



Council of the
European Union

016300/EU XXVII. GP
Eingelangt am 20/03/20

Brussels, 19 March 2020
(OR. en)

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COVER NOTE

From: Secretary-General of the European Commission,
signed by Mr Jordi AYET PUIGARNAU, Director

date of receipt: 19 March 2020

To: Mr Jeppe TRANHOLM-MIKKELSEN, Secretary-General of the Council of
the European Union

No. Cion doc.: SWD(2020) 56 final

Subject: JOINT STAFF WORKING DOCUMENT Structured Consultation on the
future of the Eastern Partnership Accompanying the document JOINT
COMMUNICATION TO THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT, THE
EUROPEAN COUNCIL, THE COUNCIL, THE EUROPEAN AND SOCIAL
COMMITTEE AND THE COMMITTEE OF THE REGIONS Eastern
Partnership policy beyond 2020

Delegations will find attached document SWD(2020) 56 final.

Encl.: SWD(2020) 56 final



HIGH REPRESENTATIVE
OF THE UNION FOR
FOREIGN AFFAIRS AND
SECURITY POLICY

Brussels, 18.3.2020
SWD(2020) 56 final

JOINT STAFF WORKING DOCUMENT

Structured Consultation on the future of the Eastern Partnership

Accompanying the document

**JOINT COMMUNICATION TO THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT, THE
EUROPEAN COUNCIL, THE COUNCIL, THE EUROPEAN AND SOCIAL
COMMITTEE AND THE COMMITTEE OF THE REGIONS**

Eastern Partnership policy beyond 2020

{JOIN(2020) 7 final}

I. Introduction

This joint staff working document summarises the results of the structured consultation on the future of the Eastern Partnership. The consultation was launched by then-Commission President Juncker at the high-level event in the context of the 10th anniversary of the Eastern Partnership on 14 May 2019.

The European Council on 20 June 2019 endorsed the consultation:

‘On the occasion of the Eastern Partnership’s 10th anniversary, the European Council reaffirms the importance of this strategic partnership and invites the Commission and the High Representative to evaluate existing instruments and measures and, on the basis of appropriate consultations, to present by early 2020, with a view to the next Eastern Partnership Summit, a further set of long-term policy objectives.’

This document outlines the **methodology** of the structured consultation process (Section II) and its main **outcomes** (Section III).

Lastly, in Section IV the document summarises an updated assessment of progress on implementing the ‘**20 deliverables for 2020**’¹. The said document is included as an annex.

II. The consultation methodology

The consultation sought to answer five guiding questions:

1. How can we sustainably boost **economic and human capital development and prosperity**?
2. How can we further strengthen **good governance, the rule of law and the security dimension of the Eastern Partnership**?
3. How can we enhance **cooperation** between eastern partners, while ensuring **inclusiveness** and **differentiation** in their relations with the EU?
4. How can we do more to enhance **Eastern Partnership and EU visibility**?
5. **Are there any other proposals and reflections on the future of the Eastern Partnership?**

In response to the consultation, **written submissions** were received from nearly all Member States, all six partner countries, the European Parliament, the European Economic and Social Committee, the Committee of the Regions, the European Investment Bank, the Eastern Partnership Civil Society Forum, international financial institutions, United Nations organisations, and youth stakeholders through the Young European Ambassadors. Joint papers endorsed by several Member States were also submitted on the topics of resilience, EaP structures, and youth.

A total of 186 **contributions** were received through a dedicated web page. These came from: (i) public authorities (international organisations, EU bodies, local and regional governments and state bodies); (ii) civil society organisations (including think tanks, academic institutions, civil society partners and business organisations); and (iii) individual citizens.

Dedicated consultation events were organised in each of **the partner countries** and in several EU Member States, and meetings were held with international organisations and EU bodies, civil

¹ Joint Staff Working Document ‘Eastern Partnership – 20 Deliverables for 2020. Focusing on key priorities and tangible results (SWD(2017) 300 final).

society, social partner organisations (including trade unions and employer organisations), business representatives and think tanks.

The consultation also took into account **reports from bodies in the current Eastern Partnership architecture**, including the four platforms and sectoral panels, and related meetings, including with Member State and partner country representations in Brussels

III. Outcomes of the consultation

The consultation **confirmed the strong benefits brought by the Eastern Partnership framework**. The Eastern Partnership's work on a regional level strengthens and complements the bilateral work between the European Union and partner countries and facilitates the development of common positions and joint activities. It provides a forum for policy dialogue and sharing information and experience among partner countries, Member States and EU institutions, the findings of which feed into the process of monitoring and assessing progress in the implementation of reforms.

There is broad consensus among stakeholders that **the current policy framework is robust and delivering**, particularly on three of its focus areas, namely stronger economy, stronger connectivity, and stronger societies. There was also agreement that more remains to be done in the area of governance, rule of law, the fight against corruption and the role of an independent media and civil society.

The consultation highlighted the clear desire of stakeholders and citizens to **tackle jointly common challenges** including climate change, digital transformation, creating an economy that works for all, investing in the continent's young people, and security and resilience.

