

The Eastern Partnership Conference: Towards a European Community of Democracy, Prosperity and a Stronger Civil Society

POST-CONFERENCE REPORT



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**The Eastern Partnership Conference:
Towards a European Community
of Democracy, Prosperity
and a Stronger Civil Society**

Warsaw, 29 September 2011

Monika Arcipowska (PISM), Uład Vialichka (CSF),
Piotr Woyke (OSW) and Anna Zielińska-Rakowicz (PISM)

A report of a conference organised

by the Centre for Eastern Studies,
the Eastern Partnership Civil Society Forum
and the Polish Institute of International Affairs

in cooperation with

the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Poland
and the European External Action Service

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About the conference

The international conference “**The Eastern Partnership Conference: Towards a European Community of Democracy, Prosperity and a Stronger Civil Society**” took place in Warsaw on 29 September 2011. It was an accompanying event to the 2nd Eastern Partnership Summit (held in Warsaw on 29–30 September 2011) and an official event of the Polish EU Presidency. The aim of the conference was to develop recommendations for the inclusion of civil society activities in the Eastern Partnership (EaP). Civil Society has been involved in the Eastern Partnership (EaP) initiative since November 2009, when the EaP Civil Society Forum was launched to support EaP goals. After two years of EaP development, the Civil Society Forum (CSF) is recognized by most of the stakeholders as an important and valuable actor that regularly provides expert opinion, independent monitoring and policy proposals to government officials and EU institutions. At the same time, Civil Society has faced a lot of obstacles on the way to becoming a proactive participant in the EaP. The situation and democratic processes in the EaP region still prove to be volatile and unstable, and therefore there is the need to further strengthen Europe’s ties with the countries of the region and to develop concrete mechanisms of cooperation between official structures and civil society on securing stability.

More than 200 participants attended the conference, including prominent representatives of European Union (EU) institutions, EU member states and partner countries, including: Radosław Sikorski (Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Poland), Jerzy Buzek (President of the European Parliament), Štefan Füle (European Commissioner for Enlargement and Neighbourhood Policy), Nick Clegg (Deputy Prime Minister of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland) and David Bakradze (Chairman of the Parliament of Georgia).

The conference was organised by the **Centre for Eastern Studies** (OSW, www.osw.waw.pl), the **Eastern Partnership Civil Society Forum** (www.eap-csf.eu) and the **Polish Institute of International Affairs** (PISM, www.pism.pl) in cooperation with the **Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Poland**. The conference was co-funded by the **European Union**.

The Conference's Key Conclusions and Policy Recommendations

The conference was an event accompanying the 2nd Eastern Partnership Summit, which was a major political event with numerous EU state leaders and all of the Eastern Partners, save for Belarus, coming to Warsaw to assess the performance of the EaP initiative over the past two years and discuss the prospects for future cooperation within the EaP.

The Warsaw EaP Summit showed that **the EU has been continuously interested in the East**. It is willing to further cooperate within the established initiatives and follow EaP countries' harmonization with EU partners in particular by continuing their gradual integration with the EU market.

The goal of the Summit was to strengthen the cooperation and international importance of the EaP initiative. **Currently, the EU is preoccupied with its debt crisis and the Arab spring**. Additional concerns include the economic and political problems of EaP countries as well as the lack of democratic reforms in EaP states. **Through now, there have been limited results from the EaP in the region**. Obviously, each EaP country has a different political position and economic strength, and therefore their expectations towards the EU are different. The EU, in turn, has different interests with respect to each of the partners. All in all, however, the economic aspect of the EaP and the EU's financial support should be seen as only secondary to the EaP's fundamental goal, which is support for political association, economic integration and democratic reforms.

- **Increased mobility** between partner countries and the European Union is an important goal. The EU should support greater interpersonal contact and an increased exchange of ideas between citizens. In the final declaration of the EaP Summit, a statement was included to indicate that **the full abolition of visas for the Eastern neighbours could be possible in a few years' time, with respect to the citizens of those countries that have fulfilled all the EU's conditions**. Nevertheless, there are still material difficulties with this on both sides—in the EU and with its Eastern partners. To eliminate these difficulties, the Eastern neighbours should reform visa legislation, including technical conditions for border controls, and introduce biometric documents as well as reduce the EU's concerns associated with illegal immigration. **During its presidency of the EU Council, Poland proposed to offer EaP states a perspective for the automatic abolishment of visas to the EU after the fulfilment of certain conditions. Poland has objected to the consideration of visa abolishment as a long-term perspective**, stating that it is not a matter of time but of the Eastern neighbours' meeting the requirements for reforms as motivated by the EU.
- **Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Areas, as part of the Accession Agreements, are among the key tools for the gradual integration of the**

- Eastern Partners with the EU's economy.** The execution of the DCFTA with Ukraine and the commencement of negotiations with Moldova and Georgia by the end of 2011, were declared at the Warsaw EaP summit. Although negotiations of the DCFTA with Ukraine in all material fields, including all technical aspects have been completed, the agreement has never entered into force.
- Disappointingly, discussions regarding democratic reforms have demonstrated the lack of progress in the transformation of some EaP countries (Ukraine, Armenia, Azerbaijan). Belarus was one of the main topics during the Summit, however, its representatives did not participate. In the final declaration, the Summit participants declined to refer to the political situation in Belarus and the numerous instances of violation of human rights under President Alexander Lukashenko's regime. The EaP countries refused to sign a declaration criticizing the Belarusian regime.
 - The “The Eastern Partnership Conference: Towards a European Community of Democracy, Prosperity and a Stronger Civil Society” concluded that **the need to engage civil societies in the process of democratic development towards open societies is crucial for the development of the multilateral dimension of the EaP.**
 - **The EU should continue to engage with all parts of society.** As stated during the conference, the **EU should support the coordinating role of the EaP Civil Society Forum in all actions involving civil society and increase financial assistance through the newly-established European Neighbourhood Civil Society Facility and the planned European Endowment for Democracy.** It also includes continued work to involve civil society representatives in formal dialogues with governments of partner states. Civil societies should be involved (through the process of consultations and negotiations) in the implementation of the EU policies. For a genuine shift towards a “partnership with societies”, maximum local participation and ownership has to be matched by the maximum political and practical commitment from the EU.
 - **The EaP creates many opportunities for development, and it is now up to the EaP countries to take advantage of them.** It remains to be seen whether they are ready to do their utmost to implement the principles of democracy at home. The EU needs to move towards more tailor-made agreements with partner countries. **The more reforms aimed at establishing democracy, the rule of law and protection of human rights, and the exchange of good practices, which the EaP states bring to life, the more assistance the EU will provide.** But in those countries where there is a clear lack of progress, such as is currently the case in Belarus, the EU is ready to suspend cooperation with authorities there until the conditions change and will refocus EU aid to support civil society and the population at large.
 - Nevertheless, the EU should propose differentiation, stricter conditionality and incentives for strong performance in the newly revised ENP towards EaP countries. **The new ENP and EaP proposals should also be more policy-driven,**

focused on jointly-agreed priorities in view of economic, social and sectoral integration as well as enhanced political cooperation.

- **The EU should engage in the debate on benchmarking for extending the funds to the EaP states**, taking into account the principles described above (mutual accountability, more for more). The EaP countries should benefit from Poland's experience of democratic transformation. At the same time, **local civil society should be more involved in formulating cooperation** within the EaP initiatives.
- Regional cooperation with EaP states is very difficult because of local conflicts. **The EU should engage in conflict resolution to promote a zone of peace, prosperity and stability in its Neighbourhood.** President of the European Parliament Jerzy Buzek said the EU should act unanimously towards the EaP initiative.

Following the lead of the authors of the PISM Report asserting the EU's Mission in the Neighbourhood, there are 10 recommendations for a more effective Eastern Partnership¹: asserting Article 49, ensuring differentiation, tackling corruption, fortifying institutions, endowing for democracy, being more daring towards Belarus, creating more mobility options, offering more generously, spirited trade deals, investing in young people and creating synergies in times of crisis.

Conference Report of Activities

The conference was opened by representatives of the organising institutions: Antonella Valmorbida, co-chair of the Steering Committee of Civil Society, Olaf Osica, director of the Centre for Eastern Studies, and Marcin Zaborowski, director of the Polish Institute of International Affairs, who welcomed all guests and participants and introduced the main theme of the conference. After introductory remarks, the floor was given to Minister Radosław Sikorski.

