

European Neighbourhood Policy Review 2015

The changing political and societal environment in Europe's neighbourhood has prompted the European Union to reassess its policy towards its neighbouring countries to the East and South of its borders. European Commission president Jean-Claude Juncker has tasked the new Commission to come up with a proposal for a reviewed European Neighbourhood Policy by November 2015. Governments, public authorities, civil society, think tanks, social partners, business, academic communities and other relevant stakeholders from both the neighbourhood and the EU are now invited to take part in the consultation process until the end of June 2015 in order to draw up a revised ENP.

This Policy Digest will address different aspects of the ENP review. Firstly, it will look at the background of the ENP as well as why and how its review is taking place. Secondly, some elements of the ENP that are under review will be discussed. Thirdly, special attention will be paid to CSOs' opportunities to participate in this review process.

What is the current European Neighbourhood Policy about?

The European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP) objective is to strengthen the prosperity, stability and security of

the closest neighbours of the EU¹. The ENP was launched in March 2003 in order to avoid creating new borders in Europe after the EU enlargement in 2004.

The ENP addresses 16 countries. Algeria, Egypt, Israel, Jordan, Lebanon, Libya, Morocco, Palestine, Syria and Tunisia to the South and Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine to the East. Most of the countries within the ENP framework share a border with the EU either by land, sea or both – only Armenia and Azerbaijan do not share any border. It is also worth mentioning two neighbouring countries of the EU that are not part of the ENP. They are Turkey, which was officially recognised as a candidate for full EU membership in 2005 and Russia, which refused to be a part of the ENP.

The ENP works on an explicit bilateral basis between the EU and each of the 16 partner countries and it is built on the basic values of the EU including **democracy, human rights, the rule of law, good governance, market economy principles and sustainable development**.² Cooperation between the EU and ENP partner countries takes place under a wide range of sector policies including employment and

¹http://ec.europa.eu/enlargement/neighbourhood/overview/index_en.htm

²http://eeas.europa.eu/enp/about-us/index_en.htm

social policy, trade, competition policy, agriculture, climate change, but also energy security, transport, as well as support to health or education.³ The extent to which relations are developed depend first and foremost on the ambitions of the partner countries ranging from deeper economic integration, increased mobility to political association. However, the ENP framework does not go beyond the offer of a 'privileged partnership' and the prospect of EU membership for the partner countries is not part of the ENP.

The current ENP is also complemented by two multilateral initiatives; the Eastern dimension of the ENP evolved into the **Eastern Partnership** programme after it was initiated by Poland and Sweden back in 2009. The Southern dimension was embraced and put into the framework of the so-called Barcelona Process already in 1995, since then it has been redefined in 2008 and 2010 when **Euro-Mediterranean Partnership** (EUROMED) was established.

Why is the ENP review taking place?

It is not the first time the EU has reviewed its Neighbourhood policy. Most recently after the Arab Spring a review took place in 2011 when the principles of 'more for more' and 'deep democracy' were brought into the ENP⁴. These principles established that countries that make most progress in their reform process will be rewarded and offered most support by the EU and that robust political reforms, free and fair elections, institution building, fight against corruption, independent judiciary and support to civil society will be part of EU's support toward the partner countries. The renewed policy included higher level of differentiation between the ENP countries.

Nevertheless, the undertaken policy faced rising challenges. In some places anxiety slightly decreased like Tunisia, in other, like Egypt, it remained. But in some countries local conflicts aroused to serious regional long term threats increasing general instability of the regions where they occurred – in the direct neighbourhood of EU. This is what we observe in two countries most. Firstly, in **Syria** where almost 220 000 people have died since the beginning of the conflict in 2011 and 3.9 million have fled. Secondly, in **Ukraine** where almost 5 000 people have died on the Ukrainian side and probably another 5 000 on the

separatist-Russian side and 2 million people have left Donbas⁵.

How will the ENP review take place?

The EU wants as wide a consultation as possible on its Neighbourhood policy, including with member and partner states, their parliaments, European Parliament, international organisations active in the neighbourhood, international financing institutions, civil society, think tanks, social partners, business and academic communities. **Consultations in partner countries will be coordinated by the EU Delegations** in each of the respective countries.