There is agreement that delivering concrete results for citizens in Eastern Partnership countries and putting people first will remain the focus for the post-2020 agenda, building on the positive results achieved through the '**20 deliverables for 2020**' framework.

Key outcomes of the consultation are further elaborated below, following the responses to the five guiding questions.

1. *How can we sustainably boost economic and human capital development and prosperity?*

Key responses:

- An **inclusive economy that works for all**, providing **decent jobs**, is a top priority for most stakeholders. This includes more emphasis on local/regional actors as key drivers for growth.
- Investment in the development of **young people's skills** and **entrepreneurship** is key
- Support for the digital transformation would need to be reinforced
- Strengthening the **green agenda** is important, building on the achievements to date

The top priority of respondents was the focus on **growth/jobs** to obtain sustainable economic development and long-term **economic resilience**, through an inclusive **circular economy** that works for all. The development of trade between the EU and the Eastern Partnership (EaP) countries and between the countries themselves will deepen economic integration and strengthen **the overall investment and business climate**. Partnership with international financial institutions will also be enhanced.

Support to small and medium-sized businesses (SMEs and MSMEs) including those in **disadvantaged regions** is key, as this could help unleash the partner countries' growth, jobs and innovation potential. **Access to finance**, particularly in **local currency**, needs to be expanded and

support provided to women in business and to young entrepreneurs. Decentralisation will **unleash the full economic potential of the regions**, strengthening regional and local authorities, businesses and civil society organisations, creating local employment opportunities and countering migration towards capital cities.

The creation of EU-EaP **economic zones** in specific sectors was proposed. This would go hand in hand with the accession to the **single euro payments area (SEPA)** of, at first, the associated countries (Ukraine, Moldova and Georgia), enhancing **the international role of the euro**. A dedicated Investment Promotion Office for EaP countries could facilitate foreign direct investment flows and contacts between SMEs and the respective authorities in Member States and partner countries. The importance of the EU's **External Investment Plan** (which provides entrepreneurs willing to invest with financial support, guarantees and technical assistance) was also underlined.

Development of core transport networks and links among the partner countries and with the EU through extension of the TEN-T is a key initiative. An **EaP connectivity partnership** will ensure that priority is given to green connectivity (green ports, green urban transport, smart cities).

Improving the **environmental and climate resilience** of the partner countries by upscaling support to green actions and policies came out strongly in the consultation. Partner countries need support to implement their commitments under the **Paris Agreement** and the **Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)**. They could be associated with the **EU's Green Deal**, commensurate to their capacities. Addressing air, water and land pollution, unlocking the potential of raw materials sector to contribute to the SDGs and overall resource security, tackling deforestation and protecting biodiversity, improving the sustainable management of forests and open access to efficient use and fair trade of food and its derivatives, and investing in sustainable agriculture will improve public health.

A focus on the **energy** sector for the EU and for EaP countries, in tandem with effective **climate** policies, will develop **energy resilience**. Energy dependency can be reduced through green finance, **diversification of energy sources and routes**, security of supply, promoting energy efficiency and renewable energy initiatives. Investing in **infrastructure for energy and transport interconnectivity** between EaP countries and the EU will address infrastructure vulnerability to the impacts of climate change, environmental challenges and hybrid threats.

In the context of the **digital transformation**, respondents also highlighted the importance of increased support for **digital competences/skills**, including focusing on people in the **labour force who are 55 and over**, along with further efforts to **harmonise digital markets**. Several stakeholders from both Member States and partner countries advocate increased access across the region to **broadband**, and steps towards a **common roaming space**.

Further support for **young people and education** is also strongly prioritised, with various suggestions to strengthen EU support to youth education, employability, mobility and engagement in decision-making. A 'New Deal for Youth' is proposed; this would bridge the gap between the labour market and the education sector, build capacities of young professionals and enable structured youth policy dialogue including e.g. through a job shadowing scheme for young professionals and a network of 'Youth Councils'. **Vocational Education and Training (VET) and higher education** reforms should continue and could be extended to primary and secondary education. The **Erasmus+** programme is a popular and effective enabler of education reforms and **increased mobility and people-to-people contacts**. The **European School in Georgia** has been recognised as a success and needs to be pursued and further developed.

Eastern Partnership and EU research and innovation systems and programmes need to be further integrated, for instance by developing a pipeline of strategic EaP innovation projects similar to the TEN-T network. Current work on **technology transfer** and **smart specialisation**

needs to be further developed. The full implementation of **visa facilitation and readmission agreements** and **integrated border management** should continue.

Gender equality needs to be more effectively mainstreamed across the new policy framework. **The EaP countries** would achieve significant economic and social benefits by empowering **women, young people, people with disabilities and minorities**.