Opening Keynote Speech

Radosław Sikorski, minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Poland, in the conference's opening keynote speech emphasized the significance of the EU's policy towards its Eastern neighbours especially in times of political changes in Northern Africa and the eurozone crisis. He said that the declaration adopted by leaders of the EU Member States and partner countries would be "a strong message supporting the integration of partner countries with the European Union, the acknowledgement of the European aspirations and European choice of partner

¹ Asserting the EU's Mission in the Neighbourhood: Ten Recommendations for an Effective Eastern Partnership, Kerry Longhurst and Beata Wojna, Report of the Polish Institute of International Affairs, September 2011. www.pism.pl/files/?id_plik=8420.

countries as well as a reference to the community of values inscribed in the Treaty on European Union". Minister Sikorski offered to share Poland's experience from its integration process so that all willing Eastern Partnership countries may benefit from it and successfully conduct their own integration processes. Concluding his speech, Minister Sikorski emphasized the great role of civil societies in the fight for democratic standards and the creation of alternatives to authoritarian regimes, adding that "civil society is a resource without which democracy cannot spread its wings".²

Session One: Empowering Civil Society. What Partnership for Citizens?

The first session of the Conference was held with the participation of civil society representatives from both the EU and the Eastern Partnership countries and focused on EU policy aimed at the societies of the EU's Eastern partners as well as on the role and place of Civil Society in the EaP. Both the achievements and problems of civic-society development in the Eastern Partnership countries were raised by participants during the panel discussion.

All speakers on the panel agreed that involving civil society as a non-state actor in policy-shaping within the Eastern Partnership is an important and constructive innovation that should be supported to the maximum extent. At the same time, with the new developments, the EU should institutionalize that role, providing civil society with real decision-making power and legitimacy to influence the process. By raising Civil Society to an unprecedented level of influence, it shows the European model and practice to be both innovative and progressive.

Panel discussion participants from both the EU and partner countries stated that the convergence with EU policies in such fields as migration, trade, energy, transport, environment, Small and Medium Enterprises (SME) and innovations, education and others creates the appropriate conditions for a gradual sectoral integration of partner countries with the EU. At the same time, proper space should also be given to non-institutional networks promoting exchanges of youth, volunteers and culture. Visa liberalisation agreements, Association Agreements (AA), Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Agreements (DCFTA) and other relevant institutional frameworks should serve as legal mechanisms for deepening such rapprochement. Greater regional cooperation among EaP partner countries at all possible levels would secure more sustainability and synergies between various initiatives deepening European integration.

Both speakers and participants of the discussion within the first session also suggested further anchoring the EaP Civil Society Forum in the family of European institutions. The huge potential of the Forum—where delegates representing all six

² The full text of Minister Sikorski's speech may be found within this report.

partner countries and the EU participate and cooperate successfully together—has insufficiently been used until now. The ability of the delegates in the Forum to define common values, interests and goals has not been transferred to the interstate level efficiently and convincingly enough. One of the conclusions of the discussion regarding the EaP Civil Society Forum (CSF) was about giving more of a role, space and support to the Forum’s National Platforms, which are recognized as a significant institutional improvement of the CSF idea in the first two years. Participants of the session also called for increased assistance for the Eastern Partnership Civil Society Forum, including the installation of a permanent secretariat, and for the CSF representatives to participate and comment on the relevant platforms of the Eastern Partnership, including the summit meetings. A problem of limited opportunities to execute independent monitoring on the functioning of EaP flagship projects and other intergovernmental initiatives of the EaP was clearly raised during the discussion.

At the end, as a result and at the initiative of the participants of the session, a special declaration was adopted on behalf of conference participants representing civil-society organizations. The declaration pays attention to ongoing human-rights violations and the existence of political prisoners in some of the EaP countries and calls for unanimous condemnation through EU institutions of any restrictions of basic civil rights, such as the right to free elections, the right to assembly and the freedom of expression, in all six countries of the Eastern Partnership.

Session Two: Promoting EU Democratic Values and Standards Through Opening Borders

The second session was dedicated to the prospects of visa liberalization towards the Eastern neighbours. All participants noted that the process should continue, especially among those countries that have fulfilled all the EU’s conditions and requirements. According to the opinions presented by panellists, there are still material difficulties on both sides—the EU and its Eastern partners—to proceed with the visa dialogue. To eliminate these difficulties, the Eastern neighbours should harmonize visa legislation with EU standards, including technical criteria and conditions for border controls. All participants agreed that abolishing EU visa limitations for Eastern Partnership member states by negotiating visa facilitation and readmission agreements that allow citizens of EaP states to obtain short-term “Schengen visas” and by regulating deportation procedures should be initiated, especially in the cases of Azerbaijan and Armenia. Attention was drawn to the visa dialogue for the full abolishment of visas with Ukraine and Moldova as well as to the Mobility Partnership—an additional EU instrument for the gradual elimination of visas that is being applied in parallel with the visa facilitation negotiations. A majority of the conference members were of the opinion

that without the visa liberalisation process and the enhancement of people's mobility, the promotion of European democratic values and standards in EaP countries is not possible. The discussion revealed the participants' considerable interest in the development of the visa dialogue with the EU's Eastern neighbours, which is largely dependent on the political will of the Member States overcoming concerns related to the numbers of illegal immigrants (France, Germany, Austria).

The EU has recently decided to deepen cooperation on visas with partners whose progress in fulfilling the technical requirements are the most significant. The Eastern neighbours that strive to deepen the visa dialogue are required to engage in cooperation with EU member states to strengthen controls on the Union's Eastern borders and to meet technical criteria of the EU Visa Code (facilitating the flows of particular groups of people, regulating how short-term visas are granted, and allowing travel to the EU by decreasing visa fees and simplifying visa procedures). A point was also made that the enhanced mobility of people (e.g., students and business partners) is the top priority of the EaP. All participants pointed out links between visa liberalisation and the EU's security and trade issues. It was noted that the abolishment of visas may be possible within the next few years for the most advanced countries that will comply with "conditions of the well-managed and safe mobility" (Ukraine and Moldova). During the discussion, all participants mentioned that visa liberalization is a long-term process.

Nevertheless, in the final declaration of the second Eastern Partnership summit, a statement was included to indicate that the full abolition of visas for the Eastern neighbours could be possible in a few years' time. Such an abolition would obviously be seen as a rather lengthy and gradual process, undertaken towards each partner separately and bearing in mind that specific conditions must be met to fully implement a visa-free regime.

Session Three: Building Prosperity. Challenges to the Economic Integration of the EU's Eastern partners?

The third session was dedicated to issues related to the economic integration of the EU and its Eastern partners. Experts tried to find answers to numerous questions, including: What is the aim of economic relations or what is the attractiveness of the Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Areas? The global context of this debate was interesting, keeping in mind that the economic crisis still seems to be a great threat and many economists and intellectuals from around the world predict the return of regular state interventionism in the free market.

The debate began with a general reflection on what is the EU's economic model (by defining its characteristics and finding an answer to the question) and whether something like this has ever existed? Panellists came to the conclusion

that, despite significant differences, there is a liberal market economy in the European Union and a set of conditions that are also shared (obviously in specific modes) by the United States and Canada. One of the panellists underlined, that the state is needed in the economy, but as the example of European countries shows, creating huge, state-owned companies is not a proper way of improving competitiveness on the markets.

It was also noted, that none of the Eastern Partnership countries has finished its economic transition, and therefore we should raise the question about what model of state interventionism may be allowed in the economy. Panellists remarked that in the short term it may be beneficial for some of the Eastern partners to look around and find actors other than EU actors who can help them fix their immediate problems. All experts invited to the third session agreed, that partner countries must work hard towards reaching the EU requirements; however, at the same time, they drew attention to the social costs of introducing strict economic regulations and declared that the economy has to be modernized without discouraging people. As the discussion concentrated on the Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Agreements, panellists underlined that it is a clear interest of the European Union to have a developed and prospering neighbourhood. It was, however, noted that there are differences in the partner states' readiness to fulfil the requirements of these agreements as well as potential political obstacles on the way to economic integration, which are seen, for example, in Ukraine in the context of the Yulia Tymoshenko case.

Despite the situation in Ukraine, the Joint Declaration of the Warsaw Eastern Partnership Summit includes the declaration of the EU's will to sign a DCFTA agreement with Ukraine in December 2011 during the EU-Ukraine Summit. As a conclusion to the session, all panellists confirmed that both the EU and its partner states should do their best to strengthen economic ties.

Session Four: EU–Eastern Partners: Whither Integration?

