik, pointed to the significance of individual partnerships that could grow within the framework of the EaP, partnerships that could allow the adjustment of bilateral relations to the Eastern neighbours’ ability and willingness to carry out the necessary reforms.²

Austria’s favourable attitude towards the Partnership is not unrelated to that country’s desire to protect its economic interests threatened by the crisis. Austrian banks are very active in Eastern European countries (they have granted in Ukraine about €10 billion in loans). These banks could sustain considerable losses. This also explains the efforts made by Werner Faymann’s government to bring about the EU’s adoption of an assistance package for the region.³

From the Austrian point of view, the emergence of the EaP is a stimulus for the development of the Danube Process, which Austria, as one of its initiators (the other being Romania) treats as a high priority.⁴ In February 2009, the ministers of foreign affairs of Austria and Romania presented to the remaining EU members a proposal concerning the enhancement of economic, social and cultural cooperation of Austria, Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, Germany, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia and Hungary, with Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Moldova, Serbia and Ukraine. They proposed that during the June 2009 EU summit the European Commission be asked to draw up a comprehensive strategy in this respect. Its realisation could begin during the period of

¹ In addition to the sources mentioned further on, this chapter is based on the author’s correspondence with the Austrian Ministry of European and International Affairs during the period 23 February to 11 March 2009 and on conversations with officials of this ministry on 24 March 2009 in Vienna.

² See Plassnik: *Bedeutender Energieschub für die Beziehungen mit Russland*, Bundesministerium für europäische und internationale Angelegenheiten, *Presseausendungen*, 26.052008, www.bmeai.gv.at.

³ See “Bankenhilfe Ost: Österreich kämpft um Hoffungsmarkt,” *Die Presse* of 10 February 2009.

⁴ The process of the Danube Basin cooperation was officially established in 2002 on the basis of the initiative of Austria, Romania, the European Commission and the Stability Pact for South Eastern Europe. See *Regierungsprogramm für die XXIV. Gesetzgebungsperiode*, p. 226, www.austria.gv.at; *Danube Co-operation Process*, www.stabilitypact.org.

the Hungarian presidency of the EU, i.e. during the first half of 2011.⁵ Austria is only beginning to formulate the principles of this new “Danube Basin States concept,” hence only very general and vague statements are heard about its relation to the EaP. The Austrian Foreign Minister Michael Spindelegger announced during the EU Council meeting in Brussels on 23 February 2009 that this new concept would play the role of a “bridge.”⁶ This declaration supposedly has the same sense as the oft-repeated emphasis on the significance of the Danube basin process for tying the EU to the countries of the Black Sea region. Austria’s positive attitude to this region determines its attitude toward the EaP. Austria stresses the necessity of complementarity of the Eastern Partnership and other EU regional projects involving Black Sea countries or the EU Eastern neighbours.⁷ Complementarity should also be the guiding principle behind the Danube basin concept that could reinforce the EaP in the case of countries participating in both initiatives. This reveals yet another possible meaning of the notion of “connector,” i.e. that of linking various regional initiatives through the Austro-Romanian undertaking.

Minister Spindelegger supported the idea of including Belarus in the EaP, although he made its participation dependent on the development of that country’s relations with the EU and its readiness to conduct economic and political reforms and to adopt European values.⁸ Austria is not opposed to including third countries, such as Russia or Turkey, in individual multi-lateral projects. This would counter the perception of the EaP as an anti-Russian initiative, whereas the inclusion of Turkey would constitute yet another argument in support of the Austrian concept of EU-Turkish relations, providing for a special type of “Turkish-European Community” as close to full EU membership as possible.⁹ Austria is clearly opposed to treating the EaP as a tool of the EU’s enlargement policy.

Austria supports solutions concerning the EaP that are not related to an expansion of the EU’s institutional dimension. The creation of a mechanism for the coordination of the EaP with other EU initiatives in the region is of key importance for Austria. With regard to the protection of Austrian interests threatened by the economic crisis, Austria supports the earmarking of additional funds for the EaP. This was reflected in its support for the European Commission’s proposal to earmark €350 million for the EaP from the unused funds from the 2007 budget.¹⁰

Austria values, above all, the bilateral dimension of the EaP. Multilateral initiatives stand little chance to be implemented given the diversity of all participants. Austria will presumably continue to support little projects in areas such as energy or integrated border management (IBM). Given the present economic crisis, measures in support of small and medium size businesses could also prove important for Austria. (ASzy)

⁵ See “Neue Strategie für den Donauraum,” *Wiener Zeitung* of 25 February 2009, www.wienerzeitung.at.

⁶ See Spindelegger: *Mehr Geld für Ost-Partnerschaft*, 23.02.2009, www.nachrichten.at.

⁷ See Spindelegger: “Potential der Zukunftsregion Schwarzmeer voll nützen,” *Bundesministerium für europäische und internationale Angelegenheiten, Presseaussendungen*, 26.02.2009, www.bmeai.gv.at.

⁸ See Spindelegger: *Mehr Geld für Ost-Partnerschaft*, *op.cit.*

⁹ See *Regierungsprogramm für die XXIV. Gesetzgebungsperiode*, *op.cit.*, p. 227.

¹⁰ See Spindelegger: *Mehr Geld für Ost-Partnerschaft*, *op.cit.*

Belgium

Belgium supported the process of establishing the ENP from the very outset and was a proponent of including countries of the South Caucasus in this form of cooperation. The Belgian authorities declared that all countries included in this policy should be viewed as EU partners in the same manner. They think that the EU should act to reinforce the Eastern dimension of the ENP in parallel with the efforts made with regard to the Southern dimension. They make a clear distinction between the EU enlargement process and the neighbourhood policy, which should not be a tool serving accession. Although Belgium declares an “even distance” from both the Southern and Eastern dimensions of the ENP, in practice it pays more attention to the Southern dimension.

Belgium has traditionally been against any efforts made with a view to set out new vectors of European policy or to shift existing ones, even if these concern the EU’s external relations.¹¹ Thus Belgian diplomacy has adopted a wait-and-see attitude with regard to the Polish-Swedish initiative. It only viewed it more favourably, though not uncritically, after the European Commission’s December 2008 proposal, recognising it as a basis for further discussions.

Belgium supports the European Commission’s conditions defining the procedure for negotiating association agreements with potential partner countries and the creation of a deeper and comprehensive free trade area. Moreover, it notes that some initiatives, such as comprehensive programmes for the improvement of administrative abilities, should be extended to the EU’s Southern neighbours. Belgium also draws attention to the problem of the migration of people from Eastern neighbourhood countries to the EU. The introduction of border crossing facilitations is treated by Belgium as a tool to incline neighbouring countries to cooperate in the creation of a safe environment in such countries (improvement of public safety, combating organised crime), one that goes beyond the questions having to do only with safe travel documents.¹²

On the subject of institutionalising cooperation with EaP countries, the Belgians have reluctantly agreed to a working structure whose outline was included in the European Commission’s proposal. Belgium sees no benefit in the establishment of the position of a special EaP coordinator. In its view, the reinforcement of internal Commission structures, as was stated in the communiqué, is sufficient. Belgium also voiced reservations in connection with the financing of the EaP, supporting a debate on this subject both at the level of the European Neighbourhood and Partnership Instrument steering committee and at the political level. It viewed unfavourably the earmarking of additional funds for the EaP and stressed that the budget should be sufficient to meet the obligations undertaken earlier. (RK)

¹¹ The information contained in this part comes from the Permanent Representation of the Kingdom of Belgium in Brussels.

¹² For example, a passport issued by the appropriate authorities is not a sufficient guarantee of the assurance/provision of safe surroundings, given that it is relatively easy to obtain a genuine document using a false identity.

Bulgaria

Relations with the countries of Eastern Europe and South Caucasus, especially with Russia, play an important role in Bulgaria's foreign policy, with the enhancement of cooperation between states of the Black Sea region also among the country's vital objectives. Bulgarians point out that the best instrument for the implementation of EU and Bulgarian interests in this area is the Black Sea Synergy, assessing all initiatives directed to EU neighbours through the prism of this cooperation forum.

Initially, the Bulgarians distanced themselves from the Eastern Partnership proposal. The primary reason for this was fear of a negative impact of this initiative on the Black Sea Synergy, which Bulgaria supports, the more so as the European Commission report of June 2008 indicated that its implementation would encounter problems.¹³ Bulgarian authorities took a critical stance with regard to concepts of development of the Eastern dimension of the ENP that include only some of the Black Sea basin countries, without Russia and Turkey. They also feared that the implementation of undertakings mentioned in the EaP project could reduce resources earmarked for the Synergy and thus reduce its already limited effectiveness.

Most probably Bulgaria's attitude towards the Eastern Partnership had to do with the negative stance initially adopted by Poland—one of the EaP's initiators—with regard to the Synergy. The Bulgarians feared that Poland, pressing for the EaP, would want to marginalise the Black Sea Synergy within the framework of the ENP. Although the Polish government's criticism of this initiative was later toned down, during the June 2008 meeting of the Council of Europe, Bulgaria was one of the EU members that voiced the greatest number of reservations with regard to the EaP. The Polish delegation ultimately succeeded in convincing the Bulgarians that both initiatives should be complementary and, therefore, they will not compete with one another.¹⁴ Nonetheless, in February 2009, Bulgaria, along with Romania and Greece, submitted a non-paper proposing to reinforce the Synergy following the model of the EaP. This proposal did not meet with any significant interest on the part of the remaining EU members.

Taking Bulgaria's position into account, the conclusions of the European Council on 19–20 June 2008 stated that cooperation in the EaP "should ... be complementary to the already existing and planned multilateral cooperation under and related to the ENP, in particular the Black Sea Synergy and the Northern Dimension."¹⁵ Similar formulations are to be found in the declaration from the meeting of ministers and secretaries of state for European affairs of countries of the Visegrád Group and Bulgaria and Romania that took place on 26 September 2008 in Warsaw.¹⁶ The inclusion in the declaration of the European Council on the Eastern Partnership of assurances concerning the complementarity of both initiatives and the strengthening of the Black

¹³ *The Commission Communiqué for the European Council and European Parliament, Report on the First Year of Implementation of the Black Sea Synergy, COM(2008) 391, www.eu-lex.europa.eu.*

¹⁴ See *Informacja rządu na temat posiedzenia Rady Europejskiej w dniach 19 i 20 czerwca 2008 roku*, stenographic record (299) from the 26th Meeting of the Commission for European Union Affairs on 25 June 2008, www.senat.gov.pl.

¹⁵ *The Council of the European Union, Brussels, 20 June 2008 (11018/08), European Council in Brussels 19–20 June 2008, Conclusions of the Presidency, www.ukie.gov.pl.*

¹⁶ *Declaration of the Ministers and State Secretaries Responsible for European Affairs of Bulgaria, Poland, Romania, Slovakia and Hungary, adopted in Warsaw on 26 September 2008, www.ukie.gov.pl.*

Sea Synergy was one of the conditions for the support that Bulgaria and other member states engaged in the promotion of the Synergy, such as Germany, Romania and Greece, gave to the EaP initiative during the European Council on 19 and 20 March 2009. (RM)

Cyprus

Cyprus is mostly involved in furthering Euro-Mediterranean cooperation and perceives the EU's Eastern neighbours above all through the prism of the resolution to the Cyprus question. It is interested in the Black Sea Synergy given the participation of Turkey, among other reasons. Russia plays an especially large role in the policy pursued by Cyprus—its attitude in the Cyprus question favours Cyprus and as a permanent member of the UN Security Council it has a real influence on its resolution. Russia is also an important economic partner of Cyprus as a supplier of energy resources. The development of relations with other countries of Eastern Europe and the South Caucasus is affected by the presence on the island of an Armenian minority, as well as immigrants from Ukraine, Moldova and Georgia.

Cyprus greeted the Eastern Partnership positively and sees it as a complement and reinforcement of the ENP as well as a project that prevents the isolation of non-EU countries and the formation of new cleavages in Europe.¹⁷ From the moment the initiative was announced, Cyprus stressed the necessity of including it within the framework of the ENP so as to maintain the cohesion of this policy and to prevent the Eastern region's domination of EU actions intended for its neighbours. In the opinion of Cypriot diplomats, the EaP and other similar EU regional initiatives, such as the Black Sea Synergy, should be complementary.

The Eastern Partnership is only beginning to be debated and, therefore, Cyprus is only addressing its general principles. In connection with the institutional dimension and specific projects of the EaP initiative, Cyprus stresses the importance of pragmatism, efficiency and adapting to the needs of different partners. It further draws attention to the fact that, in the matter of EaP financing, it is necessary to take into account the balanced approach that is functioning in the ENP. Cyprus agreed with the proposal of the European Commission to earmark an additional €350 million for the EaP from the unused funds from the 2007 budget, on the condition that proportionate additional funding is provided for the Southern dimension. It was also pointed out that countries subject to the EaP have high expectations, which the EU is not able to fulfil.

According to Cypriot diplomats, the Eastern Partnership should not be connected with the policy of EU enlargement, although in practice it could help partner countries in reaching that goal in the future. Cyprus does not single out any partner country with which it could develop closer relations within the EaP framework. While it is not against the participation of Belarus, it is conscious of the fact that this is a difficult undertaking, especially in connection with the EaP's bilateral dimension, in which Belarus would have much catching up to do.

¹⁷ The part is based on a telephone conversation that took place on 3 March 2009 with the representative of the Cypriot Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

The possibility of the participation of third countries in EaP projects gives rise to various reactions. According to Cypriots, the EaP cannot become an undertaking directed against the Russian neighbour. It is, therefore, better to include Russia in EU initiatives within the EaP framework than to leave it out. The Cyprus question is a factor in Cyprus' conservative, if not unfavourable, attitude towards Turkey's participation in EaP projects. (ASzy)

Czech Republic

The Czech Republic is a consistent advocate of an "open-door policy" and of differentiating between EU's "European neighbours" in the East and "Europe's neighbours" in the South. When preparing for EU Council presidency scheduled for the first half of 2009, it defined Eastern Europe as one of three "priority areas" (next to trans-Atlantic relations and the West Balkans). It promised action in favour of a "more distinctive" profile of the Eastern dimension of the ENP and the "allocation of adequate funds," emphasising the significance of democratisation and transformation in the Eastern partnership countries.¹⁸

The Czechs joined in the formation and implementation of the Eastern Partnership, regarding this initiative as the crowning of their own attempts to strengthen the Eastern dimension of ENP. Already when chairing the Visegrád Group (2007–2008), the Czech Republic was pointing to the need of building "such an ENP that will equitably divide its funds and possibilities between the Eastern and the Southern dimension."¹⁹ However, this was not a question of copying institutional solutions from EU's Southern neighbourhood, but of exerting joint influence on the remaining EU countries in order to lessen their resistance to the deepening of cooperation with EU's Eastern neighbours. The Czech Republic was using the "V4 + " formula for developing broader cooperation for the benefit of the Eastern dimension of ENP. However, it proved impossible to work out a joint project using the V4 + Sweden format, although joint declarations were made to the effect that a "further enhancing and deepening the cooperation with the Eastern ENP partners will bring additional benefit to the EU as a whole."²⁰ In April 2008, the Czechs presented their own proposals for the strengthening of the Eastern dimension of ENP at a meeting of the working group on Eastern Europe and Central Asia (COEST). They were largely convergent with the Polish-Swedish concept, albeit with more emphasis on multilateral cooperation and a project-based approach. Neither have the Czechs reported the need to build separate institutions within ENP or have distinguished Ukraine in any way.²¹ When in May Poland and Sweden presented their proposal for the EaP, the Czechs articulated clear support for it, and reaffirmed it during the June V4 summit in Prague.²² Then they

¹⁸ *Prioritní oblasti předsednictví České republiky v Radě EU v prvním pololetí roku 2009*, www.vlada.cz.

¹⁹ *Summit předsedů vlád zemí Visegrádské skupiny v Praze 16. června 2008*, www.vlada.cz.

²⁰ *Joint Statement of the Ministers of Foreign Affairs of the Visegrad Group Countries, Sweden and Ukraine, 23 April 2008, Czech Republic*, www.visegradgroup.eu.

²¹ Э. Тульмец, "Чешский меморандум по восточному соседству: краткий анализ и комментарии," *Европа*, 2008, no. 2 (27), pp. 63–74.

²² *Press Release: Official Summit of the Prime Ministers of Visegrad Group Countries, Prague, June 15–16, 2008*, www.visegradgroup.eu.

participated in defining a more detailed EaP proposal, which was submitted to the European Commission in October 2008.

The Czech Republic recognised EaP as an important instrument of cooperation and consolidation of European neighbours' ties with the EU, acknowledging at the same time that a rapid accession of those countries was out of the question.²³ The Czechs perceive EaP as a mechanism devised to promote the raising of standards in countries aspiring for EU membership and the consolidation of their ties to the EU, and, by that token, support autonomy and independence, which became particularly valid after the war in Georgia²⁴. Before the start of its presidency, the Czech Republic was cautioning the EU against making excessive concession to Russia in foreign and security policies and criticised Russia for designating a "privileged interest" zone.²⁵ Once it assumed the presidency, it toned down its criticism of Russia's policy, recognising EU unanimity as "central" to EU's relations with Russia.²⁶ It admitted that Russia was an important partner for EU, one whose "policy toward the countries of Eastern Europe contributed in a significant measure to the EU's successes also in this area" and announced that it intended to talk to Russia also about the Eastern Partnership.²⁷ However, the Czech's resisted French pressures aimed at treating Russia in a special way in the EaP preparations.²⁸ At the same time, they were pointing out that the EU had "above-standard" relations with Russia and was talking to it more often than with EaP countries, so the charges of "ignoring" that country in the discussions over EaP were groundless.²⁹

The presidency promised that EaP would serve the attaining of internal equilibrium in ENP. The launch of EaP was connected with the axiology of the Czech presidency, articulated by the motto "Europe without barriers." It was the ambition of the Czech government to offer EU's Eastern neighbours the maximum degree of opening of the economies and movement of people acceptable to all EU member states. The launch of EaP, along with progress in building EU's energy solidarity, was to be a yardstick of the presidency's success.³⁰ The Czechs noticed a close interdependence between these two challenges, emphasising their competence in the field of Eastern policy and their understanding of energy security. The devising of an EU strategy toward Eastern neighbourhood was to be not just a "moral duty" toward EU's European neighbours, but also a pragmatic step making it possible to "diversify foreign trade and

²³ České předsednictví v poločase, www.mzv.cz.

²⁴ A. Vondra, "Je tu riziko hrubé záplaty (M. Švehla)," *Respekt* of 6 April 2009, p. 50.

²⁵ Schwarzenberg: Rusko musí dodržovat pravidla, ČTK, 27.12.2008.

²⁶ Prioritní oblasti předsednictví České republiky v Radě EU v prvním pololetí roku 2009, www.vlada.cz.

²⁷ M. Topolánek, *Aktuální výzvy českého předsednictví – "2G," finanční krize, Východní partnerství*, 29.01.2009, www.vlada.cz.

²⁸ Czech EU Presidency Not Against Russia, Turkey in Partnership, ČTK, 23.02.2009.

²⁹ Zápis ze 49. schůze výboru pro evropské záležitosti konané dne 17. března 2009, www.psp.cz.

