

Preface

Year 2015, six years after launching the EU's Eastern Partnership (EaP) policy in 2009, can be characterised as yet another crucial year in the implementation of that policy.

In May 2015, the Riga Eastern Partnership Summit—EaP Survival Summit, as it was also sometimes called—took place, which was to take stock of the EaP initiative in the context of tremendously changed post-2013 security political environment. Also, a broader European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP) review was launched in March 2015. As the High Representative of the European Union for the Foreign Affairs and Security Policy Federica Mogherini underlined while introducing the ENP review: *The EU has a vital interest in building strong partnerships with its neighbours. Recent developments in the region have increased the challenges we all face: from economic pressures to irregular migration and security threats. We need a strong policy to be able to tackle these issues. We also need to understand better the different aspirations, values and interests of our partners. This is what the review is about if we are to have a robust political relationship between our neighbours and us.*

Reaching these objectives is without any doubt a very difficult task. And there are many reasons to believe that the outcome of the review will be, to a large extent, influenced by the crisis in Ukraine and deteriorating situation in the South. Before 2013, the entire ENP policy was very much based on the philosophy of enlargement, which used the assumption of EU's irresistibility and attractiveness. Along with changed environment, the latter has been pushed back by the new concerns for security and stability in the neighbourhood. Based on those considerations, fundamental questions have been asked in the ENP review document about the further level and instruments of cooperation.

The main question deriving for the EaP within the context of ENP review is how to make the policy truly efficient in the context of increasing differentiation between the Eastern Partners. Here also the questions about keeping the balance between values and interests become relevant: how to avoid the lowering of the level of ambitions of the policy, how to live up to the principle of conditionality

(so called *more-for-more* principle) under the circumstances where the 28 Member States are unlikely to find compromise on the membership perspective and how, without giving up on EU interests, to develop meaningful relationships with those that do not want to have a closer integration with the EU. After all, EaP is first and foremost a framework for developing bilateral relations with six respective countries—Ukraine, Georgia, Moldova, Armenia, Azerbaijan and Belarus. And accordingly, the EU's EaP initiative should also be looked at rather as a tool, not as an ultimate goal. The main aim is the well-being, stability and democratisation of EaP countries and thereby making the neighbouring region more prosperous and stable.

There is a growing differentiation between EaP countries regarding their ambitions for their relations with the EU. There are the three countries that have stated their wish to become members of the EU and the other three, which for many reasons have chosen very different paths. The litmus test in the foreseeable future for those countries that have concluded the association agreements will be the actual and efficient implementation of those agreements, i.e. the actual achievements by the EaP countries themselves in reforming their societies and economies. Even though the main burden here lies with the partner countries themselves, this will also be the yardstick by which the EaP policy and EU's commitment will be measured.

Let us hope that the ENP review will provide us with some additional, more flexible tools that would help reach those aims. The ongoing review process and different discussion platforms tackling the challenges related to the reshaping of the policy are of utmost importance. The current publication, launched by Estonian scholars, which is a compilation of articles by well-known international authors who examine the political and legal perspectives of the EU EaP policy, is a valuable contribution to this end.

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