During the last session of the conference, prospects for the development of the Eastern Partnership were addressed while taking into account the outcome of the first two years of the Eastern Partnership's functioning. It was pointed out that neither the institutional changes in the EU nor the financial turmoil should disturb the development of the EaP's cooperation and the implementation of strategies for approaching the EU market by its Eastern neighbours. This process is also important for the EU itself, as it needs a new labour force. Therefore, all countries that have fulfilled the EU's conditions should have the prospect of closer integration with the EU. All panellists agreed that the new rules of the ENP adopted by the EU can improve regional cooperation between partners. No clear reference to the potential accession of EaP partners to the EU was made; however, the potential EU accession

of the Eastern Partners was not entirely excluded, although it would be subject to numerous conditions. It was noted on this occasion that the EaP project is not an alternative to close integration. Countries that are working on their values and democratic principles and moving closer to the EU can refer to Article 49 and apply for EU membership. As a result of the revision to the ENP, the EU is developing cooperation with the Eastern partners on a case-by-case basis, rather than a “one size fits all” approach. Under the new rules for the levels of support, how much each EaP country will be entitled to will depend on its willingness and effort to meet the financing criteria (the ENPI funds will be distributed in accordance with the “more-for-more” basis and the principle of conditionality will apply, which shall be understood as “mutual accountability”). All participants agreed that the European aspirations of Eastern Partnership countries are strong commitments to building sustainable democracies. Simultaneously, the EU stated its willingness to further cooperate with the countries of the Eastern Partnership within the established initiatives. They also committed to work on EaP countries’ harmonization with the EU, in particular by continuing their gradual integration within the EU market. The Eastern Partnership creates many opportunities for development, and it is now up to the EaP countries to take advantage of them and benefit. It remains to be seen whether they are ready to do their utmost to implement the principles of Western democracy. During the session, all panellists mentioned that the engagement of civil society in the EaP cooperation process is necessary and obligatory. The situation in Belarus was one of the main topics during the session. The participants referred to the political situation in Belarus and the numerous examples of violation of human rights under President Alexander Lukashenko’s regime. The attendants pointed out that each EaP country has a different political position and economic strength, and therefore the expectations of each partner towards the EU are different. While Ukraine, Georgia and Moldova are more focused on liberalizing their visa regime and establishing free-trade association agreements with the EU, Armenia and Azerbaijan are more interested in receiving direct financial support. The European Union, in turn, has different plans and expectations regarding each of the countries. All in all however, the economic aspect of the EaP and EU financial support should be seen as only secondary to the EaP’s fundamental goal, which is to support pro-democratic reforms. Therefore, the EaP initiatives should be carried out in the long-term perspective.

Closing Speech

President of the European Parliament Jerzy Buzek, in the conference’s concluding speech, spoke about the successes and shortcomings of the Eastern Partnership, mainly in regard to promoting and safeguarding democracy, human rights and the rule of law in the EU’s eastern neighbourhood. In this context, he underlined the role of civil society in the partner countries and the need for the EU

to support it. President Buzek emphasized, next to the role of civil society, the role of parliamentary cooperation between the EU and its Eastern neighbours and the creation of the EURONEST Parliamentary Assembly. He said that the exchange of practices, peer review and discussions have set up a new dimension to the bilateral and multilateral relations between states. To conclude, President Buzek noted that complete success in creating a zone of peace, prosperity and partnership in the Eastern Partnership's member states is only possible with good cooperation between governments, Parliaments and civil society.

Conference Agenda



THE EASTERN PARTNERSHIP CONFERENCE:
TOWARDS A EUROPEAN COMMUNITY OF DEMOCRACY,
PROSPERITY AND A STRONGER CIVIL SOCIETY

Warsaw, 29th September 2011

Opening remarks 8:45 – 9:00

Olaf Osica – Director, Centre for Eastern Studies (OSW), Poland

Antonella Valmorbidia – Co-Chair of the Steering Committee of Civil Society Forum (CSF) and Director of the Association of the Local Democracy Agencies (ALDA)

Marcin Zaborowski – Director, Polish Institute of International Affairs (PISM), Poland

Keynote speech 9:00-9:30

Radosław Sikorski – Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Poland

Session 1 9:30 – 11:15

Empowering Civil Society. What Partnership for Citizens?

This session is with the participation of civil society representatives and focuses on the EU's policy aimed at the societies of the EU's Eastern partners. How can the potential of civil society be harnessed in the transformation process in the partner countries? Civil society in the partner countries and its importance in the processes of democratisation and European integration. How can the EU support the development of Civil Society?

Leila Alieva – President, Center for National and International Studies, Azerbaijan

Iris Kempe – Head of the Tbilisi office, Heinrich-Böll-Stiftung

Sorin Mereacre – East Europe Foundation Moldova, Moldova Representative Office

Andrei Yahorau – Centre for European Transformation, Belarus

Moderator: Ulad Vialichka – Chairperson, International Consortium EUROBELARUS, and co-Chair, Steering Committee of the EaP Civil Society Forum

Session 2 11:30 - 13:15

Promoting EU Democratic Values and Standards Through Opening Borders

This session is with the participation of experts and attempts to answer the question: Do unhindered people-to-people contacts facilitate the spreading of European values and ideas? What are the prospects for visa liberalisation and, in the future, the opening up of the EU's labour markets to its Eastern partners? To what extent is migration from the Eastern neighbourhood a real problem for the EU? The nature of migration from partner countries to the EU. Differences and similarities with other migrations on EU territory. Linkages between visa liberalisation and the EU's security issues will also be discussed within the scope of this session.

Maxim Boroda – Deputy Director, International Centre for Policy Studies (ICPS), Ukraine

Ghenadie Cretu – Migration and Development Program Coordination, International Organisation for Migration, Mission to the Republic of Moldova

Rob Rozenburg – Deputy Head of Unit for International Relations, DG Home, European Commission

Florian Trauner – Institute for European Integration Research, Austrian Academy of Sciences

Gunnar Wiegand – Director Russia, Eastern Partnership, Central Asia, Regional Cooperation and OSCE European External Action Service

Moderator: **Marcin Zaborowski** – Director, Polish Institute of International Affairs (PISM), Poland

Session 3 14:00 – 15:45

Building Prosperity. Challenges to the Economic Integration of the EU's Eastern Partners?

This session is with the participation of experts and intends to offer possible answers to the questions: Where should we aim in the development of economic relations? To what extent is the DCFTA attractive for the partners? What can realistically be achieved? Is economic integration with the EU the only option for the Eastern partners or is there an alternative to the EU offer (economic cooperation with third countries: Russia, Turkey, China, etc.)?

Kakha Gogolashvili – Director of EU Studies, Georgian Foundation for Strategic and International Studies (GFSIS), Georgia

Alan Mayhew – Jean Monnet Professor and Professorial Fellow, Sussex European Institute, University of Sussex

Staffan Nilsson – President, European Economic and Social Committee (EESC)

Olga Shumylo-Tapiola – Visiting Scholar, Carnegie Europe, Brussels

Moderator: **Olaf Osica** – Director, Centre for Eastern Studies (OSW), Poland

Session 4 16:00 – 17:45

EU – Eastern Partners: Whither Integration?

This session aims to answer the question of what was and what was not successfully achieved during the first two years of the functioning of the Eastern Partnership. The consequences of the ongoing evolution of the European Neighbourhood Policy on the Eastern Partnership will also be defined, both as its review and in the context of the work on the new financial perspective and the events in North Africa and the Middle East. The participants of the session will be asked to outline the priority challenges faced by the EaP over the next years.

Nick Clegg – Deputy Prime Minister of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland

Štefan Füle – European Commissioner for Enlargement and Neighbourhood Policy

David Bakradze – Chairman of the Parliament of Georgia

Moderator: Neil Buckley – Eastern Europe Editor, *Financial Times*

Closing remarks 17:45 – 18:00

Jerzy Buzek – President of the European Parliament

Conference Panelists

Leila Alieva: The founder and president of the Center for National and International Studies in Baku, Azerbaijan, since 2001. She served as director of an independent Center for Strategic and International Studies in Baku (1995–1997). Mrs Alieva advised the President of EBRD, leading oil companies and consortia, including BP, AIOC, UNOCAL and STATOIL. Her specialisation is in issues of security, conflicts and the politics of the South Caucasus region. She also contributes to publications related to European Neighbourhood Policy, the Eastern Partnership and the integration of the EU and NATO.