³⁰ Czech Government Committee Approves EU Presidency Priorities, ČTK, 22.12.2008.

shipments of energy sources.”³¹ Meanwhile, energy should become an important topic of both the dialogue with Russia and with the Eastern Partnership countries.³²

In connection with the Russian-Ukrainian gas crisis at the outset of 2009, the Czech authorities were explaining the need to launch the EaP by the crisis of confidence in relations with the EU's Eastern partners and the urgent necessity of raising energy security. The presidency was pointing to Ukraine's significant role in the EaP and to EU's interest in preserving that country's pro-Europe line. However, it emphasised that its credibility as a transit country had been badly dented.³³ EaP is to be an instrument that will encourage Ukraine to tidy up its intransparent economic structures, especially in the energy field, and to strengthen market mechanisms, thus contributing to greater security of supplies coming from the East. The development of EaP aimed at bringing the Eastern neighbourhood countries closer to EU standards should help avoid similar crises in the future.³⁴ The strengthening of the external dimension of EU's energy policy was to be effected with the help of the Eastern Partnership, cooperation with Russia and with the countries engaged in the Southern Corridor project.³⁵

The presidency promised to open a “constructive EU-Belarus dialogue” and further support for building a civic society in that country. It made the further development of EU's relations with Belarus contingent on internal liberalisation in that country. It also warned that the recognition of independence of separatist Georgian provinces could threaten Belarus's participation in EaP. There was also important pressure from Czech NGOs, which insisted that the participation of a Belarusian delegate at the EaP summit in Prague be made contingent on the fulfilment of a number of conditions by the Belarusian authorities, one of them being the amending of the criminal code.³⁶ The Czech authorities emphasised that they had addressed the invitation to the EaP summit to “Belarus,” without naming the president, while emphasising at the same time that the changes taking place in that country were “insufficient and not of a structural nature.” The possibility of the arrival of a Belarusian representative to Prague was criticised by President Klaus.

Representatives of the Czech authorities admit that EaP's problems are not limited to Belarus, but also include the condition of the political elites of other countries to which this initiative is addressed.³⁷ This is why there is evident emphasis in the Czech actions on the development of the “civic dimension” of EaP. According to the Czech leaders, the EaP should be an offer addressed not only to political elites but also to the people of the partner states. In order to emphasise it, a conference “Eastern Partnership:

³¹ *Presentation of the Czech Presidency's programme (debate)*, 14.01.2009, www.europarl.europa.eu.

³² *Work Programme of the Czech Presidency. Europe without Barriers. 1 January – 30 June 2009*, www.eu2009.cz

³³ *Jednania o asociačnej dohode EÚ s Kyjevom sa potiahnu asi celý rok*, ČTK, 4.02.2009; Cf. “Bartuška: Kradnú veľa a rýchlo,” *Sme* of 4 April 2009.

³⁴ A. Vondra, *NATO, Russia, Oil and Gas: The Future of European Security—Munich Security Conference*, 7.02.2009, www.eu2009.cz.

³⁵ *European Policy Centre—Předsednictví EU 2009: první ohlédnutí—Za účasti A. Vondry, místopředsedy vlády pro evropské záležitosti*, 18.02.2009, www.eu2009.cz.

³⁶ Cf. *České organizace vyzývají politiky, aby zvážili pozvání Aleksandra Lukašenka do Prahy*, 27.02.2009, www.civicbelarus.eu.

³⁷ *Zápis ze 49. schůze výboru pro evropské záležitosti konané dne 17. března 2009*, www.psp.cz.

Towards Civil Society Forum” attended by representatives of NGOs from EU member states and EaP countries was organised as an official side-event of the presidency in the run-up to the EaP summit in Prague.

The attainment of EU consensus on EaP became a prime objective of the Czech presidency, while, due to its role as a moderator, it took a more reserved approach to pushing those EaP elements that were seen as controversial by some. This self-restraint on the part of the Czech Republic could clearly be seen with regard to the financing of EaP, although, in the opinion of the Commission, the raising of the budget for EaP from €350 million to €600 million would not receive the support of all members but for the Czech presidency’s efforts.

While the presidency seeks to avoid emphasising Czech interests, objectively speaking the Czech Republic is a country that is particularly interested in the strengthening of the EU’s ties with the Eastern neighbourhood countries. The implementation of the Eastern Partnership is tied to the possibility of enhancing the role of the Czech Republic as a transit country. The Czechs are interested in an improvement of Ukraine’s credibility as a country situated on the transit route of raw materials to the EU. It is also in their strategic interest to extend the East-West trans-European corridor from Bavaria to Kiev. An improvement of market mechanisms in the EaP countries is seen as an opportunity for Czech entrepreneurs. However, Russia accounts for three quarters of Czech exports to the East and its significance for the Czech economy will rise in connection with new Czech investment in Russia’s energy, steel, mining and motor industries.³⁸ Taking into account the high value of these contracts, one should not expect the EaP countries to become more important from the economic point of view than Russia to the Czech Republic. The Russian investment in the Czech Republic, especially in real estate, power engineering and the engineering industry is also a significant consideration.

The summit opening the Eastern Partnership in Prague became one of the last major undertakings of Mirek Topolánek’s cabinet before it was recalled. As the opposition gained an influence over the government, it is worth noting that Social Democrats are not quite as enthusiastic about the Eastern Partnership. With regard to Eastern neighbourhood (including the Georgian-Russian conflict) and energy security, they were pointing out that “strategic talks with Russia should continue in the first place” and emphasised that “it’s impossible to do an Eastern policy without that country.”³⁹ (MG)

Denmark

Denmark attaches great importance to measures aimed at the stabilisation and democratisation of the countries of Eastern Europe and South Caucasus. An expression of this commitment is, for example, the developmental aid directed to those countries within the framework of the “Neighbourhood Program” adopted in 2004. The Danes

³⁸ ČKD začíná práce na plynovodu Nord Stream v hodnotě 17,8 milionu eur, 22.04.2009, www.iHNed.cz; Češi uzavřeli obchod za tři miliardy eur s Ruskem, 15.7.2008; České společnosti v Rusku podepsaly kontrakt v hodnotě 7,8 miliardy Kč, 6.04.2009, www.iHNed.cz.

³⁹ Rozpaky české zahraniční politiky v předvečer předsednictví, <http://eu.cssd.cz>; Zápis ze 49. schůze výboru pro evropské záležitosti konané dne 17. března 2009, www.psp.cz.

played an important role (along with Great Britain) in the establishment of the ENP by proposing, in 2002, the “New Neighbours” initiative, which was to be addressed to such countries as Moldova, Ukraine, and Belarus. The government in Copenhagen holds the view that the “European prospect” of European EU neighbours should not be rejected, but it stresses the necessity to take into account the Community’s absorption capabilities. It is favourably disposed towards the idea of building a free trade zone as part of the ENP, and favours the establishment of a Pan-European Economic Area.

Denmark supported the Eastern Partnership initiative and greeted the relevant communication of the European Commission of December 2008 positively. The Danish government did not formulate a detailed position in the matter of the EaP, but expressed general support for the initiative’s individual elements. Denmark looks quite favourably upon Belarus’ participation in the Partnership, as it thinks that this could be an opportunity for a gradual liberalisation of the political system that exists in that country.

Denmark’s attitude toward the EaP is in large measure a reflection of its perception of the regions of Eastern Europe and South Caucasus through the prism of the implementation of Danish developmental projects in these areas. These experiences could turn out to be particularly valuable from the viewpoint of steps taken within the framework of the EaP and, for this reason, they could be used at the planning stage for particular initiatives. (MK)

Estonia

Eastern Europe and the South Caucasus are the most important areas for Estonian foreign policy. Estonia maintains well developed relations with the states covered by the European Neighbourhood Policy, and it regards this policy as a stage preparing ENP countries for EU membership. The government noted that introducing visa facilitation lies in Estonia’s interest; it is in favour of concluding free trade agreements and supports close energy cooperation among ENP countries. Estonia’s privileged partner is Georgia, the largest beneficiary of Estonian development aid for several years. Estonia expects the ENP to be expanded in the future to deal with the settlement of regional problems.

The creation of the Eastern Partnership was found to be one of the most important decisions taken in 2008 within the Common Foreign and Security Policy.⁴⁰ Estonia perceives the EaP as providing a political framework for the EU’s cooperation with partner countries, and for the latter’s close integration with the block. Together with Lithuania, Latvia and Visegrád countries, it has striven hard for an “ambitious” EaP,⁴¹ calling for its institutional strengthening through the appointment of a special coordinator and the establishment of internal structures, such as ministerial meetings and working groups.

Estonia welcomed the change in the EU’s policy towards Belarus, seen as an attempt at a new opening up to the Minsk regime. The Estonian government expects that

⁴⁰ Address by the Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Estonia Mr. Urmas Paet to the Riigikogu on Behalf of the Government of Estonia, 26 February 2009; see the official Estonian website: www.riigikogu.ee.

⁴¹ Common Position of Visegrad Countries, and Bulgaria, Estonia, Lithuania, Romania and Sweden, 24 November 2008, www.visegradgroup.eu.

these moves will also result in stronger bilateral relations between the two countries. “We are interested in the opening up of Belarus to Europe,” said Foreign Minister Urmas Paet, but “raising the level of human rights protection in Belarus remains a relevant issue.”⁴² The readiness to tighten cooperation is reflected in the government’s decision of 29 January 2009 to open an embassy in Minsk and in the launch by the Estonian e-Governance Academy of e-state courses for Belarus public servants. (RK)

Finland

One of the principal aims of Finland’s European policy is the development of the Northern Dimension, i.e. cooperation between the EU, Russia, Norway and Iceland. Finish support for the ENP has been based on the reservation that this policy should be conducted in parallel with the Northern Dimension and that under no account can it have a competitive character with regard to relations with Russia. Finland is making efforts so that relations with Russia will not negatively affect Finish policy in relation to the EU’s other Eastern neighbours. Among other things, it looks favourably on the prospect of EU membership for Ukraine.

Finland has declared its support for the Eastern Partnership initiative, recognising that it had been well prepared. It expressed some incomprehension about Russia’s negative reactions, seeing no reason to conduct consultations with Russia on this subject.⁴³ Finland treats the EaP primarily as a complementary instrument with regard to existing forms of regional cooperation developed by the EU. In the opinion of the Finish government, the EaP does not endanger the Northern Dimension, including relations with Russia. Finland supports, as a matter of principle, the expansion of incentives for countries included in the ENP, primarily further liberalisation of trade, and stresses the necessity of developing the “human dimension” in relations with those countries. The Finish minister of foreign affairs, Alexander Stubb, admitted that the Russian-Georgian conflict had led to a shift of the EU’s interest eastward.⁴⁴ He also emphasised that the EU needed two Eastern policies—one directed at Russia and a second to the countries of the ENP’s Eastern dimension, as the political stability and economic development of these countries lies in Europe’s interest. In keeping with this approach, the EaP is becoming a central element of this second Eastern policy. Finland is interested in the maintenance of a balance in the development of both ENP dimensions and it treats the EaP as an adequate response to the emergence of the Union for the Mediterranean.

Finland has a positive attitude towards proposals such as a deeper free trade area or visa facilitations, while stressing that their implementation should be tied to the progress made by each individual country included in the EaP.⁴⁵ The Finnish government showed a cautious approach to proposals of additional financing and emphasised that such an increase should not take place at the cost of trans-border cooperation, for which €1.11 billion from the European Neighbourhood and

⁴² *Estonia to Open Embassy in Belarus*, 29.01.2009, www.vm.ee/eng/kat_138/10602.html.

⁴³ “Finnish PM Welcomes Plan to Boost EU Ties with Eastern Region,” *EU Business*, www.eubusiness.com.

⁴⁴ “Alexander Stubb: The EU Needs Two Eastern Policies,” *Articles and Columns*, 18.12.2008, <http://formin.finland.fi>.

⁴⁵ On the basis of information from the Permanent Representation of Finland to the EU.

Partnership Instrument has been allocated for the years 2007–2013. Common trans-border programs between Finland and Russia are also funded from this source. Finland supports the participation of Belarus in the EaP, while noting that the suspension of EU sanctions (the ban on EU entry for Belarusian officials) has already led to the first positive changes in the attitude of that country's authorities. (MK)

France

France attaches great importance to the EU's cooperation with its Mediterranean neighbours and participates actively in the development of the ENP's Southern dimension, an expression of which was President Nicolas Sarkozy's initiative to establish the Union for the Mediterranean. Countries that form the principal target of the Eastern Partnership do not play a primary role in French foreign policy, and Eastern Europe and South Caucasus are traditionally perceived through the prism of Russia as the largest political and economic partner in the region, although the French authorities are now aware that neither France nor the EU can ignore the EU's Eastern neighbours, especially Ukraine, if they wish to play an active role on the international stage. Given the development of a European energy policy, France is also paying greater attention to gas sector relations in Eastern Europe and the South Caucasus.

President Sarkozy is showing a decidedly greater interest in the growth of EU cooperation with its Eastern neighbours than did his predecessor. During his electoral campaign, Sarkozy supported, among other things, making it possible for them to access the common market and to participate in certain EU policies.⁴⁶ France even supported the EaP project prior to its adoption by the European Council in June 2008.⁴⁷ France's position, however, was due primarily to tactical concerns and only to a lesser degree to any genuine interest in the realisation of the Polish-Swedish proposal. France wanted to gain the support of Poland and other Central European countries for the Union for the Mediterranean project. It also expected that the development of the cooperation between the EU and its Eastern neighbours in 2008 would be seen as an accomplishment of the French EU presidency. And finally, perhaps it wished to counter the impression it had made on the countries of Central Europe and in Ukraine and Georgia when it opposed the proposal to extend NATO's Membership Action Plan (MAP) to the latter two countries at the alliance's Bucharest summit in April 2008.

The French authorities point to the EaP's positive aspects, stressing the necessity of a harmonious development of EU policy with regard to both its Eastern and Southern neighbours.⁴⁸ In their view, the EaP project, which was established after the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership and the Union for the Mediterranean, in some sense legitimises the two initiatives, showing that there is a need to work out new instruments of cooperation with regard to selected groups of neighbours and that just as Southern European countries are interested in collaboration with other Mediterranean countries,

⁴⁶ "Dix enjeux de politique étrangère," *Le Monde* of 16 April 2007.

⁴⁷ *Conseil européen des 19 et 20 juin 2008 et présidence française de l'Union européenne. Intervention du secrétaire d'Etat chargé des affaires européennes, m. Jean-Pierre Jouyet, au Sénat, Paris, 17 June 2008, www.diplomatie.gouv.fr.*

⁴⁸ *Déclaration de M. Jean-Pierre Jouyet, secrétaire d'Etat aux affaires européennes, notamment sur le vote négatif des Irlandais concernant le Traité de Lisbonne et sur les priorités de la présidence française de l'Union européenne, au Sénat, 17 June 2008, <http://discours.vie-publique.fr>.*

so are countries of Eastern Europe striving to intensify their relations with the EU's Eastern neighbours.

According to Sarkozy, the EaP is to help resolve the problems of Eastern Europe and the South Caucasus (territorial conflicts, minorities, etc.) and to reinforce these regions' stability and security.⁴⁹ In addition the EaP is to facilitate an adequate and ambitious cooperation with the neighbouring countries, consisting in a specific golden mean between their admission to EU and a lack of interest in them.⁵⁰ France is opposed to the thesis which holds that partnership brings Eastern European countries closer to EU membership, although—as the French ambassador in Ukraine noted—neither the ENP nor the EaP prohibit striving for membership in the Union.⁵¹ It is also against too far-reaching integration with Eastern neighbours within the framework of the EaP. According to unofficial information, in December 2008, France and a few other EU members blocked the European Commission's proposal to liberalise the visa regime for citizens of countries included in the EaP. France was also against increasing funds allocated for the EaP to €600 million. The French authorities' argument was that an increase of aid for the Eastern neighbours would signify a departure from the principle of distribution of funds allocated for the ENP. They pointed out that, in any case, the proposed funds were too small to support Eastern neighbours in any significant manner.⁵²

Despite these reservations, it seems that the EaP project is playing a growing role in French policy directed at countries of Eastern Europe and the South Caucasus. In August 2008, when France held the EU presidency, Sarkozy became actively involved in the resolution of the Russian-Georgian conflict, although he was accused of ineffectiveness and an excessively conciliatory stance towards Russia. The war in Georgia increased the French government's interest in EU policy with regard to Eastern Europe and in the EaP project, which it recognised as an instrument of stabilisation in the region. During the meeting with President Micheil Saakashvili in November 2008, Sarkozy announced increased cooperation between the EU and Georgia within the framework of the ENP and the EaP.

During the French presidency the Union undertook steps to tighten relations between the EU and Ukraine. In September, it was decided that the new EU-Ukraine understanding would have the form of an Association Agreement; in October, negotiations began on the introduction of a visa-free travel regime. These steps were greeted with mixed feelings in Ukraine, where there were fears that the EaP and other initiatives begun in 2008 would *de facto* make it possible for France to block Ukraine's prospects of EU membership. It is worth noting that during the gas dispute between Ukraine and Russia at the turn of 2008 and 2009, France pushed for the intensification of EU efforts aimed to increase its energy security. At the same time, France considered

⁴⁹ *Sommet Union Européenne—Ukraine. Conférence de presse conjointe du Président de la République, M. Nicolas Sarkozy, du président d'Ukraine, M. Viktor Iouchtchenko, et du Président de la Commission européenne, M. Jose Manuel Barroso—propos de M. Sarkozy, Paris, 9 September 2008, www.diplomatie.gov.fr.*

⁵⁰ *Conférence de presse de M. Nicolas Sarkozy, Président de la République, à l'issue du Conseil européen extraordinaire de Bruxelles, 1 September 2008, www.elysee.fr.*

⁵¹ Ж.-П. Везиан (interview), "Интенсивное привлечение' по-французски," *День* of 3 July 2008.

⁵² "EU Ministers at Odds over Energy and Eastern Projects," *EU Observer* of 24 February 2009, <http://euobserver.com>.

the Russian-Ukrainian conflict to be a “trade dispute” and demanded, without favouring either side, that both sides fulfil their international obligations in ensuring the supply and transit of gas.⁵³

In the second half of 2008, efforts were also made to normalise EU relations with Belarus. French diplomats were expressing the hope that in 2009 a democratised Belarus would become a full member of the EaP. These declarations were most probably not made entirely disinterestedly, given that a delegation of the French Business Confederation (MEDEF—Mouvement des Entreprises de France) was visiting Belarus in January 2009. While meeting with this delegation, President Alexander Lukashenko expressed interest in drawing French investors to Belarus. He also stated that the EU had started treating Belarus as a full-fledged partner and mentioned the EaP in this context.⁵⁴

In the case of Armenia, a significant role is played by the EU’s efforts to shut down a nuclear power plant in Mecamor that does not meet today’s safety standards. Armenia is only ready to cooperate on this point if and when it has a new power plant. France is one of the countries interested in participating in this project. It presumably expects that the development of EU-Armenian cooperation within the framework of the EaP will make it easy for French companies to participate in the modernisation of the Armenian nuclear power sector, while this involvement would be presented as a French contribution to the development of the EaP.

In November 2008, President Sarkozy declared that the EaP would enable a *rapprochement* between Azerbaijan and the EU, and that France would strive to make the EaP serve the interests of Azerbaijan. He did not present any more specific proposals. It was thus possible to presume that France was favourably inclined to the EU’s greater involvement within the framework of the EaP in the resolution of the crisis in Nagorno-Karabakh, something that would strengthen its role in the region, favour stability in the South Caucasus, would be consistent with Azerbaijani interests and with those of Armenia, which has close ties with France; finally this would also reduce Armenia’s dependence on Russia.

France is also analysing the EaP in the context of its relations with third countries. In February 2009, French Foreign Minister Bernard Kouchner spoke in support of the idea that such countries as Russia and Turkey might also participate in some EaP projects.⁵⁵ Nicolas Sarkozy stressed that these steps are not aimed against any country, and that the EU wanted to have conflict-free relations with Russia. French media on many occasions carried information about the negative way in which the EaP was viewed by the Russian authorities, which perceive it as an attempt to isolate Russia. Interestingly, certain Russian politicians and media quite readily make reference to the supposed disfavour with which France regards the EaP. Moreover, France is counting on the growth of cooperation between the EU and the new US administration in the post-Soviet area. In its view, the EaP will play a positive role here, as it will show that

⁵³ See, for example, *Point de presse du porte-parole*, 16.01.2009, www.diplomatie.gouv.fr.

⁵⁴ See *Alexander Lukashenko: Belarus Is Interested in Developing Business with French Companies*, 26.01.2009, www.belta.by.

⁵⁵ *Conseil affaires générales et relations extérieures. Point de presse du Ministre des affaires étrangères et européennes, M. Bernard Kouchner, Brussels, 23 February 2009*, www.diplomatie.gouv.fr.