There are two high-level summits verifying the progress of European Neighbourhood Policy. Firstly, the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership informal ministerial meeting that took place in April and discussed the review of ENP⁶. Secondly, the **Eastern Partnership Summit in Riga** (21-22 May), evaluating the progress made in the relations between the EU and the eastern partners since the last summit in Vilnius in 2013. The Member States of the EU have already issued a joint position⁷ on the review and the European Parliament Foreign Affairs committee is preparing a report⁸ on it as well as organising hearings on the topic.

The ENP review **consultation** organised by the European Commission is open from the beginning of March till the **end of June**⁹. Submissions to the consultation questions can be sent by individuals or organisations.

What are the main elements of the ENP under review?

According to the joint consultation paper, the EU needs to step up close cooperation, association and partnership in order to **further strengthen the economic and political ties** between the European Union and its neighbours. According to the High

⁵ <http://www.euronews.com/2015/04/22/ukraine-crisis-has-created-more-than-2-million-refugees-un-reports/>

⁶ http://eeas.europa.eu/statements-eeas/2015/150413_02_en.htm

⁷ <http://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/press/press-releases/2015/04/20-council-conclusions-review-european-neighbourhood-policy/>

⁸ <http://www.europarl.europa.eu/sides/getDoc.do?pubRef=-%2f%2fEP%2f%2fNONSGML%2bCOMPARL%2bPE-551.887%2b01%2bDOC%2bPDF%2bV0%2f%2fEN>

⁹ Consultation website: http://ec.europa.eu/enlargement/neighbourhood/consultation/index_en.htm

³ http://eeas.europa.eu/enp/about-us/index_en.htm

⁴ "New Response to a Changing Neighbourhood" - a review of European Neighbourhood Policy http://eeas.europa.eu/enp/pdf/pdf/com_11_303_en.pdf

Representative Federica Mogherini, the EU and ENP countries are facing “increased challenges ranging from economic pressures to irregular migration and security threats” and thus the EU “needs to move from an approach very much based on the evaluation of progress to a **more political approach**.”¹⁰

The redesigned ENP should also be able to offer adequate responses to the immediate changes in the neighbouring countries as well as the changing aspirations of the partner countries. Over the course of the five years the partner countries have shown that they all have very **diverse interests** and needs in terms of their engagement with the EU. Not all necessarily seek a special partnership with the EU, such as Belarus and Azerbaijan. There are other countries, however, which are ready and eager to deepen their ties with the EU both on the political and economic level (Georgia and Moldova are clear examples). One of the key components of the new ENP should thus be **further differentiation** among the partner countries in order to reflect their diverging aspirations. Besides differentiation, the EC has also identified three other priority areas that will be in the centre of the ongoing consultations and reflections of the ENP; **focus, flexibility and ownership & visibility**.

One of the key questions that the European community should answer during the review process is whether the Association Agreements (AA) and Partnership and Cooperation Agreements (PCA) that are now on the table for the partner countries are the final offer of the EU or whether it should also explore **other formats of cooperation**. Under discussion is the possibility to offer an EU membership perspective to some neighbourhood countries but also further sectoral integration and more tailor-made Association Agreements. Furthermore, whether the EU’s offer will go beyond the AAs or PCAs or not, the agenda of the cooperation between the EU and ENP countries should have a clear-cut focus in order to deliver tangible results on both sides.

Based on an initial review on both sides, the EC has identified **five focus areas** that have the greatest potential for cooperation within the ENP; trade and economic development, connectivity, security, governance and migration and mobility. A special emphasis is also put on energy security, threats to security from organised crime or ‘frozen conflicts’. The consultation paper also mentions additional priorities that are of key importance from a development perspective including challenges with impacts across

borders including **health security, threats to the environment and climate change**. The revised ENP also aims to further increase the engagement of youth and opportunities for women.

Having such a wide range of areas for potential deeper cooperation, the next key step in the review process will be a clear **definition of the focus of the ENP** and also identification of the most suitable **tools for delivering results**. A key prerequisite of the revised tools under the ENP framework should also be their flexibility. A flexible toolbox would enable the EU not only to respond more effectively to the changing developments in the neighbourhood, but also to adapt better to the individual needs of the partner countries and their priorities and evaluate the progress made. At the same time the revised ENP should, according to the Council of the EU, preserve its continuity and predictability.¹¹

Another key challenge that the European community faces in the neighbourhood and which also stands in the centre of the attention of the review is the sense of **ownership** with partner countries followed by a low level of **public awareness** about the ENP. A key part of the debate is likely to focus on better communication strategies of the objectives and results of the neighbourhood policy and ways of how to engage various partners in the implementation of the ENP including civil society actors.