David Bakradze: Speaker of the Parliament of Georgia since 2008. His previous positions include Member of Parliament, Minister of Conflict Issues, Minister of Foreign Affairs and Special Envoy of the President of Georgia for European and Euro-Atlantic Integration Issues. Mr. Bakradze is First Class State Counsellor and Senior Counsellor. He holds a PhD in physics from the Georgian Academy of Sciences and a Master's degree in public administration from the U.S. National Academy of Public Administration.

Maxim Boroda: Deputy Director and Senior Analyst in the International Centre for Policy Studies (ICPS) in Kyiv, Ukraine. Earlier he headed the Socio-Economic Program at ICPS. Maxim Boroda also provided consulting services to global consultancies and think-tanks, including the Conference Board of Canada, Booz Allen Hamilton, European Profiles S.A., and others. His current research interests are focused on quality-of-life evaluations, social policy and institutional development.

Neil Buckley: Neil Buckley is Eastern Europe Editor of the *Financial Times*. An *FT* journalist for more than two decades, he was formerly Moscow Bureau Chief, in 2005–2008. Prior to that, Mr. Buckley was a correspondent in New York, from 2002 to 2004, and a European Union correspondent in Brussels, 1996–2000. He has twice been a columnist on the *FT*'s "Lex" column. He was named Business Journalist of the Year in the 2004 British Press Awards, and has provided comment on broadcast outlets, including the BBC, CNN, CNBC and Bloomberg Television.

Jerzy Buzek: President of the European Parliament since 2009. His previous positions include Member of the Sejm (Polish parliament), Member of European Parliament and Prime Minister of the Republic of Poland. He was also the Head of the Works Committee in the independent and self-governing Solidarność trade union. He has a PhD in technical sciences from the Silesian University of Technology and holds offices in Polish Academy of Sciences.

Nick Clegg: Deputy Prime Minister of the United Kingdom and Minister for Constitutional and Political Reform. He is also the leader of the Liberal Democrats

party. His previous positions include Member of the European Parliament, Member of Parliament and Shadow Home Secretary. Nick Clegg worked in the European Commission in 1994 and was responsible for developing aid programmes in Central Asia. He is also known from his contributions to a large number of books and articles on political and economic issues.

Ghenadie Cretu: Migration and Development Program Coordinator of the International Organization for Migration (IOM) in the Mission to the Republic of Moldova. Since the end of 2005, he has been working for the International Organization for Migration in the area of Migration and Development. His past assignments include the administration of an EC AENEAS Project for enhancing the productive use of remittances in the Moldovan economy. Ghenadie Cretu earned his International Master of Laws LL.M. degree in 2004 at the Central European University, Budapest, Hungary.

Štefan Füle: Commissioner for Enlargement and Neighbourhood Policy since 2010. His previous positions include European Affairs Minister of the Czech Republic, First Deputy Defence Minister, Permanent Representative to NATO, Ambassador to the United Kingdom, Ambassador to Lithuania and several offices in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. He studied at the Charles University in Prague and the Moscow State Institute of International Relations.

Kakha Gogolashvili: Director of EU Studies at the Georgian Foundation for Strategic and International Studies. In 2009, he was elected member of the Eastern Partnership Civil Society Forum. His professional background includes more than 15 years working in academic institutions as a researcher and senior researcher in the field of economics and 11 years in the Georgian Foreign Service, including a high diplomatic position (deputy head) in the Mission to the EU and, later, director of the department for relations with the EU. He has academic and scientific degrees in economics, journalism and international relations.

Iris Kempe: Director of the South Caucasus Regional Office of the Heinrich-Boell-Foundation in Tbilisi, Georgia. In November 2009, Mrs. Kempe was elected member of the Steering Committee of the Eastern Partnership Civil Society Forum. Previously, she worked as Senior Research Fellow, responsible for Eastern Europe at the CAP–Bertelsmann Group on Policy Research in Munich. Mrs. Kempe holds a PhD in political science from the Freie Universität in Berlin. Her specialisation is in issues of East–West relations.

Alan Mayhew: Economist specialising in problems of economic transition and integration in central and eastern Europe as well as economic policy and budgetary issues in the European Union. He is Jean Monnet Professor at the University of Sussex and is founder and co-director of the Wider Europe Research Programme (www.wider-europe.org). He has wide practical experience in advising governments in the region. He also advises Janusz Lewandowski, Polish Member of

the European Commission and is a member of the panel of international experts advising the Polish Government on its EU Presidency.

Sorin Mereacre: President of East Europe Foundation in Moldova and the Country Director for Moldova at Eurasia Foundation. Since 2010, he has been the Chairperson of the National Participation Council. Before joining the Foundation, Mr. Mereacre served as vice president of one of the biggest Moldovan state transportation companies and was responsible for the company's privatisation process. He participated in the 2009 and 2010 EaP Civil Society Forums and was a member of the EaP CSF steering committee in 2009–2010. He holds a PhD in international private law from Bucharest State University.

Staffan Nilsson: President of the European Economic and Social Committee (EESC), the EU's only non-political advisory body, since 2010. Nilsson is a veteran leader in the EESC. Before becoming President of the EESC, he was President of Group III (Various Interests) for six years, and Vice-president for another six. Since 1995, when he became a member of the EESC and Group III, he has actively contributed his expertise to the work of the EESC, mainly in the fields of agriculture, sustainable development and international cooperation. He has been a farmer in northern Sweden for more than 30 years now and an activist since his student years in the associative sector.

Olaf Osica: Director of the Centre for Eastern Studies (OSW) since 2011. Since 2011, he has been a member of the Scientific Council of the Institute for Western Affairs in Poznań and a member of the editorial board of the quarterlies *New Europe*, *Natolin Review* and *Sprawy Międzynarodowe*. In 2005–2010, he worked as an expert at the Natolin European Centre, where he took part in the research programme "Euro-Atlantic security in the 21st century". Previously, he was employed as an analyst at the Center for International Relations in Warsaw. In 2007, he earned his doctoral degree at the Department of Political and Social Sciences of the European University Institute in Florence.

Robertus Rozenburg: Deputy Head of the International Affairs department in the Directorate-General for Home Affairs in European Commission. He studied Political Science and International Law at the University of Amsterdam. After an initial career in a Dutch NGO and in the private sector he joined the European Commission in 1994, where he has since worked in several positions in the areas of trade, external relations and development.

Olga Shumylo-Tapiola: A visiting scholar at Carnegie Europe in Brussels, where her research focuses on EU and Russian policy toward Ukraine, Moldova, and Belarus, Mrs Shumylo-Tapiola is a member of the supervisory board and former director of the International Centre for Policy Studies. She is also deputy head of the board of PASOS (Policy Association for an Open Society), a network of European civil

society organisations. In 2008, Shumylo-Tapiola served in the Ukrainian government, advising the deputy prime minister on European integration.

Radosław Sikorski: Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Poland. His previous assignments include Member of the Senate, Member of the Sejm (Polish parliament), Minister of National Defence, Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs and Honorary Chairman of the Foundation for Assistance to Poles in the East. He also worked as a war correspondent in Afghanistan and Angola from 1986 to 1989. He won the World Press Photo award in 1987. From 2002 to 2005 he was resident fellow at the American Enterprise Institute in Washington, D.C. and executive director of the New Atlantic Initiative.

Florian Trauner: Researcher at the Institute for European Integration Research of the Austrian Academy of Sciences. He was an Associate Research Fellow at the Centre for European Policy Studies (CEPS) in Brussels (2007–2008) and a Visiting Fellow at the European Union Institute for Security Studies (EU ISS) in Paris (2010). His research interests include the field of EU justice and home affairs as well as the European neighbourhood and enlargement policies. Mr. Trauner holds a PhD from the University of Vienna.

Gunnar Wiegand: Director Russia, Eastern Partnership, Central Asia, Regional Cooperation and OSCE European External Action Service. Prior to that Mr. Wiegand was head of the European Commission's Unit for Relations with Russia as well as the acting director for Eastern Europe, Southern Caucasus and Central Asia, in the Commission's Directorate-General for External Relations. Before this, Mr. Wiegand held a variety of positions at the Commission, including head of the Unit for Transatlantic Relations, spokesman for external relations with Commissioner Chris Patten, assistant to the Director-General of Trade Policy and Desk for External Aspects of German Unification.

Antonella Valmorbida: Director of the Association of the Local Democracy Agencies (www.ald-europe.eu), engaged in local governance and citizen participation in Europe and Neighbouring countries, since 1999. She worked in Croatia to support local democracy and human rights from 1996 to 2000. She has been working with the Council of Europe to support democracy in East European Countries. Mrs. Valmorbida is the co-chair of the Steering Committee of the Civil Society Forum for the Eastern Partnership. Since 2008, she has been associate professor of the University of Padua in international decentralised cooperation.