“while rejecting the logic of isolating Russia, one can propose an alternative to the logic of the Russian ‘zone of influence.’”⁵⁶ (ASze)

Germany

The stabilisation and modernisation of the EU’s Eastern partners is in Germany’s political and economic interest. The German reactions to the Eastern Partnership have been largely determined by that country’s earlier involvement in the strengthening of the European Neighbourhood Policy’s Eastern dimension. During its presidency in the first half of 2007, Germany proposed that the EU’s neighbours be presented with an attractive and broad-based proposal for cooperation (*aufgewertete Nachbarschaftspolitik, ENP+*); also greater emphasis within ENP was then placed on energy issues.⁵⁷

The Polish- and Swedish-initiated Eastern Partnership is viewed in terms of continuation, as a step in the right direction initially defined by Germany.⁵⁸ It is regarded as a new impulse to expand cooperation with post-Soviet countries, especially in view of its having been anchored within the ENP. Unlike France’s original proposal for a Union for the Mediterranean, the Polish-Swedish initiative is seen as devoid of any major controversy. It was backed by Chancellor Angela Merkel during her visit to Gdańsk on 17 June 2008,⁵⁹ and this support was repeated on several occasions by German Foreign Minister Frank-Walter Steinmeier.⁶⁰ He also endorsed the efforts to have the project fleshed out quickly, as undertaken by the Czech Republic upon its assumption of EU Council presidency.⁶¹

Germany appreciates the Eastern Partnership’s potential for ensuring stabilisation and security in the EU’s Eastern neighbourhood.⁶² In reaction to the war in Georgia, German politicians proposed to intensify ENP, beef up economic cooperation, and increase German and EU development aid to the Union’s neighbours to the East.⁶³ A Commission communication was discussed and analysed in March 2009 at the

⁵⁶ *Le partenariat transatlantique. Document de réflexion, 7 November 2008*, www.nouvelobs.com.

⁵⁷ “*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

⁵⁸ *Abgabe einer Regierungserklärung durch den Bundesminister des Auswärtigen: zu den Ergebnissen des Europäischen Rats am 11./12. Dezember 2008 Protokoll 196. Sitzung, 18.12.2008.*

⁵⁹ *Kanclerz Niemiec gościem premiera, 16.06.2008*, www.kprm.gov.pl.

⁶⁰ For example, at a press conference after talks with Polish Foreign Minister Sikorski in Berlin, 5 December 2008.

⁶¹ “Regierungserklärung des Bundesministers des Auswärtigen, Dr. Frank-Walter Steinmeier, zu den Ergebnissen des Europäischen Rates am 11./12. Dezember 2008 vor dem Deutschen Bundestag am 18. Dezember 2008 in Berlin,” *Bulletin*, no. 141-1, vol. 18, December 2008; “Rede des Bundesministers des Auswärtigen, Dr. Frank-Walter Steinmeier, vor der Heinz-Schwarzkopf-Stiftung zur gesamt-europäischen Sicherheitspartnerschaft in der Reihe ‘Historische Reden an Europa’ am 10. Dezember 2008 in Berlin,” *Bulletin*, no. 138-3, 11 December 2008.

⁶² “Regierungserklärung des Bundesministers des Auswärtigen, Dr. Frank-Walter Steinmeier, zu den Ergebnissen des Europäischen Rates am 11./12. Dezember 2008 vor dem Deutschen Bundestag am 18. Dezember 2008 in Berlin,” *Bulletin*, no. 141-1, vol. 18, December 2008.

⁶³ See, in particular, “Antrag der Fraktionen der CDU/CSU und SPD Sicherheit, Stabilität und Demokratie im Südkaukasus fördern,” *Druksache 16/12102*.

Bundestag's committees for foreign affairs and for the European Union. While the Eastern Partnership idea was fully approved, doubts emerged with respect to its individual aspects. The CDU ruled out treating EaP as a preparatory step before EU entry, the FDP wished the relationships between the Partnership and the ENP to be specified in greater detail, and the Left was interested in the participation criteria to be required from Belarus.⁶⁴ The SPD did not want the project to be a "vehicle" for some foreign politicians,⁶⁵ while the Left Party suggested its concept was strategically linked to NATO's expansion to the East.⁶⁶ The Eastern Partnership was also discussed at a joint session of German and Polish MPs representing their respective parliaments' foreign affairs committees.⁶⁷

In German debates about EaP, attempts have always been made to define the initiative's role in relations with Russia. Despite a certain change in the perception of that country in the aftermath of the Georgia crisis, Germany has sought to restrict EaP's potentially adverse impact upon relations with its most important political and economic partner in Eastern Europe. It is emphasised that EaP is by no means anti-Russian or aimed to "force Russia out of its neighbourhood,"⁶⁸ rather, the EaP development and implementation should run parallel to relations with Russia, to be based on a new Partnership and Cooperation Agreement.⁶⁹ German support for EaP was very likely made contingent on other member states' consent to resumption of PCA talks with Russia. From the German government's perspective, EaP development requires a further intensification of relations with Russia, also as part of the EaP itself—by letting Russia in on certain projects if the country demonstrates its "will and readiness."⁷⁰ A similar approach has been taken in respect of Turkey.

The German support for EaP is largely underpinned by the perception of EaP as an alternative to membership, to be achieved by means of a tightening up (*Verdichtung*) of relations, in the context of a general aversion to the EU's continued enlargement. The proposal for the accession prospect to be kept for EaP partners, which Czech Foreign Minister Karel Schwarzenberg put forward in the Bundestag on 18 March 2008, met with a tough stance on the part of the CDU, according to which only Croatia could be considered as new entrant in the near future. For the SPD, too, EaP is no kind of a "waiting room," but at best a "place for workout and preparations for future accession."⁷¹

Belarus' participation in EaP is seen as desirable and acceptable, due to an ongoing "mild opening up" towards greater room for the opposition. President

⁶⁴ "Östliche Partnerschaft soll keine Konkurrenz zu Russland sein. Ausschuss für die Angelegenheiten der Europäischen Union," *hib-Meldung* of 4 March 2009.

⁶⁵ *Ibidem*.

⁶⁶ DIE LINKE für eine neue EU-Ostpolitik, *Fraktion Die Linke, Pressedienst*, 27.03.2009.

⁶⁷ *Pressemeldung des Deutschen Bundestages*, 25.03.2009.

⁶⁸ Quoted after G. Gloser, in: "Östliche Partnerschaft soll keine Konkurrenz zu Russland sein. Ausschuss für die Angelegenheiten der Europäischen Union," *hib-Meldung* of 4 March 2009.

⁶⁹ For example, A. Merkel, "Rede beim Empfang für das Diplomatische Corps am 9. Februar 2009 in Berlin," *Bulletin der Bundesregierung*, no. 19-1, 9 February 2009.

⁷⁰ See F.W. Steinmeier, *Außenministertreffen der EU in Brüssel*, 23.02.2009, www.auswaertiges-amt.de.

⁷¹ "Östliche Partnerschaft soll keine Konkurrenz zu Russland sein. Ausschuss für die Angelegenheiten der Europäischen Union," *hib-Meldung* of 4 March 2009.

Lukashenka has been criticised at the Bundestag. It has also been demanded to link easing up on Belarus and the meeting of certain conditions by the country's government.⁷² Other EaP countries (Azerbaijan, Armenia) have come under criticism as well.

The proposal to increase EaP funding was assessed by Chancellor Merkel as an "open question, requiring clarification." And Minister Steinmeier accepted the need for the project to be properly backed financially. He saw the Commission proposal as "realistic,"⁷³ especially in the context of the Eastern partners' requirements in connection with the ongoing economic crisis.

Germany's expectations of EaP are reflected in the concept of a modern European "Eastern policy," as formulated by Steinmeier: closer ties with Ukraine, partnership with Russia, democratisation of Belarus, cooperation with Central Asia, and prosperous collaboration on the Black Sea and in the Caucasus.⁷⁴ Germany proposes that EaP be coordinated with other regional initiatives under ENP, especially Black Sea Synergy, determined to avoid a "costly and ineffective" duplication of structures. (RF)

Greece

Greece, as a Mediterranean country, is traditionally involved in the development of relations with the EU's Southern neighbours. At the same time, the Black Sea basin is a natural connector and region of cooperation with the majority of the EU's Eastern neighbours, and this explains Greece's interest in the development of the Black Sea Synergy. Russia is Greece's principal partner in the post-Soviet area, given the civilisational, religious and energy ties, as well as the two countries' position on the Cyprus question. Greece's relations with the other countries of Eastern Europe and the South Caucasus are less significant.

There is no wider debate about Eastern Partnership in Greece. Pronouncements on this subject are dominated by the EU discourse concerning the initiative. It is worthwhile to note, among other things, the institutional differences between the Partnership and the Union for the Mediterranean (the EaP is at times presented as a "mini" version of the UM) and the significance of the war in Georgia for the development of the initiative with regard to the Eastern neighbours.

Greece declares that the EaP will bring benefits to the countries of Eastern Europe and the South Caucasus and that it will bring them closer to the EU.⁷⁵ In Greek expert milieus, voices can be heard that the EaP is one of the elements of the "association plus" strategy with Eastern European and South Caucasus countries, seen as an alternative to

⁷² See *Fraktion FDP Presseinformation Nr. 301*, 17.03.2009, *Pressemitteilung Nr. 234 der Bundestagsfraktion Bündnis 90/Die Grünen*, 13.03.2009.

⁷³ *Außenministertreffen der EU in Brüssel*, 23.02.2009, www.auswaertiges-amt.de.

⁷⁴ "Auf dem Weg zu einer europäischen Ostpolitik. Die Beziehungen Deutschlands und der EU zu Russland und den östlichen Nachbarn"—Rede von Bundesaußenminister Steinmeier anlässlich der Podiumsdiskussion bei der Willy-Brandt-Stiftung, 4.03.2008, www.auswaertiges-amt.de.

⁷⁵ *Προσφωνηση Του Προεδρου Της Ελληνικης Δημοκρατίας Κ.Καρόλου Παπουλία Προς Τον Προεδρο Του Αζερμπαϊτζαν Κ.Ιλхам Αλιγιεβ Κατα Το Επισημο Δειπνο Στο Προεδρικο Μεγαρο*, 16 February 2009, www.minipress.gr.

these countries' "partial" or "limited" membership in the EU.⁷⁶ The Greek minister of foreign affairs, Dora Bakoyannis, supports the idea of reinforcing the EaP and expressed support for the steps taken by the Czech EU presidency in this sphere. The EaP is perceived in Greece as one of the instruments for preventing conflicts that has become particularly significant in the context of the war in Georgia in August 2008. According to the Greeks, the EaP is also one of the elements of the construction of the EU's global position intended to enable the EU to act cohesively on the international stage and to cooperate with the United States on an equal footing.⁷⁷

Greek politicians do not show any fears about the EaP's influence on the EU's cooperation with Mediterranean countries. Rather, the EaP initiative is presented as yet another instrument of EU influence on its Eastern neighbours, in addition to the ENP and the Black Sea Synergy. Nevertheless, one can perceive Greece's fear that the Black Sea cooperation will be weakened. In February 2009, Greece, along with Bulgaria and Romania, presented a non-paper, proposing a reinforcement of the Synergy modelled on the EaP. This proposal did not meet with the interest of the remaining EU members. Greece, along with Germany, Romania and Bulgaria, wanted the declaration of the European Council of March 2009 to stress the complementarity of the Synergy with the Partnership.

Hope is expressed in Greece that the EaP funds will facilitate the involvement of Greek companies in chosen countries of the region, such as Azerbaijan. Moreover, one can presume that in the context of the Greece's 2009 presidency of the OSCE, it may wish to use the EaP as an instrument to resolve so-called "frozen conflicts" in Eastern Europe and the South Caucasus. This applies particularly to the conflict in Nagorno-Karabakh. (ASze)

Hungary

Hungary's policy towards Eastern Europe is directed mainly at relations with Russia and Ukraine. The other countries of the region and those of the Caucasus play a lesser role in Hungary's Eastern policy. Hungary has actively supported the establishment of the ENP from the very beginning, stressing the need to develop its Eastern dimension. The Hungarian authorities also firmly emphasised the necessity to maintain a balance between the Eastern dimension of the ENP and collaboration between the EU and Russia.

Hungary supported the Polish-Swedish Eastern Partnership initiative decisively and confirmed this position during successive meetings of Visegrád Group prime ministers.⁷⁸ The Hungarian authorities treat the EaP not only as a beneficial complement of existing instruments of the ENP Eastern dimension, but also as a tool for supporting

⁷⁶ J.A. Emmanouilidis, *Alternatives between Full Membership and Non-Membership—Fata Morgana or Silver Bullet?*, paper for the conference: "The EU and its Neighbours: In Search for New Forms of Partnership," Sounio, Greece, 3–6 July 2008, p. 7.

⁷⁷ Speech of FM Ms. Dora Bakoyannis at the 45th Munich Security Conference, Athens, 7 February 2009, www.mfa.gr.

⁷⁸ See *Official Summit of the Prime Ministers of Visegrad Group Countries, Prague, 15–16 June 2008*, www.visegradgroup.eu; *Joint Statement of the Visegrad Group Prime Ministers, Warsaw, 5 November 2008*, www.msz.gov.pl.

countries of Eastern Europe and the South Caucasus on their path to EU membership. The Hungarians are aware that some EU members could view the Polish-Swedish initiative as competitive to the Union for the Mediterranean project and, for this reason, they called for the working out of a compromise in the matter of financing both dimensions of the ENP as quickly as possible.⁷⁹

The Hungarian government supports the forms of deeper collaboration with countries of Eastern Europe and the South Caucasus mentioned in the Partnership project, including the creation of free trade zones and the adoption of a road map for achieving visa free travel. Both those elements, according to the Hungarian government, can serve to stabilise the situation in Georgia. The Hungarians think that the EU should encourage this country to carry out internal reforms and to introduce effective democratic mechanisms, while stressing that collaboration with all countries of the South Caucasus should be pursued.⁸⁰ The Hungarians see the role of the EaP with regard to Moldova in a similar manner. The creation of a network of ties linking this country with the EU should contribute to the final resolution of the conflict in the region of the Transnistria. In the opinion of the Hungarian government, thanks to the EaP the population of this region may one day opt for its reintegration with the rest of the country.

The most important addressee of the EaP initiative in Hungary's view is Ukraine. In the program of the Hungarian presidency of the Visegrád Group (July 2009 to June 2010), presently under preparation, support for the Euro-Atlantic aspirations of Ukraine and the countries of the Western Balkans will be listed as a priority, as will the implementation of the EaP.⁸¹ The Hungarian chairmanship of in the V4 and its presidency of the Council of the European Union scheduled for the first half of 2011 could favour the implementation of the EaP and the promotion of Ukraine's Euro-Atlantic aspirations.⁸² According to Hungary's left-wing government, the realisation of the EaP cannot contribute to the emergence of new divisions between the EU and Russia, whereas cooperation with that country lies in the long-term interest of both the EU and NATO.⁸³ In case of a conflict of interests between Russia and any of the countries of the Eastern neighbourhood, Hungary might show a tendency to favour Russian interests, although this could change should the opposition—more critical of Russia—come to power.⁸⁴ (RM)

⁷⁹ *Statement of The Minister for Foreign Affairs, op.cit.*

⁸⁰ *Ibidem.*

⁸¹ Hungary will pursue an active foreign policy characterised by predictability and continuity, with initiatives of its own in 2009 as well—*Foreign Minister Meets Heads of Diplomatic Missions (30 January 2009)*, www.mfa.gov.hu.

⁸² In February 2009, the ministers of foreign affairs of Austria and Romania proposed to work out a cooperation strategy for Danube Basin countries, pointing out that its realisation could begin during the Hungarian presidency. Hungary have yet to take an official stand on the matter and it is difficult to define how the possible inclusion of this strategy in the Hungarian program for chairing the EU Council will affect the implementation of the EaP. See the section devoted to Austria for more on the subject of the Austrian-Romanian proposal.

⁸³ *Ibidem.*

⁸⁴ For a long time, the Fidesz party of former Prime Minister Viktor Orbán has been actively critical of the presently ruling MSZP party for its excessively conciliatory stand towards Russia and for making Hungary dependent on Russian energy. See András Deák, "Diversification in Hungarian Manner: The Gyurcsány Government's Energy Policy," *International Issues & Slovak Foreign Policy Affairs* 15, no. 3–4 (2006), pp. 44–55.

Ireland

The Irish authorities recognise the equal status of all dimensions existing within the framework of the ENP and reiterate that the EU's fundamental aim in relations with its neighbours should be to support democratic change.⁸⁵ Relations with countries of Eastern Europe and the South Caucasus do not play any significant role in Ireland's foreign policy and the addressees of Eastern Partnership are primarily the beneficiaries of Ireland's foreign aid.

Ireland took a positive view of the EaP proposal, treating it as a beneficial complement of the ENP that will make it possible to support democratic change in countries that neighbour on the EU and bring them closer to EU norms and standards. The EaP project was not the subject of a wider debate among Irish political elites. Just as in case of the neighbourhood policy, the Irish government stressed that the EaP cannot be treated as a path to EU membership. Proposals to finance the EaP did not give rise to Irish reservations. In addition, Ireland recognised that it would be most appropriate if the European Commission coordinated the project. Ireland's most important partners among the countries included in the EaP are Ukraine and Moldova. The Irish government took a positive view of the possibility that third countries, such as Russia and Turkey, will participate in selected programs. It also shared other EU members' view about the suspension of diplomatic sanctions against Belarus, stating that the present isolation policy had not produced the expected results, and that strengthening contacts with Belarus could more effectively incline it to undertake democratic reforms.⁸⁶ (BZ)

Italy

Italy perceives the ENP as an instrument for conducting EU policy in the Mediterranean, which is the principal region of interest in Italian foreign policy. It is firmly opposed to interpreting the tightening of relations with the EU's Eastern neighbours within the framework of the ENP as a pre-accession strategy. Bringing countries of the Eastern neighbourhood closer to the EU can not entail EU membership in the medium-term perspective. Italy's privileged bilateral relations with Russia, both political and economical, stand out in the context of its contacts with countries of Eastern Europe. On the EU forum, Italy strives to maintain very good relations between the EU and Russia, even at the cost of the other countries of the Eastern neighbourhood. It is also cautious in supporting initiatives that could be seen by Russia as aimed against it.

The Eastern Partnership proposal announced by Poland and Sweden in May 2008, and the European Commission's communiqué from December 2008, did not meet with any particular interest on the part of Italian politicians or other participants in the public debate. From the Italian point of view, the problem with the Polish-Swedish proposal was the fact that the Eastern Partnership was not sufficiently clearly anchored in the ENP framework. The Commission's communiqué was greeted more positively,

⁸⁵ Dáil Éireann, *Parliamentary Debates, Official Report—unrevised*, vol. 666, no. 1, 5 November 2008, p. 51, <http://debates.oireachtas.ie>.

⁸⁶ Department of Foreign Affairs, *Opening Statement by Minister for Foreign Affairs, Micheál Martin, TD at the Joint Committee on European Affairs, 12 March 2009*, www.dfa.ie.

given that a “communitisation” of the project took place, according to the Italians. Thus, the fact that the Eastern Partnership emerged as a “dimension” of the ENP, and not as an autonomous project, was crucial in securing Italy’s support for the tightening of relations with the EU’s Eastern neighbours. What’s more, given the differentiation of the addressees, it is not strictly regarded as regional cooperation on the model of the Black Sea Synergy or the Northern Dimension.

As a matter of principle, the Italians support the Partnership as an initiative strengthening the EU’s relations with its Eastern neighbours. Italy also takes a positive view on the deepening of economic integration with the Eastern neighbourhood countries and the acceleration of the legal and regulatory *rapprochement* between EaP countries and the EU. However, given the key importance of the Southern neighbourhood, Italy does not consider the EaP as a project of strategic significance.

Italian reservations about the Partnership are related, among others, to the issue of its financing. Italian representatives stressed that they would agree to increase funds earmarked for the Eastern neighbours, on the condition that the allocations for cooperation with Southern neighbourhood would be increased. The proposal of liberalising the visa regime gave rise to great scepticism. According to Italian representatives, this process should take place gradually, and countries of the Eastern neighbourhood should be treated individually. The Italians fear that, presumably, the introduction of significant facilitations in the movement of people from countries subject of the EaP could form a precedent and strengthen similar demands from the countries of Northern Africa. They also point out that before any decisions are made on this question one should wait for the assessment of the implementation of the agreements on readmission and visa facilitations that were signed with Ukraine and Moldova and which came into force in 2008.