2. How can we further strengthen good governance, the rule of law and the security dimension of the Eastern Partnership?

Key responses:

- **Governance and rule of law** should remain the cornerstone of the Eastern Partnership
- **Smart conditionality** (the principle of ‘more for more’ and ‘less for less’) is important to improve results in governance and particularly rule of law and fight against corruption
- **Hybrid and cyber** threats present new challenges which need a coordinated response

Governance and rule of law emerged as one of the **most important priorities of EU Member States and most partner countries**. This view was supported by **civil society** and by the responses made through the website. Political will continues to be an absolute prerequisite for making a real difference.

Resilience needs strengthening at all levels, including democratic, media, civil society, economic, energy and security resilience. To foster long-term resilience, a strong link is needed between **growth and jobs** on the one hand and **governance and rule of law reform**, on the other.

Rule of law work to be done includes: (i) simplification of laws to reduce corruption; (ii) improving links between state actors and ‘watchdogs’; and (iii) ensuring a zero-tolerance approach to breaches of the rule of law. The effective investigation, sanction and prosecution of economic crime, including through use of digital tools, to tackle corruption are key in this regard. The EU needs to draw more heavily on the monitoring of progress towards governance reforms when incentivising partner countries to continue with reform and discouraging them from backsliding (positive and negative conditionality).

The **capacity of the justice systems** in the partner countries, including parliaments and the judiciary, requires sustained support if reforms are to be tangible and likely to endure. Another leitmotiv of the consultation responses is the desire for greater cooperation between the justice and law enforcement sectors, particularly in combating organised crime and trafficking of human beings and illicit goods.

Local authorities, academia, think tanks, human rights defenders and civil society organisations should be involved in monitoring reforms on the ground. More structured dialogue with **think tanks** and academia on EaP policy was suggested in particular.

A significant number of respondents mentioned **security** as a priority area for the EaP; however, the responses are widely ranging in tone. There is a call for more cooperation and integration of partner countries into EU security and resilience structures such as EU Agency for Cyber Security (ENISA)/Permanent Structured Cooperation (PESCO) and the possible participation of partner countries in common security and defence policy (**CSDP**) **missions**. This call is particularly strong from the three associated countries. Cooperation should continue on **prevention, preparedness and response to disasters**. More joint efforts are needed on **cyber** security and **hybrid** threats, and on fighting disinformation and fake news, with respondents to the consultation sending a clear message about the need to improve cooperation, exchanges and capacity building with partner countries.

There is a need for continued **capacity building** in national, regional and local government and public administration reform needs to be in line with the EU². The **active engagement of local and regional actors** in decision-making needs to increase, including support for grass roots civil society, independent media, **eGovernance** and **eDemocracy**. An **EaP academy for public administration** was proposed.

3. *How can we enhance **cooperation between Eastern partners**, while ensuring **inclusiveness and differentiation** in their relations with the EU?*

Key responses:

- Striking the right **balance between inclusiveness and differentiation** is key
- **Intra-regional cooperation** and mobility need to be increased

Striking the **right balance between inclusiveness and differentiation** remains key. The bilateral and multilateral approaches are complementary, mutually reinforcing and equally important. Partner countries who so wish should be able to develop deeper bilateral and multilateral cooperation with the EU through targeted sectoral cooperation in key areas of common interest including transport/TEN-T, digitalisation, environment, education and trade.

Leadership by partner countries in policy areas where they are perceived to be ahead of the curve should be encouraged and best practice shared both with other EaP countries and with EU Member States.

There are calls for increased cross-sectoral **intra-Eastern Partnership cooperation** in areas such as trade, connectivity, digitalisation, **mobility** and knowledge transfer, and in sectoral frameworks such as associations of EaP universities, businesses and chambers of commerce.

4. *How can we do more to enhance **Eastern Partnership and EU visibility**?*

Key responses:

- Building on the achievements so far in increasing **EU visibility**, there is a need to step up a coordinated response to address **disinformation**
- Media literacy and the role of an **independent media and civil society** are important

The EU needs to further enhance its **strategic communication** to ensure better visibility and outreach for EU policy, partners' reform achievements and concrete projects and initiatives. Concrete proposals to improve **EU visibility** include enlarging the target audience, with emphasis on young people, and reaching out to key multipliers outside the capital and big cities. Enhancing people-to-people contacts and cultural exchanges can generate a new spirit of dialogue, mutual listening and learning, joint capacity building and global solidarity. Strategic communication about **Eastern Partnership** policy is also needed **within the EU**. A coordinated response to **disinformation** is needed to build **societal resilience**, capitalising on positive developments (including the European External Action Service's StratCom East Task Force).

Eastern Partnership summits and other high-level meetings could be made more visible by being organised in partner countries, possibly as part of **Eastern Partnership Days**. In addition, responses to the consultation also mentioned the crucial importance of **independent media** and

² The EU has agreed a comprehensive definition of public administration, which includes: (i) a strategic framework for public administration; (ii) policy development and coordination; (iii) public service and human resource management; (iv) accountability; (v) public service delivery; and (vi) public financial management.

the boosting of **media literacy** in all areas of society as key for **democratic and societal resilience**.