In light of the current developments in the ENP countries – and especially those of the Eastern Partnership framework – the European Commission also raised the question of how the EU should address the **neighbours of its neighbours** in order to be able to respond to the challenges that both the EU and its neighbours jointly face. A key component of the debate will thus be the question of how to ensure greater coherence between the ENP and EU’s relations with Russia or partners in Central Asia as well as other key players in the regions.

How are CSOs engaged in the ENP review?

Since the launch of the consultation on the ENP a number of civil society organisations have already put forward their positions. To mark the publication of the joint Communication ‘Towards a new European Neighbourhood Policy’ on the 4th of March 2015, SOLIDAR, Arab NGO Network for Development (ANND)

¹⁰ http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release_IP-15-4548_en.htm

¹¹ <http://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/press/press-releases/2015/04/20-council-conclusions-review-european-neighbourhood-policy/>

and the Euromed NGO Platform presented a policy briefing¹² identifying ten 'must haves' that the revised ENP should focus on. The first 'must have' is stronger accountability followed by more policy coherence for development, better trade and investment policies, stronger fight against inequalities and promotion of universal social protection schemes. Furthermore, the private sector should be bound to human rights standards and stronger solidarity should be at the heart of migration and mobility policies.

In its position ahead of the Riga Summit the Eastern Partnership Civil Society Forum call on the EU among others to recognise the contributions of civil society to monitoring and advocating for continuous reform and state-building; to invest in the development of civil society and facilitate civil society participation in policy development, monitoring and awareness-raising; to enhance support to reform-minded activists in countries with authoritarian regimes¹³.

A PASOS (Policy Association for an Open Society) analysis prepared for the European Parliament's Committee on Foreign Affairs also calls for fresh approach to the Eastern Partnership (EaP) initiative.¹⁴ The analysis recommends a major policy shift in how the EU views and deals with the six EaP countries, not least because a clear division of the EaP countries into two groups¹⁵ has become inevitable.

Different European and neighbourhood CSOs are organising workshops and discussions on the ENP review. In the EU, the CONCORD working group Enlargement, Pre-Accession and Neighbourhood (EPAN) is coordinating CSO joint work on the issue in

collaboration with members of the Human Rights and Democracy Network (HRDN). The joint work also takes place around the Civil Society dialogue event ahead of the EaP Summit in Riga 20 May and the Civil Society Forum South organised by the European External Action Service and the European Commission in Brussels on 28-29 May. For more information and to get involved, contact

Nathalie.Bekierdjerf@concordeurope.org



What can I do?

- Write a submission to the ENP review consultation as an organisation or together with other CSOs.
- Invite your partners in the EU neighbourhood countries to respond to the EC consultation and to participate in the consultation events organised by the EC delegation in their country.
- Join the CONCORD EPAN working group and participate in formulating their response to the consultation.
 - Use your country's ministry of Foreign Affairs consultation opportunities ahead of important meetings such as the Riga summit to put forward CSO concerns.

Authors:

Rebecca Murray

(Slovak Foreign Policy Association / Platforma MVRO)

Artur Kacprzak (Grupa Zagranica)

Mirjam Sutrop (TRIALOG)

¹² http://www.solidar.org/IMG/pdf/73_solidar_briefing_enp.pdf

¹³ http://eap-csf.eu/assets/files/EaP%20CSF_Position_Riga_Summit.pdf

¹⁴ http://pasos.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/03/EXPO_STU2015536438_EN.pdf

¹⁵ Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine seek closer ties with the EU, while Armenia, Azerbaijan and Belarus focus on cooperation with Russia.

TRIALOG Partners: EU13 Development CSO Platforms



www.bpid.eu/en



www.cms.hr



www.cyndep.eu



www.fors.cz



www.terveilm.ee



www.hand.org.hu



www.lapas.lv



www.pagalba.org



www.litdea.eu



www.skopmalta.org



www.zagranica.org.pl



www.fondromania.org



www.mvro.sk



www.sloga-platform.org

Other Consortium Partners



www.concordeurope.org



www.ageh.de



www.light-for-the-world.org



www.pah.org.pl



This project is funded by the European Union.

With funding from

Austrian
Development Cooperation

Lead Agency

HORIZONT3000
www.horizont3000.at