During the discussions on EaP in February and March 2009, Italy called for the inclusion of Russia and Turkey in the projects realised within the framework of the Partnership and pointed to the importance of achieving full complementarity between the EaP and the Black Sea Synergy. Italians underlined that the reinforcement of relations with the EU’s Eastern neighbours within the framework of the EaP could not be pursued as a project directed against Russia. Italy supported the Commission’s proposals about the institutionalisation of the Partnership, emphasising at the same time that EaP institutional solutions should not be excessively extended, but more use should be made of existing structures within the Council and the Commission.

The prospect of the EU’s opening in its relations with Belarus produced positive reactions in Italy. In February 2009 a meeting took place between the Italian minister of foreign affairs, Franco Frattini, and his Belarusian counterpart Siarhiej Martynau. During the meeting a declaration was signed about the expansion of bilateral consultations. In March 2009, when decisions about the EU’s policy with regard to Belarus were made, Italy called for the prolongation of the suspension of the diplomatic sanctions against that country. (AK)

Latvia

Latvia firmly supports the development of the ENP. Given a common history and geographical proximity, it is actively engaged in tightening relations with the EU’s Eastern neighbours, while stressing that political and economic stability in the region

will increase the security of the EU. Latvia is striving to support democratic changes in the region by sharing its experience from its own political transformations. Through active measures aimed at developing relations with its neighbours, Latvia also attempts to reinforce its own position in its relations with Russia. These relations aren't easy given the large Russian minority living in Latvia and close economic and energy ties between two countries.

Latvian authorities greeted the Eastern Partnership project enthusiastically, as an initiative favouring stability, security, and economic development in the region.⁸⁷ It should be noted that before the Polish-Swedish EaP proposal was announced, the Latvian Ministry of Foreign Affairs responded to the project of a Union for the Mediterranean by stating that there was no equivalent initiative for the EU's Eastern neighbours and pointed to the need to create a framework for multilateral cooperation with those countries. Latvia saw possibilities for the development of practical cooperation in trade, energy, environmental protection, justice and internal affairs, and it called for the establishment of an inter-parliamentary dialogue and for cooperation with other countries of the region.⁸⁸

Latvia recognises that their country can become actively involved in the development of the EaP and share its experience and its close relations with countries included in the EaP. Latvia sees an opportunity for itself to play the role of a bridge between the West and the East, and to assist the EU's Eastern neighbours in understanding the aims of the EaP and the ENP as well as the EU and its values.⁸⁹ According to Latvia, the EaP is to adapt the EU's neighbourhood policy to the specific needs of the countries located to its East. This will require an individual approach to each of them. Latvian president Valdis Zatlers spoke enthusiastically of the EaP, and emphasised that it offered additional funds and concentrated the EU's attention in the "right direction." According to Zatlers, the EaP is evidence of the EU's far-sighted policy and will serve its neighbours as a support for their reforms.⁹⁰ The policy declaration of the Valdis Dombrovski's government, sworn in as prime minister at the beginning of March 2009, also mentions the EaP. Among the country's foreign policy aims, it mentions supporting the implementation of the EaP by sharing Latvian experiences about reforms, the improvement of economic conditions and the reinforcement of the justice administration system and security in the region.⁹¹

In November 2008, Latvia, Lithuania, Estonia, Poland, Bulgaria, Romania and Sweden issued a common declaration stressing the significance of regional cooperation with EU neighbours to the East. In this document, the EaP was singled out as an initiative offering a new form of closer cooperation leading to the adoption of EU regulations and standards, the creation of deeper free trade areas and, in the longer perspective, the annulment of the visa requirement. This document also stressed the significance of the

⁸⁷ *Latvija atbalsta ES Austrumu partnerību*, 4.12.2008, www.saeima.lv.

⁸⁸ Cited in: Institut für Europäische Politik, *EU-27 Watch*, September 2008, no. 7, pp. 196–197, www.eu-consent.net.

⁸⁹ *Address by Latvian President Valdis Zatlers at a Plenary Session of the European Parliament in Strasbourg, 13 January 2009*, www.president.lv.

⁹⁰ *Address by Latvian President Valdis Zatlers to a Meeting of Latvian Ambassadors, 17 December 2008*, www.president.lv.

⁹¹ *Declaration of the Intended Activities of the Cabinet of Ministers Headed by Valdis Dombrovskis, 11 March 2009*, www.mk.gov.lv.

project's institutionalisation through the appointment of a special EaP coordinator and the organisation of ministerial meetings or work groups at the level of senior officials.⁹² (BZ)

Lithuania

Given its geographical location and the significance of the Russian factor, Lithuania values political stability and economic development in the region of Eastern Europe and the South Caucasus. Lithuania shows great interest in the shaping of the EU's relationship with its immediate surroundings by unequivocally supporting the ENP. While supporting the strengthening of the EU's neighbourhood policy in relation to the countries of the Eastern dimension of the ENP, it stresses the principles of conditionality and differentiation. It is against treating the ENP as an alternative to membership and is pushing for an "open door" policy. Lithuania sees the need to increase the participation of Eastern partners in the EU's developmental assistance and proposes a greater coordination of measures that have been pursued individually until now. It was Lithuania, together with Poland, that convinced the European Council at the December 2007 meeting to add to the Conclusions a remark about the need for developing multilateral forms of cooperation between the EU and its Eastern neighbours.

Lithuania took a positive view of the Polish-Swedish Eastern Partnership initiative, as one that is concordant with Lithuanian intentions of increasing the significance of the Eastern neighbourhood in EU policy. Lithuania is especially counting on the working out, on the basis of the EaP, of a new formula for relations between the EU and countries of Eastern Europe and the South Caucasus within the framework of the ENP. It also sees the influence of the EaP on the shaping of bilateral relations within the EU.⁹³ This favourable rhetoric is being followed by important political signals which have been expressed in the Warsaw Joint Statement signed by Lithuania on 24 November 2008. The signatories (the Visegrád countries, Bulgaria, Lithuania, Latvia, Romania and Sweden) called for the EU to offer its Eastern neighbours new forms of cooperation within the framework of the EaP for the purpose of bringing them closer to EU norms and standards, to establish free trade zones, to initiate the process of facilitating the movement of people, with abandoning visas as a long-term goal. In addition, the signatories supported the idea of creating effective institutional cooperation mechanisms, preferably based on a special coordinator for the EaP and regular meetings of ministers and experts.⁹⁴

In December 2008, Lithuanian parliamentarians took a favourable view of the European Commission communiqué on the EaP.⁹⁵ They stated that this document was the appropriate response to the pro-European aspirations of the EU's Eastern

⁹² *Joint Statement of the Visegrad Group Countries, Bulgaria, Estonia, Lithuania, Latvia, Romania and Sweden, Warsaw, 24 November 2008, www.am.gov.lv.*

⁹³ *The New Ambassador Presented Her Letter of Credence to the President, News, 14.03.2009, www.swedenabroad.com.*

⁹⁴ *Joint Statement of the Foreign Ministers of the Visegrad Group Countries and of Bulgaria, Estonia, Lithuania, Latvia, Romania and Sweden, Warsaw, 24 November 2008, www.visegradgroup.eu.*

⁹⁵ *Užsienio reikalų komitetas išreiškė paramą ES iniciatyvai dėl Rytų partnerystės, www3.lrs.lt.*

neighbours—that it supports their reforming efforts and, from the EU side, that it constitutes an expression of a common desire for greater cooperation and partnership.⁹⁶ Lithuania supports the proposal of concluding association agreements, facilitating the movement of people (with visa-free travel as a long term goal) and the strengthening of cooperation in energy security.⁹⁷ Lithuania also stresses the support for the democratisation process and the rule of law in neighbouring countries as tools of political stabilisation and economic development.⁹⁸ The Eastern Partnership Initiative is seen as one of the two main tools (along with the Union for the Mediterranean) for the initiation of change in the EU's neighbourhood aimed at building a stable and predictable immediate vicinity. Lithuania sees the need for balancing the Southern dimension through greater involvement in developing relations with the EU's Eastern neighbours covered by the ENP. Lithuania, similarly to Poland, places an emphasis on the need for the European Commission to define specific projects and initiatives along with a schedule for their implementation and a clear financing system.

Following the Georgian crisis, the EaP initiative began to be perceived in Lithuania as a factor that could have great influence on EU-Russian relations.⁹⁹ There is a tendency to see the EaP as a tool in the EU's policy toward Russia. As far as the possibility of including Belarus to the EaP is concerned, the most common view in Lithuania is that the Partnership could stimulate the desired changes. In the opinion of the Lithuanian authorities, inviting Belarus to the EaP should not be treated as a prize for the changes expected, but rather as a pragmatic move that accelerates them. Belarus could be invited to participate on the condition that it shows the will to evolve in the direction of an open society and a democratic political system.¹⁰⁰ Despite the routine stressing of the principle of conditionality, Lithuania is the EU member that most actively aims to include Belarus in the EaP.

Lithuania has become actively involved in promoting the EaP among other EU members.¹⁰¹ Its promotion activities were also conducted among the EaP countries. Toward the end of 2008, the Lithuanian minister of foreign affairs visited the most important beneficiaries in Lithuania's viewpoint, i.e., Ukraine, Georgia and Belarus, for the purpose of discussing questions connected with the EaP initiative and the development of bilateral relations.

At times, the Partnership is treated by Lithuanian representatives as a pre-accession package despite the fact that it does not include the prospect of EU membership. Lithuania holds great hope with the project as far as *rapprochement*

⁹⁶ *EU's Eastern Neighborhood Quests in Line w/ Lithuanian Parl't Committee Agenda*, News, 15.03.2009, www.euro.lt.

⁹⁷ *Lithuania Supports the EU's Aims to Strengthening Relations with Neighbours in the East*, MFA press release, 4.12.2008.

⁹⁸ *Lithuania Speaks Up for Promotion of Democratic Governance in Neighbouring Countries in the East*, MFA press release, 30.01.2009.

⁹⁹ *Lithuania Staying out of Poland's Inner Coordination of Foreign Policy Issues—President's Office*, News, 15.03.2009, www.euro.lt.

¹⁰⁰ *Speech of Minister of Foreign Affairs Vygaudas Ušackas at the German Foreign Policy Association (DGAP)—Challenges to the Foreign Policy of the EU. Approach of the new Government of Lithuania*, Berlin, 12 February 2009, www.urm.lt.

¹⁰¹ *During a Visit in London on 6 March, Lithuania's Minister of Foreign Affairs Vygaudas Ušackas met with Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs*, News, www.urm.lt.

between its addressees and Euro-Atlantic integration structures is concerned.¹⁰² In Lithuanian assessments, there is a need for a differentiated approach based on varying expectations with regard to the beneficiaries of the EaP. Lithuania expects the most rapid results to be achieved in negotiations with Ukraine, Georgia and Moldova, something that should then positively influence the tightening of relations with Azerbaijan, Belarus and Armenia.¹⁰³ Another important element is energy cooperation. It should be pointed out that these areas were already identified as priority issues within the context of the ENP.¹⁰⁴ The EaP is understood as yet another undertaking, in addition to the Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region, that can be realised complementarily and which can contribute to the crystallisation of a common policy on a specific issue that is important for Lithuania. (EW, RT)

Luxembourg

Russia, which is treated by Luxembourg as an important political and economic partner, plays an important role in Luxembourg's perception of the regions of Eastern Europe and the South Caucasus. Luxembourg supports the European Neighbourhood and Partnership Policy, even if it is not the object of its special interest. The Luxembourg authorities declare that in connection with the 2004 EU enlargement it is necessary to enter into close cooperation with the new neighbours, because their *rapprochement* to the EU will contribute to increased stability in the immediate vicinity of the EU. In 2005, the Luxembourg EU presidency was involved in the formulation of an understanding with the European Parliament on the subject of the European Neighbourhood and Partnership Instrument.

The Luxembourg authorities are the proponents of a balanced approach to the Southern and Eastern neighbours. They are of the opinion that the stability of the countries neighbouring on the EU to the East is important to all Europeans, and intensive cooperation with countries of the Mediterranean basin cannot take place at the expense of the EU's Eastern neighbours. Luxembourg recently supported the Eastern Partnership while drawing attention to the need for a balanced development of relations with neighbours to the South within the context of the Union for the Mediterranean. The Luxembourg authorities expect that the EaP initiative will contribute to the reinforcement of relations with the EU's Eastern neighbours.¹⁰⁵ (RK)

¹⁰² Speech by Žygimantas Pavilionis, Under-Secretary of the Lithuanian MFA at the conference "Moldova: Moving Ahead," Wilton Park, 16–18 October 2008.

¹⁰³ *Lithuania's President Welcomes the Priorities of the Czech Presidency of the EU*, 18.12.2008, www.president.lt.

¹⁰⁴ *Lithuania Raises Matters of Eastern Neighbourhood and Energy in EU*, News, 14.03.2009, www.euro.lt; *Remarks by H.E. Valdas Adamkus, President of the Republic of Lithuania at Christmas Meeting with the Diplomatic Corps*, 14.03.2009, www.president.lt.

¹⁰⁵ *Le Luxembourg et la Pologne à la recherche de solutions communes pour l'Europe*. Nicolas Schmit a reçu Mikolaj Dowgielewicz, le Secrétaire d'État aux Affaires Européennes de la Pologne, 19.02.2009, www.europaforum.public.lu.

Malta

The implementation of the ENP in keeping with the concept of “all besides institutions” is one of the priorities of Maltese foreign policy. Malta’s interest in the policy is limited to the Southern dimension and it identifies the Neighbourhood Policy with Mediterranean Policy. In the opinion of this state, the ENP and the Union for the Mediterranean increase the stability of the EU’s Southern neighbourhood and Malta’s role in this region. The pronouncements of the Maltese government on the subject of Eastern Partnership limit themselves to vague declarations. In assessing the program of the Czech presidency, the Maltese foreign minister, Tonio Borg, stated that he greeted the reinforcement of the ENP’s Eastern dimension through the realisation of the Eastern Partnership with satisfaction.¹⁰⁶ Malta views this as an important step in the context of the events in Georgia.

When there is talk of the Eastern Partnership, it is usually in connection with Mediterranean policy. Malta stresses the necessity to keep a balance between both dimensions of the ENP. It notes that in addition to bilateral steps taken in connection with Eastern dimension decisions (EaP ones as well), the EU’s relations with Mediterranean countries should also be developed. In this context, the important thing for Malta is tightening the EU’s ties with countries of the Arab League. In pursuing multilateral undertakings within the framework of the Eastern Partnership, particular attention should be paid to the implementation of projects of the Union for the Mediterranean. According to Malta, if additional funds are to be allocated for the EU’s Eastern neighbours in connection with the realisation of the EaP, the EU should also financially support the countries of the ENP’s Southern dimension.¹⁰⁷

The Maltese government supports the principle of complementariness of the Eastern Partnership with other EU regional initiatives, including the Black Sea Synergy, which Malta supports.¹⁰⁸ It can also be expected to support the participation of third countries, especially Russia, in EaP projects. Given Russia’s significance in the sphere of security, Malta pointed to the necessity of strengthening EU-Russian relations, seeing in this step a condition for the success of the ENP in its Eastern dimension. (ASzy)

Netherlands

The Netherlands is acting on the assumption that a stable and successfully developing Eastern neighbourhood is in the interests of the entire EU, as this ensures, among other things, the security of the EU’s external boundaries, the safety of energy supplies and trade and investment benefits. This is one of the reasons why the Netherlands has granted much developmental aid to Eastern European and South Caucasian countries to which the Eastern Partnership is addressed. According to the

¹⁰⁶ See *Address by Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs Dr Tonio Borg*, Malta’s Ministry of Foreign Affairs press releases, 15.01.2009, www.mfa.gov.mt.

¹⁰⁷ *Ibidem*; see also *Meusac Discusses the Programme of the Commission and of the Council for 2009*, Malta, Department of Information press releases, 30.01.2009, <http://doi.gov.mt>.

¹⁰⁸ See the opinion of the Mediterranean Academy of Diplomatic Studies of the University of Malta, cited in: *EU-27 Watch*, no. 6, Institut für Europäische Politik, Berlin, March 2008, p. 139, www.iep-berlin.de.

Dutch authorities, the EU's relations with neighbouring countries should not lead to membership, however. Reiterating this reservation has become an almost ritual element of the Dutch approach to the functioning of the ENP and to the future of this policy.

The Netherlands welcomed the Eastern Partnership, with this acceptance rooted primarily in the fact that the Eastern Partnership does not explicitly address the issue of the EU membership of countries to which it is addressed. What's more, it seems to be rather close to the Dutch concept of a new form of partnership (the so-called *partenariat*) between the EU and the countries of the Eastern dimension of the neighbourhood policy, one that assumes a more advanced form of cooperation going beyond the framework of the ENP, but still excluding EU membership. This new form of partnership should be implemented if the potential offered by the ENP is fully used up.¹⁰⁹ This concept emerged during the course of the debate which took place in the Netherlands in 2005, following the negative outcome of the referendum on the ratification of the Constitutional Treaty. The proposal for a new partnership was included in the coalition agreement concluded in February 2007 between the Christian-Democratic Party (CDA), the Labour Party (PvdA) and the Christian Union (ChristenUnie).

A possible manifestation of the Dutch government's interest in the EaP project is the fact that, toward the end of 2008, it turned to the Advisory Council on International Affairs (AIV), requesting the preparation of an analysis of the EaP initiative in terms of its added value in relation to the ENP, of possible Russian participation, and of solutions other than EU membership that would enable an intensification of relations with EaP addressees.¹¹⁰ The AIV stated that the EaP will enable the intensification of economic relations through the creation of deeper free trade areas, noting that the EaP was an opportunity for multilateral cooperation between the EU and beneficiary countries, whereas the present ENP formula gave priority to bilateral relations. It also indicated that Russia and Turkey should not be passed by in the process of development of relations with the EU's Eastern neighbours. On the other hand, the AIV was critical of the idea that the development of the EaP should omit the prospect of membership, as such a prospect could be an enormous stimulus for the implementation of political and economic reforms.¹¹¹

The government in The Hague treats the EaP as an instrument that can be used for the further democratisation of the EU's Eastern neighbours and also for the deepening of cooperation in areas such as energy, the economy, environmental protection, justice and respect for human rights. The Netherlands took a positive view of many ideas contained in the Commission's communication of December 2008.¹¹² It does not oppose the idea of concluding association agreements with countries included in the Partnership. It is also rather favourably inclined towards the proposal of creating deeper free trade areas, seeing in them an opportunity to give more dynamism to trade with those countries, especially with Ukraine. It shows a degree of caution, however,

¹⁰⁹ The Netherlands Ministry of Foreign Affairs, *State of the European Union 2007/2008*, pp. 19–20, www.minbuza.nl.

¹¹⁰ The Council is an independent entity supporting the actions of the Dutch government. See *The European Union's Eastern Neighbours*, www.aiv-advies.nl.

¹¹¹ The information concerning this report is based on the press release of the Dutch MFA: *AIV advisory letter on Eastern Partnership*, press release, 17.03.2009, www.minbuza.nl.

¹¹² The Netherlands Ministry of Foreign Affairs, *Mededeling inzake Oostelijk Partnerschap*, www.minbuza.nl.

towards the introduction of visa facilitations, stressing that it is necessary to assess the solutions already in place. The Netherlands has expressed doubts as to the added value of the “mobility and security pacts” proposed by the Commission, in comparison to already existing forms of cooperation in the sphere of movement of people.

The Netherlands questioned the European Commission’s EaP financing proposal, especially the idea of allocating additional funds from the budget in the amount of €350 million, which would go to support the European Neighbourhood and Partnership Instrument. The government in The Hague, which usually views quite sceptically any increase of funds for the neighbourhood policy, stressed that carrying out the EaP should take place within the existing financial framework. This stance arises primarily from the Netherlands’ status as a net payee to the EU budget and its fear that it will have to sustain the cost of the new financial obligations.