Ulad Vialichka: Chairperson of International Consortium EUROBELARUS and co-chair of the Steering Committee of the Eastern Partnership Civil Society Forum, Mr. Vialichka has been working in the NGO sector in Belarus since 1994 and is known as an experienced NGO manager, trainer, facilitator, evaluator and consultant. The main areas of his activity are: civil society development, organisational development and capacity-building of NGOs, project and programme monitoring

and evaluation, donor policy in Belarus, international cooperation and partnership, Belarusian-European relations, civic and adult education.

Andrei Yahorau: Director of the Center for European Transformation in Minsk, Belarus. He is one of the founders (2001) and (since 2009) deputy editor-in-chief of the journal of political studies, *Political sphere*. From 2005 up until the foundation of the Center for European Transformation (March 2010), he was an expert at and head of the analytical group of the Humanitarian Techniques Agency. The focus of his research interest is the transformation of the former Soviet Union, civil society, political transformations in Belarus and in the Eastern Partnership region, European studies.

Marcin Zaborowski: Director of the Polish Institute for International Affairs (PISM) since July 2010. Prior to that Mr. Zaborowski directed the transatlantic programme at the European Union Institute for Security Studies (EUISS) in Paris. He was formerly Lecturer in International Relations at the University of Birmingham and Aston University in the UK from 2001 to 2005 and was Coordinator and Director of the Transatlantic Programme at the Centre for International Relations in Warsaw from 2002 to 2004. Mr. Zaborowski holds a PhD in European Politics from the University of Birmingham.

Selected Speeches

Conference Keynote Speech by Radosław Sikorski, Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Poland

Ladies and Gentlemen, Ministers, Dear Commissioner,

Over 200 years ago, field marshal Alexander Suvorov lived in this palace. Sent by the Empress of Russia to pacify the Kościuszko uprising, he instilled fear in Warsaw's inhabitants with his violent repressions.

Today, Warsaw's inhabitants still fear Alexander Suvorov. No, not the Russian general, but the brilliant Moldovan striker who plays for Cracovia football club. After his great pass, Legia Warsaw lost last season's tie. This year, Legia settled the score.

In the footballing world, the borders between the European Union and Eastern Europe have been effaced. We can also erase them from other areas of life.

* * *

I am glad that the Centre for Eastern Studies, together with the Polish Institute of International Affairs and the Civil Society Forum, are hosting this conference on the day of the Second Eastern Partnership summit.

The Eastern Partnership—our joint project—carries the promise of building a community of security, democracy and prosperity spanning from the Atlantic Ocean to the Caspian Sea. It is a roadmap which brings Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus—if it so wishes, as well as Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine closer to the European Union.

We have set ourselves ambitious goals: political association, economic integration, expanding contacts across societies, free movement of people, and supporting transformation.

All of these goals are being implemented one by one.

Imagine, Ladies and Gentlemen, where we would be today without the Eastern Partnership: The eyes of the entire world, closely following the eurozone crisis, would be directed towards the South. Of course, North Africa and the Middle East need our assistance more than ever before. However, it would be contrary to the goals of the European Neighbourhood Policy to care for the **Europe's Southern neighbours**, while at the same time ignoring the needs of **Europe's reforming Eastern neighbours**—if it so happens that their reforms face difficulties.

The joint declaration to be adopted by the leaders of EU Member States and the partner countries during the 2nd Eastern Partnership Summit will answer the

needs of both Eastern Europe and the European Union itself. It will become a political lodestar for the years to come.

As the Presidency, we have negotiated a consensus. This, as we very well know, is neither the dream of its author nor that of the other parties. Precisely because it is a compromise.

Most importantly, the declaration will consist of a strong message supporting the integration of partner countries with the European Union; the acknowledgement of the European aspirations and European choice of partner countries; as well as a reference to the community of values inscribed in the Treaty on European Union.

In terms of visa regime liberalization, we have achieved the optimal result that could be achieved. Today, there are greater fears than ever before when it comes to illegal migration. And so progress was always going to be hard. But indeed, we have made it.

Moving away from describing the visa regime as an objective “in the long run” is undoubtedly a key success of the Summit. As John Keynes once said, “In the long run we are all dead.”

If a partner country fulfils the necessary and clearly defined technical criteria, the visa requirement will be abolished. And so it will no longer be a case of policy, but a real achievement. Instead of fuzzy promises and opaque criteria, we will have concrete results.

Now that’s what I call progress.

We are trying to expand the European Union’s research and education programs, including Erasmus, to involve young representatives of the new elites. I know very well how many of my own opinions were formed when, as a political refugee, I studied at Oxford.

* * *

We want to share the experiences from our own integration process, so that our partners can best benefit from this process, just as Poland once benefitted from it.

When, in December 1991, after 11 months of negotiations Poland signed the association agreement with the European Union, we did not receive a promise of future membership. All we had was our unilateral declaration. Not 15 years later, we were a fully-fledged member.

In the meantime, we managed to make the acknowledgement of democratic values the primary condition for membership candidates. The Copenhagen criteria serve as the foundation of Article 49 of Treaty on European Union, which stipulates that:

*“Any European State which respects the principles set out in Article 6(1)—that is, liberty, democracy, respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms, and the rule of law—**may apply to become a member of the Union.**”*

Twenty years ago, there were some who charged that the association agreement will mainly benefit the countries of the European Community. In our opinion, reality has proved them wrong.

While on our arduous path to membership, we created the Visegrad Group and negotiated the Central European Free Trade Agreement. Pessimists claimed that by stewing in our own regional juice, we were postponing European integration. They were wrong.

The Eastern Partnership is precisely a sort of “Visegrad II.” We did our homework when it comes to mutual cooperation. On the one hand, this knowledge will help our partners on their road to the EU. On the other hand, it will dispel any doubts that by drawing these countries towards us, we are dragging regional spats into the Western community.

* * *

The creation of a common economic area is what lies ahead.

By the end of this year, we want to finalize negotiations on the association agreement creating the Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Area with Ukraine. Georgia and Moldova are next in line.

The agreement obliges associated members to adopt **60% of EU legislation**. That is the goal of this programme. That is the scale of the transition towards sound economic governance and the rule of law.

The free-trade area brings benefits to both EU countries and our Eastern European partners. It will boost job growth and investment flows and spur on economic growth. **According to various forecasts, thanks to the DCFTA, Ukraine’s national income will—in the medium term—grow by at least 2.5% and possibly by as much as 10%.** Now that’s serious money. This growth will be felt by regular citizens.

From the point of view of Ukrainian entrepreneurs, what is the agreement’s added value?

First, it will abolish customs and other trade barriers, thereby boosting the competitiveness of Ukrainian products, which will in turn become sought-after goods on the European market of **half a billion consumers**. Trade liberalization in just the agricultural sector may increase Ukraine’s income **by at least 150 million per year**.

Second, entrepreneurs will gain greater access to cheap loans, grants and advice for SMEs, as well as assistance in doing business with EU partners. Indeed, this will be possible already tomorrow, at the Eastern Partnership Business Forum in Sopot.

Third, assistance in border management, border infrastructure modernization and training for customs police will help boost trade flows.

And, last but not least, fulfilling EU norms and standards—for example, phytosanitary or environmental ones—will aid exports not only to EU markets, but indeed to global markets as well.

When creating the free-trade area, we are guided by the method adopted by the EU's founding fathers, Jean Monnet and Robert Schuman:

Thanks to sectoral and technical cooperation, and what may at first glance seem like small steps, with time we will achieve important political goals.

* * *

Ladies and Gentlemen,

The Eastern Partnership may not be a geostrategic project, but accomplishing it will have geopolitical consequences.

There is plenty of talk in Brussels about tightening bonds with our partners in various parts of the world. But let's be frank: the **EU exerts its greatest influence right here, in our closest neighbourhood**. The newest report of the European Council on Foreign Relations about the Partnership puts it rightly: *let's turn "presence into power."*

We must use the Union's biggest asset—our attractiveness, which certainly exudes a magnetic force.

The fires in Northern Ireland would not have been put out if not for the strength of European norms and values and the sturdy leadership which got the parties to sit down at the negotiating table. This model may turn out to be very useful in the East.

We have a choice: to wait for the frozen conflicts to boil over or to extend a safety net in the form of our "soft power", which disciplines relations between countries. Mending conflicts which break out is much more costly than preventing them.