5. *Are there any other proposals and reflections on the future of the Eastern Partnership?*

The final, more open-ended, question invited stakeholders to come up with reflections that may not fit within the first four. A non-exhaustive list is presented below.

Key responses:

- **Local actors**, including government and **civil society**, need to be more empowered
- Support to **vulnerable social groups** and **tackling regional disparities** are important
- The **architecture** works but needs to adapt to new challenges and become more efficient and results-oriented

Increasing **involvement of all key stakeholders in policy dialogue** is something many stakeholders call for. **The EaP structure** can be more effective with fewer, better-prepared and better-managed meetings and increased Member State participation in platforms and panels. To encourage **greater ownership and leadership**, a system was suggested in which individual countries would take a leading role in driving action on a particular subject. **EU Member States, partner countries and civil society** need a stronger role in the design, implementation and monitoring of the EaP.

There are calls for a stronger EU role in existing frameworks for unresolved **conflicts**, and greater support for those affected by conflict, particularly women, children and minorities.

Health and wellbeing features as a prominent priority, with a focus on communicable & non-communicable diseases, e-health, medical facility modernisation, training of medical staff, affordable medical care, and sport.

Culture and the creative industries emerge as important sectors that contribute to both the social and economic dimensions of the partnership. Investments in cultural projects contribute to the competitiveness, attractiveness and social cohesion of cities and regions. **Regional tourism** requires development through exchanges of best practices, practical course exchanges and organisation of events. This will help address regional disparities and improve economic development of remote areas.

IV. Implementation of the 20 Deliverables for 2020

The ‘**20 Deliverables for 2020**’ were prepared by the European Commission in 2017 following consultations with Member States, partner countries and other stakeholders. They form a common work plan guiding actions and reforms under the Eastern Partnership for the period up to 2020, and provide a reform agenda aimed at delivering tangible results to citizens. The 20 deliverables were endorsed by partner countries and EU Member States at the Brussels Eastern Partnership Summit in November 2017.

The European Commission regularly monitors the implementation of the deliverables, highlighting both achievements and areas where additional effort may be needed. The latest review of the implementation of this joint reform agenda can be found in Annex I to this document. The review is based on inputs from all partners and stakeholders, including those provided as part of the Eastern Partnership bodies and other consultations. The assessment of the partner countries’ progress in implementing the 20 deliverables is positive overall as regards achieving stronger economies, stronger connectivity and stronger society.

On the **economy**, good progress is noted for instance in deliverables 4 (SME support) and 5 (access to finance), with increases in the number of SMEs benefiting from EU assistance, in local currency lending and in jobs created by SMEs. On **connectivity**, good progress is observed in deliverable 15 (energy efficiency), with 30 more municipalities signing up to CO₂ reduction commitments by 2030 under the Covenant of Mayors. As regards stronger society, there has been, for instance, progress in deliverable 18, with a substantial increase in the number of students taking part in the Erasmus+ programme.

The monitoring update also shows achievements in the area of **stronger governance**, including public service delivery (deliverable 11). However, there are outstanding challenges on justice and anti-corruption, as well as on gender, the enabling environment for civil society and non-discrimination. Success stories include support for SMEs in Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine, energy efficiency in Ukraine, access to public and private services in Azerbaijan, academic and youth support under Erasmus +; the first Eastern Partnership European School in Georgia and digital education in Armenia, as well as the Young European Ambassadors initiative.



20 DELIVERABLES FOR 2020

Monitoring – State of Play in February 2020

The 2017 Eastern Partnership (EaP) Brussels Summit endorsed the '20 Deliverables for 2020' as an ambitious work plan for reforms in the EaP that would bring tangible benefits for citizens.

To help Member States and partner countries guide the process, the EEAS and the Commission regularly monitor the implementation of the Deliverables, highlighting both achievements and areas where additional effort may be needed.

*This document provides an **updated overview of both the implementation** of the '20 Deliverables for 2020' and **concrete results achieved by February 2020**. It does not contain new commitments. Its findings are based on an internal monitoring process that involved the EEAS and the Commission, which also take into consideration results from meetings of the EaP institutional structure (including platforms and panels). This document selectively highlights the most representative findings from the in-depth internal monitoring. The previous report covered results achieved until March 2019.*

CROSS-CUTTING



ECONOMY



GOVERNANCE



CONNECTIVITY



SOCIETY





KEY ACHIEVEMENTS

1 More engagement with civil-society organisations

- ✓ **Capacity-building actions are now ongoing in all partner countries.** These actions focus on **grassroots organisations, innovative ways to engage citizens and mobilisation of local resources.**
- ✓ **More than 60 fellowship projects by young civil society leaders were awarded a grant,** benefiting almost 200 youth leaders.
- ✓ **A pilot tool for monitoring civil society** was prepared for all EaP countries.
- ✓ **The EU increased engagement with the Civil Society Forum** to improve policy dialogue under the revised EaP institutional structure.