The attitude of the Netherlands to Belarus’ possible participation in the EaP was negative. This was the result of The Hague’s critical assessment of the human rights situation in that country. The Dutch government took the position that Belarus would not be able to join the EaP project until its authorities took real steps to liberalise the political system there. Ultimately, however, it agreed to Belarus’ inclusion in the Partnership. (MK)

Poland

The countries of Eastern Europe occupy a special place in Poland’s foreign policy due to the political and socio-economic ties it has with them. Their stabilisation through democratisation and the building of a market economy has been one of the most important goals of the Republic of Poland post-1989. Poland has been emphasising that there is a need for intensifying EU efforts to consolidate the ties between the Union and the Eastern neighbourhood countries embraced by the European Neighbourhood Policy and has for many years promoted an “open-door” policy towards Eastern Europe in the EU. It believes that dialogue and cooperation between the EU and Russia are indispensable, although it is opposed to perceiving and assessing EU initiatives addressed to the Eastern neighbourhood from the angle of Russia’s interests. In its opinion, assistance in socio-political and economic transformations in ENP countries should be one of the EU’s chief objectives, the pursuit of which should not be combined with, let alone made contingent on, the development of the EU’s relations with Russia.

Poland showed particular interest in the development of relations with the Eastern neighbours by the enlarged EU already at the start of its accession negotiations in 1998. This was confirmed and expanded in the Foreign Ministry document adopted in July 2001 entitled “Eastern Policy of the European Union in the Context of its Enlargement by the Inclusion of East-Central European Countries—the Polish View.” In January 2003, the Ministry built on that concept in non-paper form: “Polish Proposals Concerning the Future Shape of the Enlarged EU toward the New Eastern Neighbours.”¹¹³ In this document, Poland formulated a proposal for the expansion of

¹¹³ “Non-paper z polskimi propozycjami w sprawie przyszłego kształtu polityki rozszerzonej EU wobec nowych wschodnich sąsiadów,” in: *Polityka rozszerzonej Unii Europejskiej wobec nowych sąsiadów*, Warsaw: Fundacja im. Stefana Batorego, 2003, pp. 93–107, www.batory.org.pl/doc/nowi_s.pdf; translation into Russian in: *Европа*, 2003, no. 1 (6), pp. 129–143.

EU's relations with the Eastern neighbours: the inclusion of Russia in the European Economic Space in the medium term and the signing of association agreements with Ukraine, Moldova and Belarus, provided the latter country underwent democratisation. That document also took into account the possibility of Ukraine's admission to the EU in the long term. The Polish 2003 proposals were a voice in the debate on the future relations of the enlarged EU with its Eastern neighbours. This debate produced the concept of the European Neighbourhood Policy that has been implemented since May 2004. However, not being an EU member yet, Poland had limited influence on the final shape of the EU policy toward its Eastern neighbours.

Following its admission to the EU, Poland cooperated closely with other Visegrád Group countries to strengthen the Eastern dimension of ENP.¹¹⁴ These problems were also the subject of numerous consultations and campaigns launched together with the Baltic states. The objective, in the most general terms, was to devise a new concept taking into account in a greater measure the expectations of the Eastern ENP countries and also to convince the "old" EU members to expand relations therewith. Poland was also pointing to the disparities between the Southern and the Eastern dimensions of the ENP, which lacked mechanisms for multilateral cooperation. These efforts led to the adoption by the European Council in December 2007 of a Polish-Lithuanian proposal for the development of the Southern and Eastern dimensions of ENP not only through bilateral, but also through multilateral actions.

In March 2008, after the meeting of the European Council that gave the go-ahead to the implementation of the Union for the Mediterranean, Polish Foreign Minister Radosław Sikorski promised to present a proposal for deeper relations with the Eastern neighbours embraced by the ENP. This was because Poland expected that, after the adoption of the initiative aimed at invigorating the Southern dimension of the ENP, it would be easier to obtain the EU's consent to the deepening of relations with the Eastern neighbours. The Eastern Partnership initiative was jointly presented by Poland and Sweden at the meeting of foreign ministers on 26–27 May 2008. It is worth noting that the Czech Republic, which in April 2008 submitted a proposal for the deepening of the Eastern dimension of the ENP, gave its firm support to this initiative. It also participated in the development of a more detailed EaP design by Poland and Sweden, which was submitted to the European Commission in October 2008.

After the GAERC meeting held in May, Poland focused on canvassing support for the EaP initiative both in the EU institutions and among individual member states.¹¹⁵ It held intensive consultations with the European Commission aimed at including the proposals contained in the initiative in the communication on EaP prepared by the European Commission. It also sought to form a "front" of countries supporting the

¹¹⁴ Cf. e.g., *The Visegrad Group Contribution to the Discussion on the Strengthening of the European Neighbourhood Policy*, COREU, Gymnich, March 2007; *The Visegrad Group Position Paper on Governance Facility and Neighbourhood Investment Fund*, April 2007; *Joint Political Statement of the Visegrad 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 Visegrad Countries Towards the Eastern Neighbourhood—Areas and Options of Cooperation*, Budapest, 6th–9th December 2007, www.hiia.hu.

¹¹⁵ More on this topic in: *Informacja Ministerstwa Spraw Zagranicznych na temat polskiej inicjatywy Partnerstwa Wschodniego*, 7th Senate of the Republic of Poland, typescript (461) of the 35th sitting of the Foreign Affairs Committee, pp. 4–5, www.senat.gov.pl.

initiative. On 24 November 2008, Warsaw hosted a meeting of Visegrád Group countries as well as Bulgaria, Lithuania, Latvia, Romania and Sweden. Its participants were in favour of the EU offering its Eastern neighbours new forms of cooperation within the EaP framework with a view to helping them get closer to EU standards and norms, establishing free trade zones and launching a process of facilitating the movement of people, with the abolition of visas envisaged in the long term. They voiced support for the idea of appointing a special coordinator for EaP affairs and holding regular meetings of ministers and experts.¹¹⁶

Poland has been engaged in intensive consultations with Germany, and the EaP was also discussed at meetings at various levels with the remaining EU members, including France and Britain. It has also talked to its neighbours, including Ukraine. In January 2009, Poland organised consultations between the Visegrád Group and Russia on the subject of EaP, among other topics.

The Polish-Swedish initiative and actions for its adoption by the Community are a logical component of Poland's foreign policy. After all, the objective of the Eastern Partnership is to consolidate socio-political and economic transformations of the countries of Eastern Europe and South Caucasus.¹¹⁷ Initially, the absence of any mention of EU enlargement in the proposal aroused some reservations among certain Polish political forces. Law and Justice (PiS), the biggest opposition party, dismissed the plan as not ambitious enough and "defensive,"¹¹⁸ with some criticism too coming from within the ruling Civic Platform (PO) party.¹¹⁹ Fears were also voiced by politicians from the peasant party in connection with the planned establishment of an EU-Ukraine free trade zone and the possibility of subsidising farmers from outside the EU.¹²⁰ In the end, however, no Polish political force came out against the Eastern Partnership.

Similarly as many other EU members supporting a further eastward expansion of the EU, Poland regards the Eastern Partnership as a pragmatic response to "enlargement fatigue." In Poland's opinion, an initiative speaking expressly about EU enlargement would stand no chance of being accepted by all the EU members.¹²¹ Meanwhile, in the present format, the EaP can help to bring the countries to which this initiative is addressed significantly closer to the EU, and in the case of those countries that show such aspirations and display a sufficient level of determination—to actually prepare them for integration. According to the Polish authorities, an important role will be played by the EU's association agreements with the neighbours, the liberalisation of visa

¹¹⁶ *Joint Statement of the Foreign Ministers of the Visegrad Group Countries and of Bulgaria, Estonia, Lithuania, Latvia, Romania and Sweden, Warsaw, 24 November 2008*, www.visegradgroup.eu.

¹¹⁷ *Informacja ministra spraw zagranicznych o zadaniach polskiej polityki zagranicznej w 2009 r.*, typescript of the 35th sitting of the 6th Sejm of the Republic of Poland, 12 February 2009, p. 251, www.sejm.gov.pl; *Informacja Ministerstwa Spraw Zagranicznych na temat polskiej inicjatywy Partnerstwa Wschodniego...*, *op.cit.*, p. 3.

¹¹⁸ P. Kowal in the debate over *Informacja ministra spraw zagranicznych o zadaniach polskiej polityki zagranicznej w 2009 r.*..., p. 259; *Nowoczesna, solidarna, bezpieczna Polska. Program Prawa i Sprawiedliwości*, Kraków, 2009, p. 179, www.pis.org.pl.

¹¹⁹ Statement by M. Grubski in the debate over *Informacja Ministerstwa Spraw Zagranicznych na temat polskiej inicjatywy Partnerstwa Wschodniego...*, *op.cit.*, pp. 21–22.

¹²⁰ Cf. e.g., the statement by Senator Jan Olech (PO) in the debate over *Informacja Ministerstwa Spraw Zagranicznych na temat polskiej inicjatywy Partnerstwa Wschodniego...*, p. 13.

¹²¹ *Informacja Ministerstwa Spraw Zagranicznych na temat polskiej inicjatywy Partnerstwa Wschodniego...*, pp. 3, 5.

policies and the establishment of a deepened free trade zone. Finally, the foreign policy reports presented by Foreign Minister Radosław Sikorski to the Sejm in 2008 and 2009 also confirm that Poland has not abandoned the striving for an eastward enlargement of the EU.

The adoption of the EaP by the European Council in March 2009 did not end Poland's efforts for the benefit of its development and implementation. Without waiting for the implementation of the EaP by the Commission, the Polish Ministry of Foreign Affairs is planning to launch the first pilot projects financed out of the national budget. They concern the promotion of human rights, regional development and the protection of cultural heritage, among other things. Poland has also been emphasising the importance of coordinated efforts of the member states and the European Commission with regard to development aid channelled to EaP beneficiaries. It proposes intensified exchange of information on that subject and the combining of member states' projects with initiatives of the European Commission. Meanwhile, the Polish proposals for the establishment of the position of a special coordinator for the Partnership and also for setting up a small secretarial force, or at least hiring additional European Commission staff dealing with the EaP, remain valid. Poland has also been advocating the creation of a financial mechanism making it possible to establish cooperation in the implementation of the EaP with countries from outside the EU, e.g. USA, Canada or Japan. (BW)

Portugal

Given its political, economic and energy ties with the Mediterranean region, Portugal is primarily involved in the realisation of the Southern dimension of the ENP. Eastern Europe and the South Caucasus are almost absent in that country's foreign policy, and Russia is Portugal's largest political and economic partner in the post-Soviet area. Interest in the problems of Eastern Europe has been slowly rising in the last few years as a result of EU enlargement and the implementation of the ENP. The most important factor influencing Portugal's somewhat greater activeness than in previous years with regard to the EU's Eastern neighbours is a growing number of immigrants from Ukraine and Moldova.

The Eastern Partnership is not a subject of public debate in Portugal. Even in the context of the parliamentary discussions about the Georgia-Russia conflict, there were no references to this initiative, although it is under the influence of this conflict that work on the EaP accelerated. Emphasised was the necessity of building close relations with Russia, which, as a major EU partner, should not be marginalised.¹²² The government's position is limited to the statement that Portugal accepts the Eastern Partnership and expects that it will reinforce multilateral cooperation between the EU and its Eastern neighbours.¹²³ Reservations are voiced as to its financing. Portugal is rather against allocating additional funds for the Partnership. Given a growing number

¹²² See the pronouncement, among others, of Vitalino Canas in *Diário da Assembleia da República*, Reunião Plenária de 18 de Dezembro de 2008, I Série — Número 28, 4.^a Sessão Legislativa (2008–2009), 19.12.2008, p. 43.

¹²³ *Intervenção da SEAE na audição parlamentar sobre o PLT COM 2009 – Comissão Assuntos Europeus da AR*, 6.01.2009, www.mne.gov.pt.

of immigrants from Eastern Europe, Portugal will undoubtedly be cautious with regard to proposals to introduce significant changes in the visa regime. Portuguese politicians point to the need to control the EU's Eastern boundaries and to counter illegal immigration from the East.¹²⁴ It can be expected that the Portuguese position in the matter of the EaP will be similar to that of Spain and France. In the past, Portugal worked closely with both of them within the framework of the ENP, thus reinforcing the group of Mediterranean EU members.¹²⁵ (BW)

Romania

Eastern Europe and the South Caucasus play an important role in Romania's foreign policy, and the development of the ENP—primarily of its Eastern dimension—represents one of the priorities of Romanian policy within the EU. Given shared historical, ethnic, and economic ties, Romania's most important partner is Moldova. Romania calls for this country to be included in the EU's policy directed at Western Balkan countries that are candidates for EU membership. Romania's authorities perceive their relations with their Eastern neighbours through the prism of their position on the Black Sea basin. Romania wishes to play the role of a leader in this region and is interested in the further development of the Black Sea Synergy.

Initially, Romania was rather critical of the EaP project. Its authorities felt that appropriate consultations were not conducted with them on the subject of an initiative in a region so important to Romania. Given the fear that the EaP would have a negative impact on the Black Sea Synergy, Romanian officials stressed that both initiatives have to be complementary: the EaP could concentrate on bilateral cooperation and the adaptation of neighbouring countries to EU standards, whereas the Black Sea Synergy would concentrate on multilateral projects and the building of a zone of security and trust in the region.¹²⁶ In this, Romania pointed indirectly to the Black Sea Synergy's advantage connected with the fact that it includes not only EU and EaP countries, but also Turkey and Russia. In February 2009, Romania along with Bulgaria and Greece presented a non paper proposing a strengthening of the Black Sea Synergy modelled on the EaP. This proposal did not meet with wider interest on the part of other EU members. During the same month, the ministers of foreign affairs of Austria and Romania—Michael Spindelegger and Cristian Diaconescu—presented to the other EU members a proposal for the creation of an EU strategy for Danube Basin countries.¹²⁷ If it were to be realised and if it were to include Ukraine and Moldova and the countries of the Western Balkans, the EaP would probably lose in significance for Romania and, at the same time, would bring back controversies having to do with the principle of complementarity of regional initiatives.

¹²⁴ *Diário da Assembleia da República*, Reunião Plenária de 17 Janeiro de 2007, I Série – Número 37, 2.ª Sessão Legislativa (2006–2007), 18.01.2007, p. 12, www.europa.parlamento.pt.

¹²⁵ See B. Wojna, "Polityka wschodnia państw śródziemnomorskich," in: A. Gil, T. Kapuśniak (eds.), *Polityka wschodnia Polski. Uwarunkowania, koncepcje, realizacja*, Lublin–Warsaw: IEŚW, 2009, pp. 395–408.

¹²⁶ Conference "The Eastern Partnership and the Black Sea Synergy: How to Cooperate, not to Compete," 25 November 2008, Bucharest, Intercontinental Hotel. Summary, www.ier.ro.

¹²⁷ For more on this subject, see the section about Austria.

Romania's cautious stance with regard to the EaP was also affected by the equivocal assessment of the initiative by Moldova. The authorities of that country saw the Partnership as a unilateral EU initiative directed at countries that are less advanced in their reforms than Moldova and, moreover, one that can be viewed as an attempt to isolate Russia. There was also anxiety that the association proposal for EU neighbouring countries could make Moldova's EU membership prospects more remote. Romania seemed to share these fears in part.¹²⁸

Ultimately, Romania stated that the EaP can further transformations and bring Moldova closer to the EU.¹²⁹ It did not question the Eastern Partnership project, which was declared one of Romania's priorities in the region for the years 2009–2012.¹³⁰ The Romanian authorities stress that the new initiative could strengthen the EU's political and economic ties with the Eastern part of the continent, especially in the sphere of energy and transport. They hold the view that the initiative should also support the European aspirations of countries to which it is addressed.¹³¹ From the Romanian perspective, the EU's most important partner within the framework of the EaP is Moldova. In the case of Ukraine, voices have been raised that the EaP could be used to improve the situation of the Romanian minority in that country. Romania supports a policy of openness towards Belarus. It expresses the hope that the attitude of the authorities in this country will change. There are no specific Romanian proposals concerning cooperation with countries of the South Caucasus within the EaP framework. (ASze)

Slovakia

The countries of the ENP's Eastern dimension, especially Ukraine, Belarus and Moldova, are a priority area of Slovakian foreign policy. For Slovakia, which is located on a strategic path along which energy is shipped to the EU, the most important country to the East of the EU is Russia.

Slovakia supports the development of the ENP and, as far as the EU's Eastern neighbours are concerned, it treats the Neighbourhood Policy as an instrument supporting those countries' path toward EU membership. Slovakia supported the Polish-Swedish project of the Eastern Partnership as one corresponding to its "priority interests" and treats it as the crowning of its efforts on behalf of the ENP made, among other, as part of the Visegrád Group. In the opinion of the Slovakian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the concept of the Eastern Partnership meets the requirement of maintaining the internal cohesiveness of the ENP and properly takes into account the experiences of this policy in relation to the partners to the East. The EaP is an opportunity to tighten cooperation and a chance for a "new quality" in their relations with the EU. Slovak

¹²⁸ C. Diaconescu (interview), *Vom negocia cu Rusia livrări directe de gaze*, 25.01.2009, www.cotidianul.ro.

¹²⁹ Ambasadorul României în RM la IDIS "Viitorul": "Viitorul relațiilor RM-UE se regăsește în formula Parteneriatului Estic," *Dezbateri Europene*, IDIS Viitorul, Friedrich Ebert Stiftung, 3 December 2008, www.viitorul.org.

¹³⁰ *Programul de guvernare 2009–2012. Capitolul 25—Politica externă*, www.gov.ro.

¹³¹ *Statement of the Ministers for Foreign Affairs of Romania and the Republic of Hungary, Szeged, 21 October 2008*, www.mae.ro.

experts were more critical though and they pointed out, among other things, a lack of reference to the sectorial approach preferred by the German EU presidency, the problem of delimitation of multilateral cooperation between the EaP and existing regional initiatives in the Black Sea Basin and an absence of reference to cooperation with Turkey.¹³²

According to the Slovakian authorities, the EaP is, however, “a very good preparation to future unification of all parts of Europe in one European project,”¹³³ and its mechanism will favour close ties between the EU and its Eastern neighbours. Although the EaP does not include a promise of EU membership, in the future such a perspective could materialise after candidate countries meet specific conditions. Slovakia sees “added value” in the EaP because by supporting reforms in partner countries this will make it possible to create “one common space of values and principles based on the EU model.”¹³⁴ Slovakia shows particular interest in the expansion of a free trade area and the creation of a more friendly visa regime for citizens of countries included in the EaP.

Slovak diplomats stress that the EaP is not, and cannot be, a project aimed against any country (especially Russia). Although Slovakia perceives the EaP as an initiative of strategic significance for the stability and security of the countries of the ENP’s Eastern dimension and of all the EU, emphasis in the EaP initiative on the problem of desecuritisation is, according to Slovakia, an advantage of the project. Thanks to this, the EaP will make it possible for the EU to make full use of its “soft power,” indirectly contributing to the improvement of international security in the region.

Slovakia declared that it would actively participate in the practical implementation of the EaP by sharing its own experiences from the transformation and European integration process.¹³⁵ In doing so, it drew particular attention to the multilateral dimension of the EaP and to the possibility of using certain experiences of Central-European regional cooperation in the East.¹³⁶

Slovakia is interested in the “maintenance of the attractiveness of the Eastern Partnership in all participating partner countries.”¹³⁷ Although it had often pointed in the past to Ukraine as a country that was mature enough to enjoy a privileged partnership with the EU and actively supported Ukrainian integration efforts, it does not at this time show any will to single out this country. This is related to tensions between Slovakia and Ukraine that arose during the Ukrainian-Russian gas conflict at the beginning of 2009.