The conflicts in Transnistria, Nagorno-Karabakh, Abkhazia and South Ossetia can be resolved. Russia's constructive input will be necessary. So, despite the fact that Russia—of its own will—is not part of the Eastern Partnership, our negotiations on a partnership and cooperation agreement with Russia are a step forward.

But we must also remember that the Eastern Partnership does not absolve partner countries of the responsibility for reform.

The principle we have adopted—"more for more"—is there for a reason. The more effort you put into reforming, the more assistance the European Union will provide. And this includes financial assistance. We will not let cynicism set in and

tolerate a situation in which you pretend to adopt European values and we pretend to help you in doing so.

But another principle also applies—“less for less”. This relates first and foremost to Belarus. I am aware that there are Belarusian delegations here today, and so are relatives of those who have been detained and imprisoned.

In November of last year, together with Minister Guido Westerwelle, we made President Lukashenko an offer: free and fair elections and, in turn, close cooperation with the European Union, in exchange for 3 billion over three years.

Unfortunately, President Lukashenko once again failed to keep his word. He rigged the election and arrested his rivals. I have spoken to many people—including some from Russia—and nobody believes that Lukashenko received 80% of the vote. He has an interesting way of clinging to power: adopting “democratic” standards from the East, and taking money from the West. This we cannot accept, and I’m afraid his plan will never work. He must get his standards and his money from the same direction.

Poland sees Belarus as a European nation. That is why we want the best possible offer for Belarus. But this offer will come into effect only once Belarusian prisons are filled with criminals—not oppositionists.

The Belarusian opposition is our partner.

Our neighbourly brother nation of Belarus can be sure that there exists a real alternative to authoritarian rule.

This alternative will become all the more tangible as Belarusian civil society gets stronger.

Civil society is a resource without which democracy cannot spread its wings. Civil society “speaks truth to power.”

When Poland was ruled by a communist dictatorship, 10 million Poles joined the “Solidarity” movement and stood up for their rights. Never in history have 80% of the workforce belonged—of their own free will—to one social organization. Without that united force, we would not be where we are today—a member of the European Union, currently holding its Presidency.

We succeeded, and so can you!

Speech by Nick Clegg, Deputy Prime Minister of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland

It is twenty years since the Soviet Union collapsed. I was a student, part of a generation raised during the Cold War, with family from across Europe: I'm British, my mother is Dutch, my grandmother Russian, with roots tracing back to Ukraine. Like many people, we watched with great hope as the barriers that divided this continent were swept away. We witnessed a new dawn for Europe, a triumph for peace, prosperity, and liberty, too.

Two decades on and it is European unity that concerns us again today. Europe finds itself, once again, at a fork in the road. As a sovereign debt crisis continues to engulf the eurozone and as all energies are focused on the big steps needed to end that crisis, to stop it ever happening again. Europe is clearly embarking on a period of change. The danger we face, which I will address today, is of change leading to fragmentation—that we become divided, turning away from each other, both within the European Union, and with our partners who are not, or not yet, members of it. As I will explain, that would be a disaster.

Our history has been marked by moments of great destruction and turmoil. At each we have had to make a choice: do we allow circumstances to pull us apart, or do we overcome our challenges by working together? And, when it has counted most, Europeans have stood together—recognising that we are stronger shoulder-to-shoulder than we are apart. Now, we must do the same again. Whether that is on completion of the Single Market or whether through the EU staying open to the rest of the world, not least our Eastern neighbours. With those countries driving through the reforms that are their side of the deal, whether by showing new, European leadership on defence. In these areas, and so many others, we are the key to each other's success.

Before I come to those, let's consider the danger of division. European states have always been arranged in different groups, and levels of integration have always varied between those groups, with nations changing and evolving at different speeds, jumping different hurdles at different points. Academics call it variable geometry, and there's nothing new about it. Today we have states in the eurozone, and those out of it; those who are out, but want to be in; those who are out, and happy to stay out; and those not currently in the European Union at all. These distinctions are not the problem—the problem is if the economic crisis deepens the fault lines between our nations, if it tears us apart.

It is entirely feasible that—for a period—the eurozone now turns inwards. In order to resolve the current troubles, members will need to integrate further, that is clear. A number of ideas are floating around, primarily around further fiscal integration to support the monetary union, with stronger governance arrangements to support it. And it is not the UK's place to seek to dictate those steps. Like

everyone, our immediate concern is that decisions are taken quickly. The world is impatient, the markets are desperate for signs of leadership, and the eurozone does not have time on its side. But, we are also clear that any change to governance structures must not lead to a weaker and divisive Europe where the aims of “euro ins” are set against those of “euro outs”. There can be no inhibiting of trade, for example, no obstructing the single market. And any decision that affects the 27 must always be taken by the 27.

The European Union is built on consent, cooperation, and participation. While the UK has chosen not to join the euro, we respect the decisions taken by its members to support it. But we cannot accept arrangements that would privilege the eurozone as a decision-making body over the European Council. It would not be right for the eurozone to take decisions that bind the rest of the EU. Above all, it cannot act against the interests of those who are not members. That is the surest way to rupture our union—undermining the huge strides that have been taken to secure cooperation between us, allowing walls to spring up, even though we spent years knocking them down. And don’t forget how central that cooperation is to our shared prosperity. Our economies benefit massively from integration. Ask the British manufacturer whose goods travel without duty or tariff for sale in Spain, or the Polish engineer who moves freely to work in Germany.

Sacrificing that closeness would carry huge costs for the businesses and individuals who benefit from the opportunity it presents. And, in the future, it would mean less trade, fewer jobs, lower growth—a major blow to a continent that was already struggling to compete with new global powers, even before this crisis began. A fractured and fragmented EU would also be less inclined—and less able—to open its door to our partners in the East. We must not let that happen. This is a moment for leadership, countering the forces pulling us apart while—for the UK’s part—we serve British national interests, too. That should happen in a range of areas. I won’t attempt to cover each one, but I will pick out those where there are both real risks and real opportunities: the Single Market, greater partnership between the EU and our Eastern neighbours, and European defence.

On the Single Market, we must be much more aggressive about completing it. The world’s largest borderless marketplace, consisting of 500 million people, generating 12 trillion euros every year. As a result of the Single Market, EU nations trade with each other around twice as much as they would do otherwise. Imagine the prosperity we could deliver if we took it to the next stage. Liberalising trade in services and in the digital economy could add around 800bn euros to the EU’s economy. That’s around 4,200 euros extra for the average household every year. It’s also how we make ourselves more competitive. On current trends, by the middle of this century major European economies are expected to have slipped from their top spots—France, Germany, the UK. Our growth rates are still only half of what they were before the crisis, while our competitors steam ahead. The only way to turn that around is through a major effort to open up our markets.

And not just within the EU, but outside of it. It's estimated that, by opening up to other markets, we could create up to 5.2 million new jobs—more than were lost during the recession. Which brings me to our Eastern neighbours. It is in the EU's clear interest to offer meaningful integration to those neighbours, including through full EU membership, where the criteria are rigorously met. The creation of the European Union was the most daring political experiment of modern times. But the growth of that union has been even more impressive. The leaders of the time were big enough to take a risk, to do the previously unthinkable. And millions of ordinary people have seen their lives improve as a result.

So the UK is clear: “no” to a planned pause after Croatia. Any European nation that meets the eligibility criteria must be welcome to apply for EU membership. To those who say enlargement is impossible because of our cultural differences—you sometimes hear this said about Turkey—the EU has always been a patchwork of different identities; and, as it happens, the UK remains the strongest supporter of the Turkish bid. To those who say it costs too much: the boost to trade can reap enormous economic benefits—that has been the experience after previous enlargements. In the UK, exports to the new Member States are two and a half times what they were a decade ago. To those who say it is administratively impossible: I recognise that expansion creates logistical challenges, but surely we will not restrict entry to our club because we cannot reorganise the tables and chairs?

Of course, it would be totally wrong to lower the bar for membership. But we can help nations straining to reach it, using integration to support reform. That's what the EU's reworked Neighbourhood Policy should do. Previously, billions of euros were sent across our Southern and Eastern borders to aid political and economic reform. But it did not achieve enough. That money will now be properly targeted, specially tailored, country by country. And, where we do not see real progress, support and access will be withdrawn. The regional element of that—the “Eastern Partnership”—offers much closer integration to Ukraine, Moldova, Georgia, Armenia and Azerbaijan as well as Belarus, on the condition of proper reform—which I will come to.