2 Increase gender equality and non-discrimination

- ✓ **Gender Action Plans** were updated in **Armenia, Belarus, Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine.**
- ✓ **Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine** have now introduced specific laws on gender equality.
- ✓ **All six partner countries** have now adopted specific legislation against domestic violence, with **Armenia and Ukraine** making further amendments to update their legislation.
- ✓ More than €60 million was allocated to almost **7,250 women-led SMEs,** and **290 women entrepreneurs** received training through the EU4Business initiative in 2018 alone.
- ✓ **Equality legislation** is being reviewed in **Armenia and Moldova,** while in **Belarus** a feasibility study is being conducted for an equality law in line with European standards.

3 Strengthen strategic communications and support diverse and independent of media

- ✓ The EU conducted more consistent branding, messaging, visibility and outreach, under the umbrella message '**stronger together**'. It also **strengthened its outreach to young people, by appointing 730 'Young European Ambassadors'** to promote the EU and its values across the region.
- ✓ **Communication campaigns** were run on EU actions in **all partner countries.** For example, the EaP 10th anniversary (**#EaP10**) was celebrated in all EaP countries in 2019. There was also campaigns in Armenia (EU4Armenia), Azerbaijan (EU4YOU), Belarus (Neighbours Inspire), Georgia (EU4Georgia), Moldova (EU-Moldova: Stronger Together), and Ukraine (Moving Forward Together).
- ✓ According to the EU Neighbours East survey 2019, **67% of citizens** in the region have a **positive perception of the EU's relations with their country** (up 6% since 2017). **65% of the EaP citizens** (up 6% since 2017) are confident that '**the EU provides tangible benefits to citizens in their everyday lives**'. The EU is also considered the **most trusted foreign institution by 58% of the EaP citizens.**
- ✓ **More than 850 journalists and media professionals** have been trained to date thanks to EU support for journalism-literacy and journalism-skills, contributing to media independence.

CROSS-CUTTING DELIVERABLES

PRIORITIES FOR ACTION

- Promoting the development of civil society
- Promoting independent media
- Ratification of international instruments and implementation of relevant legislation on gender equality and non-discrimination across the region

SUCCESS STORIES



#EaP10 – when we communicate together

The EU ran a communication campaign throughout 2019 focusing on the main achievements of the EaP as part of the EaP's 10th anniversary. Focusing on

outreach to young people and audio-visual content, the campaign kicked-off in February, with a flash-mob by 100 'Young European Ambassadors' in Brussels and across the six partner countries. The campaign peaked in May with Europe Day celebrations in partner countries and high-level events in Brussels. These events attracted media attention from across the EaP region. In total, more than 43 million people were reached through TV, radio and news sites, and 2.1 million were reached out through social media across the EaP region.



Working together for a better and more inclusive society

In 2019, the EaP Civil Society Hackathon was organised with EU support in Tbilisi, Georgia. Its aim was to encourage the participation of citizens and to exchange ideas on improving society. 70 civic activists and IT professionals from all six EaP countries took part and developed IT tools to tackle social challenges through innovation. In total, 20 project ideas were

developed from which three were pre-selected for the 2019 EU Digitalisation for Civil Society Award. The 2019 award winner was Anna Krysz, for her project 'Interactive Map PROVIDNIK'. This project helps people with impaired mobility to access easier and safer routes in the cities of Ukraine so they can carry out their day-to-day activities. 'I wanted to create a map that would not only mark accessible and inclusive infrastructure but also consolidate society so that all people could engage with the map', she said. With EU support, Anna's interactive map is expected to be operational in April 2020.



KEY ACHIEVEMENTS

4 Improve the investment and business environment, and unlock the growth potential of small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs)

- ✓ More than **18,000 SMEs** (around **70%** of total SMEs in countries having **Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Agreements (DCFTAs)**) have benefited from EU financial assistance since 2016. More than **90,000 jobs** have been created or sustained as a result.
- ✓ Over **420 business-support organisations** received EU assistance through the EU4Business initiative
- ✓ The **SME policy index improved** in 2020 (+18% compared to 2016), with notable progress in the institutional framework and entrepreneurial human capital.

5 Address gaps in access to finance and financial infrastructure

- ✓ Out of **€350 million** in new access-to-finance programmes committed since the end of 2016, around **50%** will mobilise **local-currency lending**.
- ✓ The 'Structural Reform Facility' supported the development of action plans to develop **non-banking alternatives** for SME financing.
- ✓ **Credit registries** are in place in all EaP countries.

6 Create new job opportunities at the local and regional level

- ✓ Since 2016, over **300 'Local Authorities'** in EaP countries have committed to submitting a plan for local economic development (and **180 have already drafted such plans**), while **16 urban demonstration projects** on local economic development have been launched.
- ✓ **12 focal regions** have been selected in **five EaP countries** to maximise the impact and visibility of EU assistance.
- ✓ Five out of six EaP countries expressed interest in **smart specialisation**, with **Ukraine and Moldova** already advanced in drawing up strategies, and new smart specialisation activities are now being prepared for **Georgia, Armenia and Belarus**.