Slovakia is one of the proponents of a conditional inclusion of Belarus in the EaP and is interested in the growth of cooperation with that country. According to Slovakian diplomats, thanks to the participation of Belarus in the EaP the EU will obtain an instrument with which it will be able to influence developments there. As Slovakia

¹³² A. Duleba, L. Najšlová, V. Benč and V. Bilčík, *The Reform of the EPS: Tools, Institutions and Regional Dimension*, Bratislava: Slovak Foreign Policy Association, 2008, pp. 63–66.

¹³³ *Vystúpenie ministra zahraničných vecí SR Jána Kubiša na Fakulte medzinárodných vzťahov Univerzity v Bologni* (Bologna, 27 November 2008), www.mzv.sk.

¹³⁴ *MZV SR k Východnému partnerstvu*, 3.12.2008, www.mzv.sk.

¹³⁵ *Vystúpenie podpredsedu vlády SR Dušana Čaploviča na zasadnutí predsedov vlád členských krajín Stredoeurópskej iniciatívy v Kišiňove*, 28.11.2008, www.caplovic.vlada.gov.sk.

¹³⁶ See, for example, *Vystúpenie ministra zahraničných vecí SR Jána Kubiša...*, *op.cit.*

¹³⁷ *Zameranie zahraničnej politiky SR na rok 2009*, www.rokovania.sk.

holds firmly to the principle of sovereignty and territorial integrity of states (it did not recognise the secession of Kosovo), it would view critically Belarus' recognition of Abkhazia and Southern Ossetia, and regard it as a significant obstacle to regional cooperation within the framework of the EaP. In spite of its very good relations with Russia, Slovakia criticised the proclamation of independence of the two Georgian provinces. It is, however, particularly interested that the EaP does not become a plane for EU-Russian disputes. Slovakia did not oppose Russian participation in the realisation of individual EaP projects and calls for talks with Russia on the subject of the EaP, such as in a "V4+" format (such consultations took place for the first time in January 2009 on Poland's initiative).

Slovakia supported Poland in its efforts to increase funds for the EaP and it also supported the Polish position in the matter of the EaP complementariness with other regional initiatives and the concept of creating an EU office for EaP coordination.¹³⁸ According to Slovakia, the Black Sea Synergy should concentrate on problems strictly related to the Black Sea basin. Support for the Eastern Partnership is also treated by Slovakia as a manifestation of a regional "solidarity" reinforcing Slovak-Polish ties, contributing to the deepening of regional cooperation within the EU framework and indirectly strengthening Slovakia's position within the EU.¹³⁹ The EaP also belongs to the sphere of "common interests" Slovakia shares with Hungary. The two countries present a "proximate stance" in EaP matters, despite problems in their bilateral relations.¹⁴⁰ (MG)

Slovenia

Of all areas beyond the EU, the most important for Slovenia are the Western Balkans. Relations with countries of Eastern Europe and the South Caucasus do not play a significant role in Slovenia's foreign policy and the Eastern dimension of the ENP was never the subject of any large scale debate in this country, the more so as the Slovenians support the strengthening of the ENP as a whole. They hold the opinion that multilateral cooperation with the EU's Southern neighbours is more extensive, and that it is, therefore, necessary to develop regional cooperation with its Eastern neighbourhood. They also see the fundamental difference between the countries of the Southern and Eastern neighbourhood to which the ENP is directed. The Slovenian government calls for the recognition of the "European prospects" of at least certain EU Eastern neighbours.

Slovenia was initially sceptical of the Eastern Partnership. In truth, the Slovenian government gave it its formal support, but this was accompanied with more or less openly expressed doubts concerning the potential influence of the EaP on the functioning of other EU initiatives. The Slovenians undoubtedly had primarily the Black Sea Synergy in mind, with which they placed great hopes, above all in connection with

¹³⁸ See, for example, *Joint Statement of the Foreign Ministers of the Visegrad Group Countries and of Bulgaria, Estonia, Lithuania, Latvia, Romania and Sweden*, Warsaw, 24 November 2008, www.visegradgroup.eu

¹³⁹ *Správa o plnení úloh zahraničnej politiky Slovenskej republiky v roku 2008*, www.rokovania.sk.

¹⁴⁰ O. Algayerová *prijala štátneho tajomníka MZV Maďarskej republiky G. Szentiványiho*, 19.12.2008, www.mzv.sk.

its interregional character.¹⁴¹ To a lesser degree these doubts concerned the potential influence of the EaP on the financing of cooperation within the framework of the Union for the Mediterranean. The factor that caused Slovenia's caution in its approach to the EaP was also the fear of Russia's possible reaction. Slovenia feared that the Russians could see in it an attempt to isolate them in an area that they consider their privileged sphere of interests.

Ultimately, Slovenia joined the group of EU member countries supporting the EaP, although the Slovenian minister of foreign affairs, Dimitrij Rupel, reiterated in mid-2008 that the project could not be realised at the cost of cooperation with the Southern neighbourhood of the EU, and even less at the expense of the EU's involvement on behalf of the membership prospects of the Western Balkans.¹⁴² The Slovenians also drew attention to the fact that prior to the implementation of this initiative, it will be necessary to resolve such issues as the participation of third countries, complementarity with other regional undertakings, financing, and the participation of Belarus.¹⁴³ (RM)

Spain

The main sphere of interest of Spanish foreign policy is the Mediterranean region, which is the origin of the most important challenges and threats to Spain's security, challenges connected with migrations, energy security and terrorism. Spain's actions within the framework of the ENP are concentrated on the development of the Southern dimension of this policy. Spanish interest in the EaP is slight. Eastern Europe and the South Caucasus do not occupy a significant place in the policies of this country, although during the last few years the perception of the EU's Eastern neighbourhood has been changing slowly. Besides Russia, which is viewed as the most important political and economic partner to the East of the EU, the Spaniards are beginning to notice other countries in the region. This is especially the case for Ukraine and Moldova, from which many immigrants to Spain come. Spanish investors also take note of Ukraine's economic potential.

In Spain there has practically been no debate on the Partnership. The declaration of the Polish minister of foreign affairs about the intention to prepare an initiative for the Eastern neighbours modelled on the Union for the Mediterranean, made during the European Council meeting on 14 March 2008, gave rise to rather indifferent comments. Prime Minister José Luis Zapatero only noted that in the EU there is a visible tendency to reinforce the Eastern dimension of the ENP but, at the same time, he stated that for Spain Mediterranean policy is the most important.¹⁴⁴ Reaction to the proposal of EaP was

¹⁴¹ The Black Sea Synergy includes both countries of the EU Eastern dimension and countries located in the Balkans and on the Mediterranean.

¹⁴² Rupel pozdravil poljsko pobudo o vzhodnem partnerstvu, 26.05.2008. www.mzz.gov.si

¹⁴³ Februarski GAERC predvsem o Zahodnem Balkanu in Vzhodnem Partnerstvu, 23.02.2009. evropa.gov.si

¹⁴⁴ Conferencia de prensa del Presidente del Gobierno después de la reunión del Consejo Europeo, 14.03.2008, www.la-moncloa.es.

considerably more positive, although it was limited in principle to the statement that the initiative “has the full support” of Spain.¹⁴⁵

According to the Spaniards, the aim of the EaP is to achieve the political and economic stabilisation in six countries of the Eastern neighbourhood by the establishment of close political and trade relations with them. This initiative is thus part of the general ENP framework and under no account can it be seen as a preparatory stage for membership.¹⁴⁶ The Spaniards recognise, in truth, that “Ukraine is a special case given its characteristics,” but are rather unfavourably inclined to the idea of its membership. They argue that given Ukraine’s internal situation it is not a country that can presently be offered the prospect of membership.¹⁴⁷

Spain supports the participation of Belarus in the EaP. During the meeting of ministers of foreign affairs on 16 March 2009, it supported the prolongation of the suspension of diplomatic sanctions against that country. Foreign Minister Moratinos also announced that Spain, as the country chairing the Council of Europe, would take steps aimed at a *rapprochement* between Belarus and this institution. In connection with this, on 30 March, the Spanish foreign minister visited Minsk.¹⁴⁸

Although Spain declared its support for the EaP, it greeted the allocation of additional funds for this initiative with reserve. The Spaniards consider that it is necessary to safeguard a financial balance between the Southern and Eastern dimensions of the ENP, which they understand as “two thirds of the funds allocated to cooperation with Southern neighbours, and one third for cooperation with the former Soviet republics.”¹⁴⁹ Spain presumably fears that the additional funds for the EaP would disturb this balance, and would perhaps even create a dangerous precedent in the context of the approaching review of the budget in 2010 and the negotiations on the future financial perspective.

The proposition to liberalise the visa regime also gives rise to critical opinions.¹⁵⁰ According to the representatives of the Spanish ministry of foreign affairs, rapid changes in this area should be ruled out, as they could have unfavourable consequences for the internal security of EU members. Spain’s position in this respect is influenced by the growing number of illegal immigrants from countries of Eastern

¹⁴⁵ *Discurso del Presidente del Gobierno en el Pleno del Congreso de los Diputados para informar de los resultados del Consejo Europeo de Bruselas, Madrid, DS. Congreso de los Diputados, Pleno y Dip. Perm., núm. 19, 25.06.2008, p. 8, www.congreso.es.*

¹⁴⁶ Press conference of Diego López Garrido, Secretary of State for EU Affairs, 23.02.2009, www.es-ue.org.

¹⁴⁷ See the pronouncement of Minister of Foreign Affairs, M.A. Moratinos Cuyaubé in *DS. Cortes Generales, Comisiones Mixtas*, no. 7, 10.06.2008, s. 7, www.congreso.es.

¹⁴⁸ *The Minister of Foreign Affairs and Cooperation Visits Belarus*, 30.03.2009, www.coe.int.

¹⁴⁹ Spain favoured this principle during the working out of the European Neighbourhood and Partnership Instrument. Spain worked closely with France in this respect. *18th Franco-Spanish Summit Statements Made by M. Jacques Chirac, President of the Republic, During His Joint Press Conference with Mr Jose Luis Rodriguez Zapatero, President of the Government of Spain (excerpts),* Paris, 10 November 2005, www.diplomatie.gouv.fr.

¹⁵⁰ *Los titulares de Exteriores analizan hoy la situación en Oriente Próximo, Afganistán y los Balcanes*, 23.02.2009, www.europapress.es.

Europe, particularly Ukraine.¹⁵¹ It would seem that Spain also fears the creation of precedents that could be used by countries of the Southern neighbourhood, where the greatest number of immigrants to Spain come from.

The Spanish do not voice reservations about the EaP's proposed flagship initiatives. As a country grappling with the problem of illegal migration, Spain can, in the future, become interested in an integrated external boundary management programme. The project of promoting a regional energy market could also prove attractive to Spain, the more so as Unión Fenosa, the Spanish company producing and distributing electrical energy, possesses over 90% of shares in three of five Moldovan distributors of electrical energy and is responsible for providing electrical power to 70% of that country's inhabitants.¹⁵²

Spain excludes the possibility of including Russia and Turkey in the initiative on the basis of full-fledged participants, as the EU's policy with regard to both countries rests on other bases than the ENP. Spain allows for their participation in Partnership projects on a case-by-case basis.¹⁵³

Spain will hold the EU presidency in the first half of 2010. One should rather not expect any significant Spanish involvement in the development of the EaP during that time. As the Spanish secretary of state for European affairs stated, "2009, which is a year of Czech and Swedish presidency, is the period of the EaP. During the Spanish presidency, which will succeed them, special attention will be paid to Mediterranean affairs and the Union for the Mediterranean."¹⁵⁴ (BW)

Sweden

In the Swedish foreign policy there is an appreciation of the EU's "soft power" influence in the world. Sweden stresses the attraction power of the EU integration model and the EU's possibilities in stimulating democratic and economic change in neighbouring areas.¹⁵⁵ The principal motivation behind Sweden's involvement in the neighbourhood policy with regard to the Eastern neighbours is support for bringing those countries closer to the EU. The countries of the Eastern neighbourhood are seen as potential member states. The ENP is treated not as an alternative to enlargement, but as a stage preparing neighbouring countries for possible future accession to the EU.

Before the Polish-Swedish Eastern Partnership proposal was announced in May 2008, Sweden noticed shortcomings in the ENP and stressed the need to work out

¹⁵¹ In January 2007, Spain and Ukraine began to work together on migration and control of the movement of people. See the information of the MFA of Spain about Ukraine, *Ucrania*, MAEC, April 2008, p. 42, www.maec.es.

¹⁵² For more on the investments of Unión Fenosa in Moldova, see www.unionfenosa.es.

¹⁵³ Press conference of Diego López Garrido, Secretary of State for EU Affairs, 23.02.2009, www.es-ue.org.

¹⁵⁴ Press conference of Diego López Garrido, Secretary of State for EU Affairs, 4.03.2009, www.es-ue.org.

¹⁵⁵ See *The Address of the Swedish Minister for EU Affairs, Cecilia Malmström, Sweden in the new Europe, The Swedish Network for European Political Science, Södertörn, 15 March 2007*, www.sweden.gov.se; *Statement of Government Policy in the Parliamentary Debate on Foreign Affairs, 13 February 2008*, www.sweden.gov.se.

a more attractive offer for the Eastern partners. Providing an additional incentive for cooperation with the EU was considered crucial in a situation where the EU could not offer them membership. The concept of the new cooperation framework for Eastern neighbours was born in Poland,¹⁵⁶ whereas Sweden decided to join this initiative given its shared vision of relations with the Eastern neighbours, as well as the fact that a common presentation of the proposal made for a better chance of promoting the project within the EU.

The increase of the attractiveness of the EU offer for its Eastern neighbours and, by the same token, the strengthening of stimuli for the continuation of democratic and market reforms, are recognised as the main added value of the EaP. For Sweden, especially important areas of cooperation include gradual integration with the EU internal market, a regulatory and legal approximation with the EU and facilitations in people mobility.¹⁵⁷ The EaP is not a subject of lively debate in Sweden and meets with lesser interest than in Poland.

During the presidency of Sweden in the second half of 2009, its most important priority in terms of regional cooperation will be the Baltic Sea Strategy.¹⁵⁸ On the subject of the EaP, Sweden is concentrating on its implementation and does not plan any new initiatives or meetings on a high political level. This does not mean, however, that the EaP is losing in significance in Swedish policy. Limiting the “high profile” of the Partnership during its presidency of the EU, Sweden wishes to stress that this is a common EU initiative, and not the sole domain of Poland and Sweden.

During the discussion about the EaP in February and March 2009, Sweden, as a net contributor to the EU budget, did not fully support the Partnership financing proposal presented by the Commission. In addition, it adopted an open stance in the question of the participation of other countries in individual EaP projects, showing in this way that the Partnership is not a project directed against Russia. The EU’s openness to dialogue with Belarus and that country’s participation in the EaP is the subject of a dispute in the governing coalition. (AK)

United Kingdom

United Kingdom was one of the initiators of EU’s policy toward its Eastern neighbours when it and Denmark proposed, in 2002, the “New Neighbours” initiative, which was to be directed at such countries as Moldova, Ukraine or Belarus. The European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP) presently constitutes the fundamental framework for the realisation of British interests in Eastern Europe and the Southern Caucasus. Countries subject to the Eastern Partnership (EaP) are not, in truth, significant economic or political partners of the UK, but its interest in this region is considerable.

¹⁵⁶ See for example, M. Menkiszak, *Enhanced European Neighbourhood Policy towards Eastern European Partners: A Role for the Visegrád Countries?*, *The Foreign Policies of the Visegrad Countries towards the Eastern Neighbourhood—Areas and Options of Cooperation*, Budapest, 6th–9th December 2007, www.hiia.hu.

¹⁵⁷ *Statement of Government Policy in the Parliamentary Debate on Foreign Affairs*, *op.cit.*

¹⁵⁸ F. Langdal, G. von Sydow, “The Swedish 2009 Presidency—Possible Policy Priorities,” *European Policy Analysis*, no. 14, October 2008, Swedish Institute for European Policy Studies, www.sieps.se; *Address of the Swedish Minister for EU Affairs, Cecilia Malmström, A Swedish Vision for Europe*, College of Europe, Brugge, 4 February 2009, www.sweden.gov.se.

This is the result of UK's general support for steps aimed at extending the area of stability, security and free market through further EU enlargement. The British government points out that the ENP cannot be an alternative to or a waiting room to EU membership. It openly favours admitting Ukraine to the EU.

The British decidedly supported the Eastern Partnership project.¹⁵⁹ They indicated that it is a complement to the ENP and serves to support reforms and to strengthen security in the region, especially in the context of the Russian-Georgian war of August 2008. They also stated that the EaP will contribute to building closer relations with Ukraine, which is the most important EaP partner for the UK.

The UK supports association agreements (AAs), which provide for the introduction of free trade areas and the gradual tightening of cooperation, making it easier for partners to adopt EU norms and standards in such areas as, for example, agricultural and manufacturing exports. With that, the British government also insists that the adoption of EU regulations takes place at the level of multilateral cooperation. It also holds a positive view of the introduction of a system of milestones and benchmarks for documents that will replace present ENP action plans, as they will make the carrying out and evaluation of reforms easier. The British authorities see the Comprehensive Institution Building Programme as an important tool for the strengthening of administrative and support capabilities in the implementation of obligations arising from the AAs. In addition, the British authorities point to the necessity of increasing the importance of long-term projects for building civil society and for mobility and reform programs in the sectors of education and research.

The UK is positive about introducing bilateral mechanisms to reinforce energy security. Among other things, they point to the necessity: of adopting EU regulations by the addressees of the EaP in the sphere of energy; of adding decisions about energy interdependence to the association agreements; of Moldova's and Ukraine's rapid joining of the Energy Community Treaty; of signing memoranda on energy matters with Moldova, Georgia and Armenia; and also of increasing support for Ukraine's full integration with the EU energy market.

The UK government also supported the idea of closely tying the question of the movement of people with guarantees of a secure environment, where combating illegal immigration, corruption and organised crime as well as border management are carried out according to EU standards of effectiveness. The UK announced that it will be engaged in strengthening of borders, while fully supporting initiatives directed at combating illegal migration, including the so-called Mobility Partnership. Its approach to the questions of visa regulations and the movement of people is cautious. It is not inclined to conclude understandings about opening the EU labour market for EaP partners. Moreover, it is against their inclusion in the Cohesion Policy, which, according to the UK, should apply only to EU member states.

With regard to the initiative financing, the British government pointed out that considerable additional funds within the framework of present and future financial perspectives are necessary in order to fully use the EaP potential. At the same time, the British government drew attention to the already excessive pressure being put on the

¹⁵⁹ See D. Miliband, *Ukraine, Russia and European Security*, Kiev, 27.08.2008, www.davidmiliband.info; C. Flint, *Written Ministerial Statements, FCO, Prospects for the European Union in 2009*, 27.02.2009, Column 14WS, www.parliament.the-stationery-office.com.

European Neighbourhood and Partnership Instrument, given the shifting of funds that took place in connection with the August 2008 war in Georgia and support of the Palestinian Autonomy. It also indicated that an appropriate balancing of needs, expectations and present initiatives directed at the EU's Southern neighbours will be necessary.¹⁶⁰ The UK seems less inclined to treat the matter of ENP financing as a priority issue. It traditionally views any increase of EU budget expenditures, also for the neighbourhood policy, unfavourably.¹⁶¹ In the UK, opinions are being voiced that the EaP only has a chance of reaching its aims in the longer perspective, on the condition that both the EU and partner countries are adequately involved in it. Difficulties that are encountered in carrying out the Barcelona Process and which may also arise in the EU's relations with its Eastern neighbours are also being mentioned in this context.¹⁶² In light of this, cooperation within the framework of the EaP should be adapted to each individual partner and cannot be treated as a road to EU membership or as an "eternal waiting room" for EU admission.¹⁶³

The UK supports the EU's opening towards Belarus and calls for that country's participation in the EaP. The government expects that cooperation could mobilise the Belarusian authorities to introduce further reforms at home.¹⁶⁴ It also views positively the possibility of third countries' participation in EaP projects. In this context, the UK takes Russia's reaction under account and thinks that, on the one hand, the aims and the realisation of the Eastern Partnership should be openly communicated to it while,, on the other, Russia should be involved in projects that will allow for a more effective resolution of problems in the common neighbourhood—especially in the spheres of security and energy. (BZ)

¹⁶⁰ European Scrutiny Committee, *The EU Eastern Partnership*, Report 2, Document 7, House of Commons, 17.12.2008, www.parliament.the-stationery-office.com.