I would like to pay tribute to the Polish Presidency for spearheading this agenda, encouraging the EU to extend the hand of friendship to these countries in a way we never really have before. Not least through Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Areas, much more than simple tariff liberalisation, [but also by] bringing countries' commercial laws and regulations in line with EU standards, in effect integrating these countries into the Single Market. The partnership will also seek to build regional cooperation. The EU wants to help Armenia and Azerbaijan resolve their conflict and we remain committed to helping Georgia protect its territorial integrity within its internationally recognised borders.

On the Eastern Partnership, let me get one thing straight: the UK does not see these agreements as an *alternative* to EU membership, which I know is a concern for some. We do not see these agreements as a dead end. They are not a downgrading.

On the contrary, they a very real deepening of our ties, a down-payment towards membership for those who seek it. Of course, for this partnership to work, our neighbours need to do their bit—liberalising your economies, opening up your politics, entrenching the rule of law. Transition in post-communist Europe has been extremely mixed. There are success stories—10 former communist countries are now members of the EU and NATO. But elsewhere we have seen progress stall, even regress. The shift to democracy and to a market economy cannot happen overnight. It is not without pain and it can become harder over time as the cost of reform is paid before its benefits are felt.

But the facts speak for themselves. Where states have taken decisive steps, and maintained momentum we now see maturing democracies, consistent stability, higher growth. Real reform works. It's half-measures and token gestures that create the worst of all worlds—autocracy, crony capitalism. Where, without proper democratic controls, power cannot be kept in check. No transparency, so no end to corruption. No accountability, so no means of restraining vested interests. No rule of law, so no foreign investment. Nor can you create the environment for honest businesses to thrive.

So the UK urges our partners to see through your reform programmes—political and economic. Freedom of speech, human rights, economic opportunity—these are not “western values”. They are the aspirations of people across the globe. They are the building blocks of prosperity. We want our partners to build on progress already made. Like Ukraine, a country with eight million more people than Poland, but an economy only a third the size. Energy, agriculture, access to major markets, enviable human resources—Ukraine has what it takes to become a European giant, but only if it builds a dynamic market economy coupled with a vibrant democracy. So, there can be no backsliding. In order to attract wealth, foreign investors must be confident of decent protections under Ukrainian law and in Ukrainian courts. In order to complete negotiations with the EU—negotiations that could revolutionise Ukraine's economy—we must see fair elections, a free press and a guarantee that opponents of the Government are not persecuted for their views. Otherwise EU parliaments will find it very difficult to ratify the agreement that is now tantalisingly close.

Ukraine, of course, is a country where there is progress to work with. Unfortunately, the same cannot be said for Belarus. Grave human rights abuses continue under Alexander Lukashenka's regime. He has decimated the opposition, doing whatever it takes to retain his grip on power. I was in Minsk 15 years ago as an EU official trying to help find ways to take Belarus forward. I find it deeply saddening that, if I went back now, I expect many of the problems I witnessed would be the same or even worse. But there is hope. If we are learning anything from events across the Arab world, it's this: You cannot deny people their rights and freedoms forever. Not in today's world. Not when the forces of youth, technology and economic grievance are colliding to drive change across the globe pushing the oppressed and forgotten to find their voice. You cannot rig an election, squash

dissent, destroy liberty, run an economy into the ground without, eventually, paying the price. Lukashenka's support is now at its lowest in years, finding himself increasingly isolated abroad. At home he is facing protests, worker unrest, growing opposition from the young and the educated. The international community must keep up the pressure.

In Europe, that means sticking to our comprehensive package of sanctions aimed squarely at members of the regime involved in human rights abuse. The offer of dialogue remains, but the price is clear: stop the repression, start building democracy or you will get nothing from us. Europe has come too far, achieved too much to allow any European nation to be dragged back to our darker past. Today, I will be meeting with activists and speaking to listeners of European Radio for Belarus to demonstrate the UK's solidarity with them and I'd like to pay tribute to the efforts of campaigners back in the UK working with the Index on Censorship and Free Belarus Now. And one of our major banks has now stopped helping the Belarusian government sell its bonds—a blow to the regime's coffers. It is heartening to see British business and civil society stand together on this.

Finally, I would like to say a word on defence, because, with budgets under pressure, there is also a danger of fracture. Some countries have shown a willingness to invest in meaningful defence capabilities and, crucially, a willingness to deploy them—as seen in Afghanistan and recently in Libya. Others are more interested in institutional tinkering, detracting from, rather than increasing Europe's defence capabilities. For the UK's part, we believe that those countries which are serious about European defence, whether in NATO or EU frameworks, should forge ahead in partnership as the UK and France are already doing. Others who have the will and the capabilities should join us. Not to create a Euro-army or anything to rival NATO, but to increase our capabilities, to find savings and to pull our weight both inside and outside NATO. We don't want simply to rely on the U.S., we want European leadership. The current U.S. administration has made very clear it expects Europe to up its game. Any future administration is likely to feel the same. Frankly, I agree. So, we want to take a lead on European foreign policy and defence and we want those who are able and willing to join us. Yes to Atlanticism, but coupled to a new leadership in Europe.

So, to finish as I began, as we look back at the end of the Soviet Union—a moment when all Europeans watched with both awe and unease as old certainties vanished—we are again at a turning point in our history. Now, as then, Europeans face a choice. Drift apart, retreat to our corners, and undo the work of those who came before us. Or, amidst the challenges of our current problems, find each other once more. A united European Union, standing shoulder-to-shoulder with our partners in the East. Standing together for the sake of our common good.

We've done it before. We can do it again.

Thank you.

Speech by Štefan Füle, European Commissioner for Enlargement and Neighbourhood Policy

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Your discussions set the scene for tomorrow's debates among the leaders at the Summit. Tomorrow, we will review the achievements of the Eastern Partnership and discuss how to pursue our common goals.

We value your opinion, so allow me to outline the main issues:

- First: What has the Eastern Partnership achieved since it was launched?
- Second: Where has the Eastern Partnership been less successful?
- Third: How will the ongoing evolution of the European Neighbourhood Policy affect the Eastern Partnership?
- Fourth: What challenges will we face in the coming years?

First, our achievements. Since the 2009 Prague Summit, we have created a new, distinct relationship between the EU and our Eastern neighbours. Our partners are at various stages of establishing sustainable democracy, founded on respect for fundamental freedoms and the rule of law. The less advanced this is, the more difficult, but also the more necessary, your work is.

Some of our Partners express clear aspirations to join the European Union. The Eastern Partnership supports their work to consolidate sustainable democracies and market-economies. Deep reforms bring ever closer political association and deeper economic integration with the European Union within reach.

The Eastern Partnership is innovative and inclusive as it reaches out to all stakeholders: government, parliaments, regional and local authorities, business community, and, last but not least, civil society.

The Civil Society Forum is increasingly involved in most activities within the multilateral track of the Eastern Partnership, and I am committed to help enhance its role and capacities.

Developing a multilateral dimension for the Eastern partnership is an important achievement. It complements each country's bilateral relations with the European Union. It provides a forum to exchange experience and good practice between EU Member States and our Eastern Partners, and among our Partners.

Through the Eastern Partnership platforms and panels, we are dealing with a broad range of issues.

We have initiated Comprehensive Institution Building programmes to strengthen the efficiency, transparency and accountability of our Partners' key government institutions.

We launched five Flagship Initiatives to deliver tangible benefits for Partner countries' citizens in key areas such as integrated border management, Small and Medium Enterprises, energy efficiency, environment protection and civil

protection. And we have stepped up our financial support. Our overall budget for bilateral and regional cooperation amounts to over 1.9 billion for 2010–13.

We are advancing in our bilateral agenda with Partners. The goal is to negotiate Association Agreements, including Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Areas, with all willing Partners. Such negotiations are already in a very advanced stage with Ukraine.

Mobility and people-to-people contacts are important aspects of the Eastern Partnership. We are now implementing Visa Action Plans with Ukraine and Moldova, with the aim of visa liberalisation. Visa facilitation and readmission agreements are being implemented with Georgia and we hope to negotiate similar agreements with Armenia, Azerbaijan and Belarus.

This brings me to my second point—in some areas, I wish we had achieved more.

The progress of reforms in some countries has not been as constant, comprehensive and advanced as we hoped. In a number of cases, we have noted backsliding, for instance regarding freedom of media or rule of law.

Clearly, our relations with Belarus remain a thorn in the side of the Eastern Partnership. Following the crackdown on the opposition and civil society, we re-imposed sanctions against the Minsk regime. However, we will not isolate Belarusian people. I remain personally committed to engagement with the opposition, human rights defenders and free media for as long as it takes.