7 Harmonise digital markets

- ✓ Partner countries adopted a joint roadmap in 2019 and **committed to signing a Regional Roaming Agreement in 2020** to reduce roaming tariffs.
- ✓ All partners countries are preparing **National Broadband Strategies** aligned with similar EU strategies.
- ✓ Coordination has started on the cross-border **700 MHz frequency band**, and is well advanced in **Georgia, Moldova and Belarus**.

8 Support intra-regional trade between partner countries and between partner countries and the EU

- ✓ The number of **companies from DCFTA countries** exporting to the EU **has significantly increased** since 2015: in **Georgia by 46%**, **Moldova by 48%** and **Ukraine by 24%**.
- ✓ Trade volumes between all EaP countries and the EU **increased** between 2016 and 2019 by **27%** with **Armenia**, **55%** with **Azerbaijan**, **40%** with **Belarus**, **7%** with **Georgia**, **42%** with **Moldova** and **50%** with **Ukraine**.
- ✓ Volumes of **intra-regional trade** among the six EaP countries **increased** between 2016 and 2018 by **51%**.

STRONGER ECONOMY

PRIORITIES FOR ACTION

- ✔ Securing sources of finance for SMEs
- ✔ Incubation and pre-acceleration of start-ups in information and communication technologies (ICT), and development of skills in innovation, entrepreneurial and creativity
- ✔ E-signature, e-trade, e-commerce, e-customs, and e-logistics
- ✔ Intra-regional trade and full implementation of trade agreements
- ✔ Negotiations over the accession to the Convention on the Simplification of Formalities in Trade in Goods also need a concerted effort push in the coming years.

SUCCESS STORIES

Improving people's lives by investing in small businesses in Moldova and Belarus



In **Moldova**, a company specialised in hydraulic engineering and based in Chişinău received an EU-funded investment loan in 2016. The loan was to purchase high-performance machinery to clean up the bed of the River Durlleşti, as part of an EU project. This action saved the river from degradation, made the area more attractive for investment, and improved the lives of 1,000 people living in the immediate vicinity of the river.



In 2018, the EU supported a small company in **Belarus**, which specialises in a cutting-edge, 3D, holographic-display system. The system provides an immersive experience enabling viewers to create, manage and display 3D videos that appear to hover in the air. The EU helped the company to increase its management effectiveness and productivity. This led to an increase in the company's profitability and helped to create or sustain 150 jobs. The company's products have now reached international brands and markets, and it is exploring ways to use interactive holograms in various sectors including education and medicine.



KEY ACHIEVEMENTS

9 Strengthen the rule of law and anti-corruption mechanisms

- ✓ Legal frameworks on **confiscation** are in place in **Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine** covering different confiscation regimes.
- ✓ Systems for declaring assets and conflicts of interest are in place in **Armenia, Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine**.
- ✓ **Ukraine** has set up a **High Anti-Corruption Court**, and selected judges for this court in cooperation with international experts.

10 Support the implementation of key judicial reforms

- ✓ Initial steps have been taken towards setting up a system to monitor the track records of judges and prosecutors. These include the creation of an online appraisal system for prosecutors in **Georgia** and planned work or initiatives in **Armenia and Ukraine**.
- ✓ **Armenia** has advanced its strategic framework in the justice sector, including by adopting a new comprehensive reform strategy for the justice sector.

11 Support the implementation of public administration reform (PAR)

- ✓ **PAR strategies** were developed in line with the 'Principles of Public Administration' in **Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine**. **Armenia** undertook its first baseline assessment in line with the 'Principles of Public Administration'.
- ✓ **All six EaP countries** have introduced service-centre **one-stop-shops and e-government services**, making their administrations more accessible and service-oriented.
- ✓ There has been increased engagement of citizens in the EaP countries through high-level civil-society dialogue in **Armenia, Georgia and Ukraine**. This paves the way for more open and accountable state administrations in the EaP countries.

12 Stronger security cooperation

- ✓ **Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine** have adopted **strategies and action plans on cybercrime**. Although they are not yet fully aligned with the Budapest Convention, **all six EaP countries** have set up **specialised cybercrime units**
- ✓ **Joint investigations** between EaP partner countries and Europol have increased.
- ✓ **Hybrid-threat surveys** have been carried out with **Moldova and Georgia**
- ✓ **Five regional guidelines** and tools were developed to address flood-risk management and raise awareness about disasters and civil-protection volunteering.

STRONGER GOVERNANCE

PRIORITIES FOR ACTION

- Tackling high-level and complex corruption across the region, and setting up an anti-corruption institutional framework. This framework should include the creation of track records of cases, effective use of financial investigation tools, and making publicly available all registry data on beneficial ownership
- Merit-based recruitment, reduction of case backlogs, and enforcement of judgments in civil and administrative cases
- Fighting organised crime
- Addressing hybrid threats, including cyber threats, to strengthen critical infrastructure.