¹⁶¹ See A. Mayhew, "The British Position in the Negotiation of the Financial Network," *Working Paper FG 1*, SWP Berlin, 2005/07, July 2005, www.swp-berlin.org.

¹⁶² European Scrutiny Committee, *The EU...*, *op.cit.*

¹⁶³ See D. Miliband, *Developments in the European Union*, Minutes of Evidence, HC 79-i, 10.12.2008, answers to questions 44 and 45, www.publications.parliament.uk.

¹⁶⁴ See *Ibidem*, answers to questions 48 and 49.

CHAPTER II

ENP EASTERN DIMENSION COUNTRIES ON EASTERN PARTNERSHIP

Armenia

The authorities of Armenia consider the Western model of development to be the most appropriate, and integration with the EU is treated as a “strategic choice.” Even though they do not openly articulate the postulate of EU membership, such is the desire of a considerable segment of the political elite, of the absolute majority of citizens, and also of the strong Armenian diaspora in Western countries.¹⁶⁵ In practice, however, it is considered the only pro-Russian country of the South Caucasus, and not without reason. Armenia is tied to Russia by a political and military alliance, and its economy is controlled by Russian entities. Such a state of affairs results primarily from Armenia’s location, bordering on an ill-disposed Turkey and on Azerbaijan, with which it is in a state of war over Nagorno-Karabakh.

Armenia participates in the implementation of the European Neighbourhood Policy and has a positive view of the EaP.¹⁶⁶ The absence of a wider debate about the EU initiative is visible, however. In assessing the EaP and the ENP, the Armenian authorities consider that they create a greater chance for increasing their country’s integration with the EU, that it represents an opportunity to obtain additional funds for modernisation and gives hope that the EU will pay greater attention to the region of the Caucasus. In their relations with the EU, the Armenian authorities are interested in the liberalisation of the visa system and the establishment of a free trade area. They also praise the fact that the EaP can serve to develop regional cooperation. Armenia is counting on the EU’s support in its political and historical disputes with Turkey.¹⁶⁷

Armenia attaches great importance to the sphere of security, seeing the EaP as an instrument making it possible to stabilise the situation in the South Caucasus, particularly to reduce the danger of renewed fighting with Azerbaijan. President Serzh Sargsyan expressed the hope that the EU will make efforts to ensure that the premises of the program are respected by all countries participating in the initiative.¹⁶⁸ The deputy minister of foreign affairs, Arman Kirakosyan, stated that the EaP could contribute to reducing tensions and resolve conflicts in the region.¹⁶⁹ (LA, RS)

Azerbaijan

In 2004, President Ilham Aliyev stressed that Azerbaijan identifies entirely with European values and treats integration with the EU as a “strategic choice.”¹⁷⁰ In practice,

¹⁶⁵ *Armenia Says Not Aiming For NATO, EU Membership*, 16.06.2007, www.rferl.org.

¹⁶⁶ *Joint Statement by President of the European Commission, José Manuel Barroso, and President of the Republic of Armenia, Serzh Sargsyan, Yerevan, 7 November 2008*, www.delarm.ec.europa.eu; *Foreign Minister of Armenia Meets with the European Commissioner for External Relations and European Neighbourhood Policy*, 19.01.2009, www.armeniaforeignministry.com.

¹⁶⁷ See *Foreign Minister of Armenia Edward Nalbandian Starts Official Visit to Poland*, 17.02.2009, www.armeniaforeignministry.com; *ЕС привносит в регион не конкуренцию, а сотрудничество – замминистра иностранных дел Армении*, 23.01.2009, <http://hayinfo.ru>.

¹⁶⁸ *President Serzh Sargsyan Received the EU Special Representative for the South Caucasus, Peter Semneby*, 18.02.2009, www.president.am.

¹⁶⁹ *Interview with Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs of Armenia Arman Kirakosyan*, Mediamax Agency, 23.01.2008; www.armeniaforeignministry.com.

¹⁷⁰ *President Ilham Aliyev Spoke during the PACE Spring Session Meeting*, 29.04.2004, <http://president.az>.

however, this aim remains a declarative one. This is the result not only of geographical and cultural distance from Europe, but also of the authoritarianism that reigns in this country. In addition, Azerbaijan is not encouraged by the example of Turkey, a country that is close culturally and politically and whose efforts over many years to gain membership in the EU have thus far not produced the expected results.

Azerbaijan declares a favourable attitude towards the idea of the EaP.¹⁷¹ Summing up the year 2008, Azerbaijan's Ministry of Foreign Affairs described the EaP as an additional impulse to strengthen cooperation with the EU by way of new association agreements.¹⁷² The minister of foreign affairs, Elmar Mammadyarov, recognised three baskets as having priority for Azerbaijan within the framework of the EaP: security (the conflict over Nagorno-Karabakh, the struggle against terrorism), economic matters (transit, energy security, economic cooperation beyond the energy sector), people-to-people contacts (liberalisation of the visa system, student exchanges, scientific and legal cooperation).¹⁷³ In truth, Azerbaijan's lack of WTO membership makes it impossible to initiate negotiations about the free trade area with the EU, but the authorities have declared their interest in an association agreement with the EU, in cooperating in such areas as the fiscal and customs system and in the creation of convenient conditions for the development of business and fighting corruption.¹⁷⁴ They do not show, however, any interest in reforms leading to greater democratisation and the rule of law.

Most Azerbaijani experts hold a positive view of the EaP. They stress that this initiative will lead to the strengthening of economic and political ties with the EU, and the Azerbaijani elites will be under a greater influence of "European thinking."¹⁷⁵ Economic cooperation will make the Azerbaijani economy less dependent on the energy sector, more modern and competitive. It is thought that the EaP could become a platform for accelerated integration with the EU,¹⁷⁶ and also for the gradual integration with the Euro-Atlantic security area.¹⁷⁷

Certain experts also think that the project has an anti-Russian edge and that it is an attempt to punish Russia for the war in Georgia by wresting Belarus and Armenia away from it, that it constitutes a strategic counterweight for Russia's actions, and that it

¹⁷¹ *EU-Azerbaijan Cooperation Council Ninth Meeting, Brussels, 9 December 2008*, press release, 9.12.2008, www.consilium.europa.eu.

¹⁷² *МИД Азербайджана распространил отчет по итогам 2008 года*, 13.01.2009, www.newsazerbaijan.ru.

¹⁷³ *В рамках "Восточного партнерства" приоритетными для Азербайджана будут вопросы безопасности, экономического и гуманитарного сотрудничества – глава МИД Азербайджана*, 27.02.2009, <http://hayinfo.ru>.

¹⁷⁴ *Азербайджан вскоре выскажет свое мнение ЕС о включении в программу "Восточное партнерство" – замминистра*, 20.02.2009, www.newsazerbaijan.ru.

¹⁷⁵ *Геополитические потрясения могут оказать решающее влияние на ситуацию в Азербайджане—Расим Агаев*, 26.02.2009, www.newsazerbaijan.ru.

¹⁷⁶ *С. Рзаев, Н. Абасов, Восточное партнерство Европейского союза открывает новые возможности перед пятью бывшими республиками Советского Союза*, 27.06.2008, <http://azeri.ppd.spb.ru>; *"Восточное партнерство" дает широкие возможности для интеграции в ЕС, но сам процесс зависит от действий страны—политолог*, 4.12.2008, www.newsazerbaijan.ru.

¹⁷⁷ *Присоединение Баку к программе ЕС "Восточное партнерство" – шаг к системе европейской безопасности—политолог*, 4.12.2008, www.newsazerbaijan.ru.

is not as vitally important for Azerbaijan, which has no need for economic assistance, as do some of its other addressees.¹⁷⁸ (ŁA, RS)

Belarus

The relations between Belarus and the EU were already tense in the 1990s. This was directly attributable to President Alaksandr Lukashenka's building of an authoritarian regime that broke human rights and violated civic liberties. In truth, the EU signed a Partnership and Cooperation Agreement with Belarus in 1995, but suspended the ratification of this document after Lukashenka dissolved parliament, extended his term, and expanded presidential powers in 1996. In addition, Belarus was not included in the ENP. In 2004, following a falsified referendum annulling limitations on the number of presidential terms, the EU introduced visa sanctions for several representatives of the regime. These were extended in 2006 following the brutal repression of the opposition during the Belarusian presidential electoral campaign and immediately following it.

Possibilities to improve mutual relations emerged in 2008. Growing economic difficulties and fears of excessive economic and political dependence on Russia, especially following the Georgia-Russia war of August 2008, forced the regime to seek ways to attract Western investments. The EU, in turn, saw that the policy of isolating the Belarusian authorities did not produce the expected results, i.e. it did not lead the regime to liberalise.

During work on the EaP, which coincided with signs of liberalisation in Belarus, the EU conducted consultations with the authorities in Minsk. They were interested in the EU initiative from the beginning, although they tried not to let this show. Pronouncements from Belarusian diplomats and from Lukashenka himself seem to indicate that Minsk is counting on the EU's acceptance of the system of government in place in Belarus, on an end to the diplomatic isolation, on the intensification of economic cooperation, on assistance from the EU to improve economic and environmental standards, on aid of a technical and consulting character, and on the liberalisation of the visa regime.¹⁷⁹ Such an interpretation is suggested by, for example, the official commentary of the Belarusian Ministry of Foreign Affairs following the adoption of the Partnership by the European Council. It stated that given the very general shape of the initiative, it is difficult to comment on it, though Belarus is interested in expanding all forms of cooperation with the EU in all formats that presuppose the equal participation of the Belarusian state and its representatives without any preliminary conditions.¹⁸⁰

¹⁷⁸ Б. Сафаров, Н. Алиев, *Совет ЕС обсудил программу Восточное партнерство*, 23.02.2009, www.azeri.ru; С. Рзаев, *Катализатор для Восточного партнерства*, 29.08.2008, <http://azeri.ppd.spb.ru>; Ф. Меджид, *Азербайджан ожидает конкретных предложений от инициативы "Восточного Партнерства" ЕС*, 1.12.2008, www.kavkaz-uzel.ru.

¹⁷⁹ *Интервью информационному агентству "Франс-Пресс" (AFP)*, 24.11.2008; www.president.gov.by; *Ответы пресс-секретаря МИД Андрея Попова на вопросы представителей средств массовой информации в ходе брифинга в МИД Беларуси 6 ноября 2008 года*, www.mfa.gov.by.

¹⁸⁰ See *Комментарий пресс-секретаря МИД Андрея Попова в связи с вопросом агентства "БелаПАН" о позиции белорусской стороны относительно польско-шведского предложения о формировании "Восточного партнерства"*, www.mfa.gov.by.

Following the EU summit in December 2008, the Belarusian authorities confirmed their readiness to collaborate with the EU within the framework of the EaP. They mentioned cooperation in spheres such as trade, energy, transport, fighting cross-border crime, the environment and agriculture, in which Belarus would be particularly interested. They also declared that many proposals of cooperation negotiated between the EU and Belarus within the framework of the EaP could also be realised in a multilateral format.¹⁸¹

From that time, Minister Martynau pronounced himself publicly about the EaP and he went into detail about his Ministry's position on many occasions. He generally assessed the project positively, appreciating that the EU had consulted it with Belarus, though he stated that his country's final position on the matter would depend on the final shape of the program.¹⁸² In an interview given to *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* he did not even rule out that in the longer term, Belarus could become a member of the EU and NATO, though he pointed out that there are no such plans in the foreseeable future.¹⁸³ He stressed firmly that for Belarus it is a matter of principle that the Partnership rest on a mechanism of equality for all of its participants,¹⁸⁴ and also gave assurances that Belarus does not lay claim to either economic assistance on a great scale or preferences and abatements. To the spheres of cooperation mentioned in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs communiqué in December, Martynau added customs cooperation, fighting illegal migration, and facilitations in the transport of merchandise.¹⁸⁵ He also strongly emphasised that for Belarus the improvement in the quality of production and the introduction of standards similar or identical to those in force in the EU is very important. He expressed the hope that Belarus will be able to take advantage of the finance and credit institutions that are presently inaccessible to it, such as the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development and the European Investment Bank.¹⁸⁶

Lukashenka himself made a pronouncement on the EaP. In an interview given to the Euronews station, he stated that Belarus welcomes this positive gesture of Europe towards its neighbours. This is a very pragmatic and reasonable step, which is topical from the point of view of the European Union. For this reason, we view positively the Eastern Partnership initiative.¹⁸⁷ He also added that the most important question is not who will represent Belarus at the May 2009 EU summit devoted to this initiative. In addition, Lukashenka personally spoke to the president of Ukraine, Victor Yushchenko, about the realisation of common undertakings within the framework of the EaP—mainly infrastructural projects, such as the express highway from Kaliningrad, Vilnius, Minsk

¹⁸¹ See Комментарий пресс-секретаря МИД Андрея Попова для представителей СМИ в связи с презентацией 3 декабря в Брюсселе политики "Восточного партнерства" ЕС, www.mfa.gov.by.

¹⁸² See Стенограмма подхода к прессе Министра иностранных дел Республики Беларусь Сергея Мартынова по итогам встречи с Министром иностранных дел Литовской Республики Вигаудасом Ушацкасом, состоявшейся 29 декабря 2008 года в МИД Беларуси, www.mfa.gov.by.

¹⁸³ See *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* of 14 February 2009. Lukashenka himself spoke similarly about the prospects for relations between Belarus and the EU and NATO, see Интервью информационному агентству "Франс-Пресс," *op.cit.*

¹⁸⁴ Bielta Agance press release, 17.03.2009.

¹⁸⁵ *Ibidem.*

¹⁸⁶ Интервью Министра иностранных дел Республики Беларусь Сергея Мартынова Первому национальному телеканалу (Минск, 5 февраля 2009 года), <http://mfa.gov.by>.

¹⁸⁷ Стенограмма интервью Президента Республики Беларусь А.Г. Лукашенко телеканалу "Евроньюс" (2 февраля 2009 года), www.president.gov.by.

and Kyiv to the ports of the Black Sea (such as Illichivsk or Mykolaiv) and cooperation in the sphere of energy.¹⁸⁸

Generally, one can say that Belarusian authorities support the Eastern Partnership, counting that thanks to it Belarus will reap tangible economic benefits and receive assistance in the modernisation of its infrastructure and technology. At the same time, Belarus demands to be treated as an “equal” partner, which is a demand for the *de facto* acceptance of the system of government present in the country and for the lifting of the diplomatic isolation.

Participation in the EaP will undoubtedly be perceived by the Belarus authorities as a form of legitimisation of their regime. This is also one of the principal reasons why the Belarusian opposition is divided about the EaP. A considerable portion of the opposition views it with reserve, while some of its activists criticise it openly.

The political council of the liberal United Civic Party—one of the major Belarusian opposition parties—adopted a resolution to the effect that Belarus should be included in the Partnership but only provided that the authorities meet all conditions that are essential for the country to be able to take part in in.¹⁸⁹ The context of this rather unclear statement suggests that it refers to the demands made of Belarus by the EU in the sphere of democratisation, and which were to be found in the European Commission work document from November 2006.¹⁹⁰ As party leader Anatoly Lebedko later explained: “Peaceful demonstrations are being dispersed, new political prisoners have appeared. I think that in this situation, including our country in this program will lead to massive disappointment precisely among the pro-European Belarusians. One cannot say, on the one hand, that yesterday Belarus was the ‘last dictatorship in Europe’ and, on the other, include it today in European programs without a qualitative improvement of the situation in Belarus.”¹⁹¹ Lebedko is also firmly against the visit of European politicians to Minsk and the invitation of Lukashenka to the EU summit.¹⁹²

The BNF Party (the old Belarusian People’s Front and one of the strongest opposition groups), which clearly supports its country’s membership in the EU and in NATO, uses a similar argumentation. In a special resolution, the party declared its support for Belarus’ participation in the Eastern Partnership, but only on the condition of the prior democratisation of the country. In practice, this proposal entails that Belarus be included in the EaP, but that its participation in specific projects be suspended immediately afterwards. “Presently, when the authorities are interested in European assistance, one cannot open the door to them without insisting on the liberation of all political prisoners, on respect for freedom of speech and assembly, on changes to the electoral law and, lastly, on free elections. Cooperation with Belarus within the framework of the program has to proceed step by step and be made conditional on the

¹⁸⁸ See Communiqué of the press service of the President of Ukraine of 20 January 2009: *Найближчим часом Україна планує відновити поставки електроенергії до Білорусі and also Інтерв'ю Міністра іноземних дел Республіки Беларусь...*, *op.cit.*

¹⁸⁹ Declaration of the Political Council of the United Civic Party of 26 February 2009: “Восточное партнерство” – пока не для Беларуси, www.ucpb.org.

¹⁹⁰ See the document of the European Commission from November 2006: *What the European Union Could Bring to Belarus*, <http://ec.europa.eu>.

¹⁹¹ С. Пульша, “Восточное партнерство”: Беларусь включают, оппозицию исключат?, 24.02.2009, <http://naviny.by>.

¹⁹² See the PAP press release of 10 March 2009.

performance by its leaders of specific steps in the direction of democratisation.”¹⁹³ Understandably, the party is firmly opposed to the invitation of Lukashenka to the EU summit.

Both parties, especially the BNF, criticised the EU’s annulment of its sanctions against officials of the regime as early as October 2008. The Social-Democrat Stanislau Shushkevitch, a former speaker of the Supreme Council and head of state in the years 1991–1994, even suggested that the EU’s policy is amoral.”¹⁹⁴ In turn, Alaksandr Kazulin, Lukashenka’s opponent in the 2006 presidential elections, following which he was imprisoned for two and a half years, said that “accepting Lukashenka into the program will unquestionably signify the confirmation of the European program of support for the Lukashenka regime.”¹⁹⁵ He also criticised the Partnership if it were to be directed against Russia,¹⁹⁶ although he admitted that the program itself is beneficial for his country.¹⁹⁷ At the same time, he also accused Poland of making immoral deals with Lukashenka and disregarding European values in exchange for improved conditions for the Polish minority in Belarus.¹⁹⁸

Many known political analysts, most of whom support the opposition, are proponents of Belarus’ participation in the EaP, even without a significant “thaw.”¹⁹⁹ This is also the position of Alaksandr Milinkevitch, a former opposition presidential candidate in 2006 and presently one of the most visible anti-Lukashenka figures in Belarus. The leader of the moment “For Liberty” has for a long time also called for the annulment of trade sanctions and for dialogue with the authorities for the purpose of liberalising the regime and modernising the economy and in order to prevent Belarus’ loss of its sovereignty. Milinkevitch claims that the inclusion of Belarus into the EaP would not be an inclusion of the authorities but an inclusion of the Belarusian people and would constitute a “historical decision” that would “confirm Belarus’ choice to be in Europe.” He also claims that including Belarus in this initiative would push the authorities toward democratisation, favour the modernisation of the economy and help counterbalance Russia’s influence in Belarus.²⁰⁰ (ŁA)

¹⁹³ Declaration of the BNF party of 14 March 2009: *Заява Сойму Партыі БНФ ВА "Ўсходнім партнэрстве" павінна быць дэмакратычная беларусь*, <http://pbnf.org>.

¹⁹⁴ С. Пульша, *Ни одно из 12 условий Евросоюза не выполнено, считает Станислав Шушкевич*, 24.02.2009, <http://belapan.com>.

¹⁹⁵ Interview of A. Kazulin and A. Labedka for the portal *Delfi* on 14 March 2009: *Белорусская оппозиция: Европа забывает о демократических ценностях*, <http://ru.delfi.lt>.

¹⁹⁶ *Ibidem*.

¹⁹⁷ *15 лет диктатуры никуда не ушли*, 20.03.2009, www.charter97.org.

¹⁹⁸ PAP press release of 10 March 2009.

¹⁹⁹ See *Эксперты: Дыялог трэба працягваць*, 19.03.2009, <http://by.milinkevich.org>. Belarus’ participation in the Eastern Partnership is supported by Valery Karbalevich, Vitali Silitski, Andrey Liakhovich, Dzianis Meliantsov. It is also favoured by Uladzimir Ulakhovich (in a conversation with the author).

²⁰⁰ *Мілінкевіч: Далучэнне да праграмы "Усходняе партнёрства" паспрыяе дэмакратызацыі*, 24.02.2009, <http://by.milinkevich.org>.

Georgia

Of the countries of the South Caucasus, Georgia is not only located closest to Europe in geographical terms, but is also a country that has for many years been firmly calling for integration with Western structures—NATO and the EU. Such integration is favoured by Georgia's sense of cultural and religious affinity with Europe as well as the state of Russian-Georgian relations. Since Micheil Saakashvili became president in 2003, Georgia's foreign policy took on a clearly pro-Western orientation. Since Russia's invasion of Georgia in August 2008, the two countries have severed diplomatic ties.

Georgia—similarly to Armenia and Azerbaijan—was included in the European Neighbourhood Policy in 2004. The initial version of the EU assistance program did not provide for the participation of South Caucasian countries. Many EU members considered that countries of this region were too remote from the EU, too unstable, or too closely tied with Russia for them to be included in the policy addressed to the EU's neighbours. The EU changed its mind only after the democratic “Revolution of the Roses” in Georgia in 2003. Geostrategic considerations also played an important role. Through the Black Sea, Georgia neighbours on Bulgaria and Romania, which became EU members in 2007. Georgia is also an important transit country—for example, the exploitation of the Baku-Tbilisi-Erzurum pipeline began in 2006.

Georgia sees the ENP as an appropriate step toward EU integration. It expects primarily the liberalisation of the visa system, the removal of trade barriers and the establishment of a free trade area, and increased EU involvement in conflict resolution in the Caucasus. Such are also its basic expectations from the Eastern Partnership. Georgia took a positive view of this initiative,²⁰¹ although very little is being said about it. For the authorities, the priority areas in the EaP are security issues, including energy security, and transit (new transit routes) and transport (new rail lines) of resources. Georgia is also planning to present common initiatives with Azerbaijan and Ukraine—its GUAM allies. Of course, the reconstruction of the country following the destruction during the war and greater EU involvement in the area, including support of Georgia's efforts to restore the territorial integrity of the country, are also unusually important. Lastly, Georgia is hoping for financial assistance, including funds for fighting the effects of the world economic crisis and the improvement of conditions for the functioning of Georgian companies. The latter demand is related to the already-mentioned Georgian “traditional” demands from the EU, the creation of a free trade area and the liberalisation of the visa regime. Responding to the decision of the Council of Europe of 19–20 March 2009, Saakashvili talked of the need to build the Nabucco pipeline, something that would considerably increase Georgia's strategic significance, and expressed the hope for an influx of foreign investments.²⁰² (ŁA, RŚ)

²⁰¹ See Михаил Саакашвили: “Скоро Грузия вместе с еще пятью государствами сможет создать новое восточное партнерство с Европой,” 21.01.2009, <http://day.az>; A weekly briefing at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Georgia, 2.03.2009, www.mfa.gov.ge; Приоритеты в рамках “Восточного партнерства” для Грузии – вопросы безопасности, 27.02.2009, www.panarmenian.net; The Report of Open Society Georgia and an NGO Group, For Transparency of Public Finances: Georgia and the European Neighbourhood Policy. Perspectives and Challenges, www.osgf.ge.

²⁰² Саакашвили доволен подключением Грузии к программе ЕС “Восточное партнерство,” 21.03.2009, www.interfax.ru.

Moldova

Culturally and historically tied to Romania, Moldova expressed its aspirations for EU membership as early as 1996. Following initial hesitations, this position was maintained by the governments of the communist party which gained power in 2001. The communists, with President Vladimir Voronin at the fore, treat relations with the EU in a very instrumental fashion—as an opportunity gain access to EU funds and to assistance in the reunification of the country, whose eastern portion, Transnistria, is ruled by Moscow-backed separatists.

Moldova has been participating in the implementation of the ENP since its very beginnings and its participation in the EaP seemed a matter of course. For this reason, the little enthusiasm shown by the Moldovan authorities for this project may have come as some surprise to the EU. In July 2008, Andrei Stratan, Moldovan minister of foreign affairs, while thanking Poland for its support for Moldova's integration efforts, including *explicite*—for the EaP project, nevertheless pointed out that his country needed clear European prospects.²⁰³ Moldovan Prime Minister Zinaida Greceani, during a meeting with Polish Prime Minister Donald Tusk, assessed the EaP positively and assured Tusk that Moldova will gladly participate in it.²⁰⁴ In September of the same year, president Voronin said that, of all EaP aspects, Moldova is mostly interested in the building of a deeper free trade area with the EU, the mobility of labour and the “roadmap” on liberalising the visa regime.²⁰⁵ In January 2009 in turn, he gave assurances that “Moldova's European choice is irreversible.”²⁰⁶ At the same time, the Moldovan authorities neither commented on the work of the EaP in any way, nor did they put forward any proposals of their own.

Voronin's negative pronouncement about the EaP in February 2009 caused a stir. The president stated that “it reminded him of CIS-2,” only a “controlled one,” and one that forms a “ring around Russia.” He criticised the financial assistance provided by the program, calling it “candy given out on such occasions.” He expressed dissatisfaction that Moldova was placed in the same basket as Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia,²⁰⁷ countries far less advanced in European integration than Moldova, in his opinion.

It is difficult not to view this sharp pronouncement in the context of Moldovan-Russian relations. Russia treats the EaP in geopolitical terms, as an instrument by which the EU expands its “sphere of influence,” something that the Russian foreign minister, Sergei Lavrov, expressed publicly on 21 March 2009. As it happened, Voronin's critique was spoken a few days following the Russian politician's visit to Kishinev, and three weeks before Moldovan president's meeting in Moscow on 18 March 2009 with Russian President Dmitri Medvedev and the leader of the

²⁰³ See *Meeting of Andrei Stratan and Radoslaw Sikorski*, 11.07.2008, www.mfa.gov.md.

²⁰⁴ *Moldovan Premier Meets Polish Foreign Minister*, 11.07.2008, www.gov.md.

²⁰⁵ *Președintele Republicii Moldova, Vladimir Voronin, a prezidat Ședința Comisiei Naționale pentru Integrare Europeană*, 26 Septembrie 2008, www.presedinte.md.

²⁰⁶ *Alocuțiunea Domnului Vladimir Voronin, Președintele Republicii Moldova, în cadrul recepției oferite Corpului diplomatic și participanților la Reuniunea SEECF*, 29 Ianuarie 2009, www.prezident.md.

²⁰⁷ See the PAP press release of 27 February 2009.

Transnistrian separatists, Igor Smirnov. This was a sign of Moscow's efforts to resolve the Transnistrian conflict as quickly as possible in keeping with its strategic interests.²⁰⁸

Despite this criticism, one can expect that Moldova will join the EU initiative. Given the public's pro-European views, a decision not to participate in the program would be very badly received by the people. In addition, it would deprive Moldova of an opportunity to obtain EU funds and assistance in the promotion of Moldovan exports on EU markets (wines). It would also considerably worsen relations with the EU and make the country unilaterally dependent on Russia, something that is not in the interest of the Moldovan authorities. (ŁA)

Ukraine

Ukraine is the largest of the countries to which the Eastern Partnership is addressed. Of all the inhabitants of the six countries included in this initiative, three out of five are Ukrainians and Ukraine produces 58% of the region's total GDP. Ukrainian authorities wish for their country to become an EU member and expect the EU to provide wide-scale assistance in its integration process and to recognise its "European Perspective."

After the announcement of the European Neighbourhood Policy in 2004, Ukraine viewed this initiative with coolness and distrust. Although it did not refuse to participate in it, Ukraine claimed that the ENP does not appreciate Ukraine's European identity or its ambitions to join the EU and treats it on the same basis as countries of North Africa, which are remote from the EU on account of culture and whose geographical situation rules out EU membership. The Eastern Partnership was greeted positively in Ukraine in large measure precisely because it singles out the "European neighbours of the EU"—six post-Soviet countries located in a politically defined Europe, of which some openly express a desire to join the EU—from other participants in the ENP—Europe's neighbours. The program also gives hope for a real acceleration of Ukraine's integration with the EU and for its reaching of EU standards.

The same day that the EaP was presented for the first time during the meeting of EU foreign ministers, the Ukrainian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, in an official commentary, greeted this initiative with satisfaction, but stated that the proposed program is indicative of the need for the EU to work out an effective Eastern dimension providing for clear EU membership prospects to its "European neighbours."²⁰⁹ A month later, after the EaP had been approved by the European Council, the Ukrainian Ministry of Foreign Affairs pointed out that the practical realisation of the EaP should reflect the specificity of each partner country and take into account the state of its democracy, its economy, and the declared ultimate aim of relations with the EU. At the same time, it was hoped that the aim of the program would not be to preclude in an elegant manner Ukraine's prospects of EU membership.²¹⁰

²⁰⁸ See *Kommiersant* of 19 March 2009.

²⁰⁹ Коментар Прес-служби МЗС України щодо розробки східного виміру політики Європейського Союзу, 26.05.2008, www.mfa.gov.ua.

²¹⁰ Коментар Прес-служби МЗС України щодо результатів розгляду на засіданні Європейської Ради нової концепції відносин ЄС зі східними партнерами, 24.06.2008, www.mfa.gov.ua.

On 3 December 2008, when the European Commission announced its proposal about the EaP, the Ukrainian Ministry of Foreign Affairs noted with satisfaction that the “level of ambition of the framework of the Eastern Partnership for each partner country will depend on the efforts, aims and abilities of each of them.”²¹¹ At the same time, it also clearly declared that Ukraine will only cooperate in the EaP if the program does not constitute an alternative to future EU membership, but will bring [Ukraine] closer to that goal.”²¹² Generally speaking, Ukraine cannot get rid of a certain distrust with regard to this initiative out of fear that some Western European politicians see the EaP not as a stage on the way to EU membership but as a substitute for it.

Following the Ministry’s lead, commentaries on the EaP began to be voiced by politicians. Prime Minister Yulia Tymoshenko appraised the project positively.²¹³ She also stated that it creates an additional opportunity on the way to EU integration for Ukraine.²¹⁴ President Yushchenko, who has recently been continuously at odds with Prime Minister Tymoshenko, recognised the Polish-Swedish initiative as an “excellent” thing.²¹⁵ He noted with satisfaction that the EaP recognises the European identity of the EU’s Eastern neighbours. In doing so, he also voiced the hope that a free trade area would also be established and that the visa regime would be liberalised.²¹⁶

Borys Tarasyuk, a two-time minister of foreign affairs and presently the chairman of the Ukrainian Parliamentary Commission for European Affairs, also spoke positively of the EaP. According to him, it is one more instrument for the realisation of the Ukrainian strategy for European integration, although a greater scale in its realisation would be desirable. He announced that Ukraine was ready to collaborate within the framework “Euronest”—the parliamentary dimension of the Partnership.²¹⁷

The subject of the EaP was most often raised by Hryhoriy Nemyria, deputy prime minister responsible for European integration. His pronouncements indicate that Ukraine expects from the EU assistance programs for raising the effectiveness of the Ukrainian administration; support for regions, especially the ones that are distrustful of the idea of Ukrainian integration with the EU (the Crimea and the Donbas); support for Ukrainian agriculture; the expansion of cooperation in the sphere of security; guaranteeing the appropriate financing of aid programs; intensification of cooperation with the EU in the sphere of energy, including issues related to the transit of gas to the

²¹¹ Коментар МЗС України щодо Комунікації Європейської Комісії “Східне партнерство” від 3 грудня 2008 року, 4.12.2008, www.mfa.gov.ua.

²¹² *Ibidem*.

²¹³ See Глави урядів України та Польщі домовилися про пришвидшення реалізації двосторонньої Угоди щодо малого прикордонного руху, 14.07.2008, www.kmu.gov.ua.

²¹⁴ See UNIAN press release of 14 July 2008. Tymoshenko also has hope that the Eastern Partnership will favour the EU’s recognition of Ukraine’s EU membership prospects. See UNIAN press release of 21 November 2008.

²¹⁵ Заяви Президента України та Короля Швеції за підсумками зустрічі, 30.09.2008, www.president.gov.ua; Президент України та Король Швеції з дружинами відвідали Національний заповідник “Софія Київська,” 30.09.2008, www.president.gov.ua.

²¹⁶ See the Ukrainian version of the interview given by Viktor Yushchenko for the daily *Lietuvos žinios* on 9 December 2008; *Більше ніж стратегічний партнер*, www.president.gov.ua.

²¹⁷ See the Ukrinform press release of 25 February 2009; “Ініціатива ‘Східне партнерство’ – додана вартість, чи лише зміна декорацій?,” 27.02.2009, <http://comeuroint.rada.gov.ua>.

EU, nuclear energy and the modernisation of Ukraine's network of gas pipelines.²¹⁸ The Ukrainian authorities also expect technical assistance for the implementation of EU standards in agriculture and industry, investments in the development of transport and agricultural infrastructure and the strengthening of industrial cooperation.

Following the March summit of the European Council, Ukrainian diplomats noted with regret that the promise of annulling visas in the long term, which was to be found in the European Commission's proposal, had been replaced by its "liberalisation," while the entirety of the EaP was less ambitious on the whole.²¹⁹ The assistant chief of staff of Ukraine's president, Andriy Hancharyk, in presenting Yushchenko's position, assesses many elements of the EaP positively, including the announcement of the creation of a program for the increase of the quality of administration and border management or cooperation in the sphere of energy. He expressed dissatisfaction, however, that, instead of economic integration and political association that were proposed in the document of the Commission, the Council decided to "create conditions toward this end," and instead of annulling the visa system, it limited itself to announcing its liberalisation.²²⁰

The attitude of the opposition, represented mainly by Viktor Yanukovych's Party of Regions, toward the EaP is difficult to define, because this party did not comment on the initiative. In their political pronouncements, its politicians have for a long time given assurances that the party supports EU membership,²²¹ and that the European orientation of Ukraine's foreign policy remains unchanged and is irreversible.²²² At the same time, Yanukovych calls for the maintenance of close ties with Russia, and during the Russian-Georgian war his party took the Kremlin's side and called on the Ukrainian authorities to recognise Abkhazia and South Ossetia as soon as possible.²²³ This gives rise to doubts as to the sincerity of his party's declarations about European integration.

The most famous Ukrainian experts in European and foreign policy pronounced themselves on the EaP positively, if in a restrained manner at times. According to Oleksandr Sushko, director for scientific affairs of the Institute of Euro-Atlantic Cooperation, the EaP is an initiative deserving a positive appraisal because for the first time it singles out Eastern Europe and the South Caucasus from neighbouring countries which have no chance for integration with the EU, because it announces the signing of association agreements and the intention to annul visas in the long term. Among the EaP's drawbacks, Sushko mentions the fact that it has no institutional structure, in

²¹⁸ See Віце-прем'єр-міністр України Григорій Немиря: "Східне партнерство" сприятиме поглибленню співпраці між Україною та Європейським Союзом в енергетичній сфері, 16.01.2009, www.kmu.gov.ua; see UNIAN press release of 8 December 2008; Віце-прем'єр-міністр України Григорій Немиря: В умовах світової фінансової кризи поглиблення європейської інтеграції є одним з найважливіших засобів її подолання, 8.12.2008, www.kmu.gov.ua.

²¹⁹ Commentary by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Ukraine on the European Council Decision Concerning the Eastern Partnership, 19–20 March 2009, www.mfa.gov.ua.

²²⁰ Україна підтримує "Східне партнерство" як інструмент досягнення членства в ЄС—А. Гончарук, 24.03.2009, www.president.gov.ua.

²²¹ Виступлення Лідера Партії регіонів В.Ф. Януковича на XI съезде Партії регіонів, 19.04.2008, www.partyofregions.org.ua.

²²² Виступ Сергія Львовичкіна на XI засіданні Комітету з парламентського співробітництва між Україною та ЄС "Внутрішній політичний та економічний розвиток України та ЄС," 9.10.2008, www.partyofregions.org.ua.

²²³ See PAP press release of 26 August 2008.

contrast to the Union for the Mediterranean.²²⁴ Iryna Solonenko, director of the European Program at the International Renaissance Foundation, called for the EU to offer Eastern partner countries the same reform supporting instruments as are made available to EU membership candidates, without officially confirming their membership prospects. She noted, however, that this is not very likely.²²⁵ In turn Valeriy Chalyi, director of the International Program at the Razumkov Centre, said that the EaP initiative is “not bad,” but does not satisfy any of the parties. He stated, without giving any supporting arguments, that one of its aims is to “strengthen the position of Poland within the EU.”²²⁶ He also called for the wholesale annulment of visas for Ukrainians within the framework of the EaP.²²⁷ Finally, Vitaliy Martynyuk from the Ukrainian Centre for Independent Political Research indicated that the EaP creates new possibilities for strengthening cooperation with the EU, and Ukraine can reinforce its position as a regional leader. At the same time, he pointed to the EaP’s financing weakness and disproportions between funds allocated for the Mediterranean region and for the Eastern European and Caucasian one.²²⁸

The four above mentioned experts and other Ukrainian analysts took part in the formulation of a common proposal with regard to the EaP published in October 2008.²²⁹ It comes down to the demand that the EaP provide the same level of assistance the EU had provided to the countries of Central Europe prior to 2004, including the same level of financing and privileges, i.e. that it be a form of pre-accession aid without stating this openly. A considerable portion of the Ukrainian experts’ proposals (such as accession agreements, the free trade area and increased inter-personal contacts) were later to be found in the European Commission’s communiqué of December 2008. (ŁA)

²²⁴ See UNIAN press release of 28 November 2008.

²²⁵ “Східне партнерство” Євросоюзу: експерти мріють прирівняти Україну до країн-кандидатів, 28.10.2008, www.dw-world.de.

²²⁶ Пропозиція ЄС зі створення “Східного партнерства” не задовольнить ні Україну, ні ЄС, 2.07.2008, www.uceps.org.

²²⁷ Експерт радить ставити перед ЄС питання про скасування віз для українців, 27.01.2009, www.dwworld.de.

²²⁸ В. Мартинюк, Східне Партнерство: фінішна пряма до затвердження, 02.03.2009, www.ucipr.kiev.ua.

²²⁹ See Пропозиції українського громадянського суспільства (Громадської експертної ради при Українській частині Комітету з питань співробітництва між Україною та ЄС) до розробки проекту Східного партнерства ЄС, Україна, Київ, 24 жовтня 2008 року, www.europexxi.org.ua.

The launch of “Eastern Partnership” between the European Union and its Eastern neighbours in Prague, under the Czech presidency of the EU, is by no means a symbolic event. The fall of communism in Central Europe gave the world a new hope for peace, security and sovereign right of each country to choose its own path of development. Today the enlarged European Union, integrating nations from both sides of the former Iron Curtain, can give Eastern Europe the same hope.

Eastern Europe is suffering most painfully from the consequences of the economic crisis, and the region needs a consolidation of its ties with the EU. Hence the economic crisis must not be an excuse for inaction on the part of the EU; on the contrary, it makes it even more pressing for the EU to engage in Eastern Europe financially, offering significant aid for the economies in trouble, as well as politically, by showing solidarity with the Europeans living outside its exclusive club. EU assistance today will be much less costly than the consequences of the fall of even one of these countries, a fall that would hit Europe with tremendous force.

The people of Eastern Europe should be offered a prospect of inclusion in the broader European family, including the ability to travel and trade freely. The pursuit of Eastern Partnership would enable the European Union to demonstrate its strength and reliability, confirming to the world that economic upheavals will not prevent it from promoting its values and shaping the world in accordance therewith, at least in its immediate neighbourhood.

The future of Eastern Partnership will be conditional upon the commitment and political will not only of the countries to which the project is addressed, but also of the EU member states. Consequently, this report offers a comprehensive analysis of these countries' standpoints on Eastern Partnership. The conclusions and proposals concerning the implementation of the initiative included in the report encourage further thought on the activities that need to be undertaken by both EU members and EaP addressees in order to make the most of Eastern Partnership.

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