SUCCESS STORIES

Fighting corruption in Ukraine

The High Anti-Corruption Court was set up in **Ukraine** in September 2019 to handle complex, high-level corruption cases against top officials and politicians. These high-level corruption cases are investigated by the National Anti-Corruption Bureau of Ukraine (NABU) and prosecuted by the specialised Prosecution Office. EU assistance ranged from technical advice on the relevant legislative and institutional framework, to provide equipment and training. The Court was set up following a rigid and highly transparent selection procedure that is now being replicated in other selection and vetting processes across Ukraine. This process is now attracting great interest from other countries. The Court is now fully operational, and the first 38 judges have been selected by international independent experts. The Court has already issued its first two judgments in plea-bargaining cases, and more judgments are expected in the coming months with an intensive schedule of hearings in highly publicised cases.



Access to public and private services in Azerbaijan

With EU support, public services are now more accessible in **Azerbaijan** through the ASAN state agency. ASAN consists of centres that function as 'one-stop shops' providing more than 300 services including: birth, death and marriage registration; identity cards; passports; driver's licences; real-estate records; registrations of companies; and e-visas. The network of ASAN centres is equipped with a mobile service providing access to people in remote areas. Having improved the visibility and professionalism of public service delivery in Azerbaijan, the ASAN service received the UN Public Service Award in 2015. ASAN, which means 'easy' in Azerbaijani, has significantly improved the lives of citizens, making access to services easier and quicker thanks to the use of modern technology.



KEY ACHIEVEMENTS

13 Extend the core Trans-European Transport Network (TEN-T)

- ✓ **'High-Level Understandings'** on drawing up the indicative extended **core TEN-T network** were signed, and the related European Commission Delegated Act entered into force in January 2019. The **Indicative TEN-T Investment Action Plan** has identified priority investment projects. A €20-million technical assistance facility to help implementation of the TEN-T has also been set-up.
- ✓ All countries have endorsed a **Declaration on Road Safety**. **Road Safety Investment Programmes** have been approved in **Armenia, Azerbaijan and Ukraine**.

14 Increase the security of energy supply

- ✓ The **Southern Gas Corridor** is reaching completion, with **different sections now connected** (the South Caucasus Pipeline, the Trans-Adriatic Pipeline, and the Trans-Anatolian Pipelines); ceremony to mark the completion of the Trans-anatolian Pipeline took place in Greece in November 2019.
- ✓ **Ukraine** has finished the implementing the third energy package on unbundling.

15 Improve energy efficiency and the use of renewable energy; reduce greenhouse gas emissions (GHGs)

- ✓ Under the **Covenant of Mayors** framework, **187 Local Authorities** have committed to cutting **CO₂ emissions by 20% by 2020**, and **240 Local Authorities** have committed to cutting emissions by **30% by 2030**.
- ✓ The ESP Fund has provided **more than €150 million** in investment grants to **36 projects** benefiting **8 million people**. This has made it possible leverage a total investment of almost **€800 million**. The ESP now covers **all six countries**, with **Azerbaijan** joining in 2019.
- ✓ The **high-level EU-International Financial Institutions (IFIs) energy-efficiency initiative** has increased political ownership in **Armenia, Georgia and Ukraine**. For example, **Ukraine** has set up an energy-efficiency fund for residential buildings.
- ✓ **Ukraine** has adopted regulations on ozone and fluorinated gases and a law on monitoring, reporting and verification of GHG emissions in December 2019.

16 Support the environment and adaptation to climate change

- ✓ **Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine** adopted new laws on **environmental assessment of strategies, plans, and investment projects**.
- ✓ To protect and connect natural areas, **Emerald Network** sites now exist in **Belarus (155 sites), Georgia (58 sites), Moldova (61 sites), and Ukraine (377 sites)**. **Armenia and Azerbaijan** officially nominated **23 and 17 sites** respectively.
- ✓ EU support has promoted **modern water policy at river-basin level**, covering **500,000 km²** and affecting more than **30 million people** across the region. Since 2017, **Armenia, Belarus and Moldova** adopted **four river-basin plans** in line with EU benchmarks. **All countries** received **modern equipment** to better monitor and reduce people's exposure to toxic pollutants.
- ✓ Environmental data from all six EaP is available **online via an internet-based tracking tool** hosted by the European Environment Agency (EEA).

STRONGER CONNECTIVITY

PRIORITIES FOR ACTION

- Interconnection projects in the gas and electricity sectors, including the unbundling of the operators of the gas-transmission system in Energy Community Contracting Parties
- Monitoring and implementing the reduction of CO2 emissions in line with the Paris Agreement
- Access to climate finance
- Climate adaptation
- Environmental health

SUCCESS STORIES



Working together for a greener and safer environment in Georgia

In Georgia, the EU-funded Tbilisi bus project purchased 143 modern, compressed-natural-gas buses for the city. The blue buses have improved the bus service for the city's 1,2 million inhabitants by increasing

the safety and efficiency of public transport. The new eco-friendly buses are able to accommodate people with disabilities, the elderly, and parents with children, while reducing pollution. Natalia Maziashvili is happy to use these new buses: *'As a mother of two, I find clean air and the environment very important,'* she said. *'That is why these new buses that are 'green' are very welcome. I use them almost every day.'*



Saving together for energy efficiency in Moldova

In Moldova, Cantemir has the first kindergarten that is thermally renovated in compliance with European standards. Four educational institutions in the city are also switching to renewable energy sources thanks to EU support. The renovations include: thermal insulation of external

walls; installing biomass boilers; adding individual heating control points; installing solar collectors and photovoltaic panels; and replacing internal lighting systems with LEDs. As a result, the 50-year-old building now offers improved learning conditions for 135 children, while using at least 20% less energy and addressing climate change.



KEY ACHIEVEMENTS

17 Progress on Visa Liberalisation Dialogues and Mobility Partnerships

- ✓ Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine continue to fulfil the benchmarks of the Visa Liberalisation Action Plan. Visa Facilitation and Readmission agreements with Belarus were signed in January 2020.
- ✓ Modernisation of the Border Crossing Points is on track. The network has now helped to set up jointly operated crossing points between Poland and Ukraine and between Moldova and Ukraine.
- ✓ Integrated border-management strategies have been introduced in almost all EaP countries and structured cooperation is now in place.

18 Strengthen investment in young people's skills, entrepreneurship and employability

- ✓ The EU4Youth Erasmus+ capacity-building scheme helped to fund 100 projects working with 265 EaP organisations. These projects supported civic engagement and entrepreneurship among young people. EU4Youth grants supported six large-scale projects for youth employment, employability and transition to work. This benefited 23,000 young people in the region.
- ✓ Erasmus+ encourages mobility and quality of formal and non-formal education. Since 2016, 32,000 students and academic staff from EaP countries participated in academic exchanges, 46,000 young people were involved in other exchanges, trips and volunteering, almost 500 Master's students received an Erasmus Mundus scholarship, and nearly 3,000 schools and 7,600 teachers were connected via eTwinning Plus.
- ✓ All EaP countries engaged in structural dialogue through the Torino process on Vocational Education reforms to improve human capital development, vocational education and policies on training.
- ✓ Armenia, Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine signed agreements for participation in Creative Europe. EaP cultural organisations were involved in 44 projects.

19 Establish an EaP European school

- ✓ The EaP European School in Tbilisi has been open since September 2018. 65 students from all EaP countries in the school have been awarded an EU-funded scholarship for an international baccalaureate (IB) diploma focused on European studies. Phase II of the project was launched in 2019 with the aim of setting up a fully-fledged EaP European School by 2023 under the Ministry of Education of Georgia.

20 Integrate EaP and EU research and innovation systems and programmes

- ✓ Four EaP countries are associated to the EU's Horizon 2020 research-and-innovation programme. Research-and-innovation stakeholders from these four countries are also integrated in relevant EU networks/platforms.
- ✓ All partner countries have full access to all Horizon 2020 funding schemes for individual researchers, with 135 already receiving grants. Under the Marie Skłodowska-Curie scheme, 915 EaP researchers benefit from EU support.
- ✓ National research and education networks from all partner countries are integrated in the Pan-European GÉANT network, as well as Eduroam.

CROSS-CUTTING DELIVERABLES		STATUS (since 2016)	CHANGE (since 3/19)
1	More engagement with civil-society organisations	++	↑
2	Increase gender equality and non-discrimination	+	↔
3	Strengthen strategic communications and support diverse and independent media	++	↔
STRONGER ECONOMY			
4	Improve the investment and business environment and unlock the growth potential of small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs)	++	↑
5	Address gaps in access to finance and financial infrastructure	++	↑
6	Create new job opportunities at the local and regional level	++	↑
7	Harmonise digital markets	++	↔
8	Support intra-regional trade between partner countries and between partner countries and the EU	++	↔
STRONGER GOVERNANCE			
9	Strengthen the rule of law and anti-corruption mechanisms	+	↑
10	Support the implementation of key judicial reforms	+	↔
11	Support the implementation of public administration reform (PAR)	++	↔
12	Stronger security cooperation	++	↔
STRONGER CONNECTIVITY			
13	Extend the core Trans-European Transport Network (TEN-T)	++	↔
14	Increase the security of energy supply	++	↑
15	Improve energy efficiency and the use of renewable energy; reduce greenhouse gas emissions (GHGs)	+	↑
16	Support the environment and adaptation to climate change	+	↑
STRONGER SOCIETY			
17	Progress on Visa Liberalisation Dialogues and Mobility Partnerships	++	↔
18	Strengthen investment in young people's skills, entrepreneurship and employability	++	↑
19	Establish an EaP European school	+++	↑
20	Integrate EaP and EU research and innovation systems and programmes	++	↑

Implementation since 2016: completed ++; on track +; limited progress +
Change since March 2019: no change ↔; progress ↑

school; 42 shared research facilities; high-tech industry units; a conference centre; and revenue-generating commercial space to ensure the centre's long-term viability.