Equally painful is the slow progress in effectively solving conflicts in the region.

As my third point, let's consider the ongoing evolution of the European Neighbourhood Policy and its impact on the Eastern Partnership.

Events in our Southern neighbourhood illustrate that long-term stability cannot be assured by non-democratic regimes. In response, throughout its neighbourhood, the European Union is putting an even stronger emphasis on promoting deep and sustainable democracy.

Several days ago, the Commission established a Neighbourhood Civil Society Facility. For 2011, the budget of the Facility is 22 million. We also aim to set up a European Endowment for Democracy.

Last, we need to communicate our work to citizens. Improving the visibility of our activities within the Eastern Partnership is certainly a challenge for the future.

Finally, what are the other challenges for the future? The principle of “more for more” between the EU and Partners needs to become a reality. This will require efforts on all sides. When Partners make genuine progress in reform programmes, the European Union must respond accordingly. This includes providing financial support, making travel easier and allowing access to the EU market. By implementing an ambitious reform agenda and building sustainable democracies,

our partners will also have improved the lives of their own citizens and made their European aspirations credible.

My final message is clear: without a well-functioning and adequately supported civil society, the Eastern Partnership has no chance of success. We count on your contribution to promote the reform agenda and fostering democratic values in Partner countries.

As promised at my last meeting with the Steering Committee of the Civil Society Forum, I asked the EU delegations in the six Partner countries to organise a series of meetings with the National Platforms of the Civil Society Forum to prepare for this Summit, in cooperation with the governmental authorities.

These meetings have occurred in all six countries and we are currently reflecting on their results. I share many of the concerns you raised, including the lack of information about the Eastern Partnership in your countries and the need to encourage governments to create inclusive processes for your participation.

Today, I spoke about establishing a Neighbourhood Civil Society Facility. This can support your efforts—at national, regional and local levels, where the voice of civil society is equally needed. I hope to continue this delegation-facilitated dialogue in a structured way.

I read with great interest the Position Paper prepared by the Civil Society Forum. Your recommendations merit deeper reflection. I will discuss one of them, namely “association via sectoral integration”, at tomorrow’s Summit.

Tomorrow, we hope to agree on a renewed Eastern Partnership agenda. At the next Civil Society Forum in Poznan, we will be able to discuss plans for its implementation. I look forward to debating how we should move forward together.

Thank you for your attention.

Speech by David Bakradze, Chairman of the Parliament of Georgia

Dear colleagues and friends, Ladies and Gentlemen,

The Eastern Partnership has been an invaluable catalyst for Georgia's European integration. As such, it is a special honour for me to address such a distinguished audience on a topic as pivotal as this.

I hope we can use our time together to think hard about how to make the Eastern Partnership even more effective—how to evaluate its progress and set our priorities going forward.

The EU, in initiating the Eastern Partnership, signalled its readiness to accelerate the political and economic integration of its neighbours to the East. The opportunity has been embraced by Georgia and the other countries represented here as a way to deepen our democracies and bring greater opportunities to our people.

Equally, I believe we would all agree that the Partnership has strengthened the European Union as well. Working together, we are able to respond more decisively to the common challenges we face in the 21st century; and only together can we keep alive the promise of a Europe whole and free.

I believe if we consider the Eastern Partnership through the prism of the Arab Spring, we can see how indispensable it has been—and how crucial it is to make it even stronger. Because the Arab Spring reminds us how very fragile democratic transformations can be. This makes it all the more important for us not only to consolidate the progress prompted by the Eastern Partnership, but to maintain our momentum and strive for ever more profound integration in our neighbourhood.

We are unwavering in our commitment to working within the Eastern Partnership framework and advancing our relations with the EU. We value the Partnership as well for bringing us closer to our neighbouring states through our commitment to implementing joint projects of common interest under the multilateral cooperation format of the EaP.

Progress Achieved:

The bilateral component of the EaP is of particular importance for Georgia, and I am glad to note that EU–Georgia cooperation has greatly advanced since the launch of the EaP.

Allow me to draw your attention to some of the major developments:

Negotiations on our **Association Agreement** were launched in July 2010 and have been very constructive. Six plenary sessions and 27 Working Group meetings have achieved agreement on a majority of the articles under the Preamble and Titles—including the sections on Political Dialogue and Reform, Common Foreign and Security Policy; and Justice, Freedom and Security—as well as the majority of chapters on Economic Cooperation and Sectoral Cooperation Policies.

Georgia is pleased to have fulfilled all of the key recommendations necessary for the start of negotiations on a **Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Agreement**. We hope that the final step in the preparatory process, the Commission's assessment, will proceed apace and that we can begin negotiations without delay.

The **Visa Facilitation and Readmission Agreements** have been in force since March 2011 and our Government is successfully implementing these agreements. We hope the reforms we have completed in this area will pave the way towards greater visa liberalization between Georgia and the EU; in particular, we look forward to the possibility of an announcement later this year, on the margins of the EU–Georgia Cooperation Council, regarding the start of a Visa Dialogue and the launch of an exploratory phase in the first trimester of 2012.

Other examples of deepening cooperation between Georgia and the EU include our **Agreement on a Common Aviation Area**, signed in December 2010, and our **Agreement on Mutual Protection of Geographical Indications of Agricultural Products and Other Foodstuff (GIs)**, signed in July 2011.

The EU's Role in Security & Stability

The EU has played a crucial role in promoting security and stability on the ground, especially during and after the August 2008 War. The EU brokered the six-point cease-fire agreement that ended hostilities, deployed a monitoring mission, and hosted a donors' conference; the Union remains central to the Geneva talks and has been strongly supportive of Georgia's territorial integrity. It also has vowed to stand by its non-recognition policy concerning our occupied territories.

Unfortunately, the full implementation of the ceasefire agreement—including the withdrawal of Russian military forces from the occupied territories of Georgia—can only be assured by deepening the EU's involvement in conflict resolution. Specifically, it is vital for the EUMM to remain on the ground until all of its objectives are achieved. We also hope the EUMM will be able to fulfil its original mandate, which includes full access to the occupied territories. In addition, the EU can play a significant role in speeding the safe and dignified return of internally displaced persons to their homes.

The EU–Georgia partnership is already a robust one. But both sides believe that our cooperation could be further enhanced. As High Representative Baroness Ashton said in March 2010, “There is more work to do... So we need stronger structures, more flexibility and better preparedness if we want Georgia to be the benchmark for the future.”

I can assure you that Georgia can and will be that benchmark.

Strengthening Cooperation within the EaP:

It is important to ensure the successful multilateral development of the EaP, as well, notably by going beyond the current phase of seminars and exchanges of experience and focusing on concrete, results-oriented joint projects.

We thus welcome the initiative outlined in the Joint Communication of the Commission and the High Representative, “*A new response to a changing neighbourhood*,” which explains that cooperation and exchange will be stepped up significantly. In this regard, there should be early consultations on the annual ENP progress reports with every Partner State prior to their official presentation.

Naturally, for the effective implementation of the EaP, it is essential that financial support is proportionate to the goals set within this framework.

It is worth noting that the aforementioned Communication mainly focused on the Southern Mediterranean. We all understand the potential implications for the EU of the North African revolutions, and we believe strongly that the EU should play a role in nurturing aspiring democracies in the region.

However, looking toward the Southern Mediterranean from the perspective of an Eastern Partnership country—and understanding that our own journey toward the EU is far from over—we would hope that the spirit of the Communication will apply equally to the changing environment in the Eastern Neighbourhood.

We welcome the emphasis the Communication placed on the importance of democratic political reforms. Even as Georgia continues to learn from the experiences of others, we are ready and willing to use the ENP framework to share our successes in implementing reforms in a number of different areas, especially with the Southern neighbours.

We also believe the EU can play a stronger role in resolving existing conflicts in the EaP region, a fact also acknowledged in the Communication. Security and stability are essential platforms for political and economic reform and for effectively pursuing the goals of the ENP.

The Georgian quest to build a mature democratic state, meanwhile, requires a corresponding level of economic development. We are developing our transit potential in order to play an active role in improving EU energy security. But we believe that cooperation on energy security should be considerably stepped up, including by completing the implementation of the Southern Corridor, Nabucco, and the Trans-Caspian project.

EURONEST

Naturally, the establishment of a parliamentary assembly was a logical development in the institutionalization of the Eastern Partnership. The significance of a structure aimed to hold the executive to account and to scrutinize its activities is crystal-clear, I believe.

Furthermore, the EURONEST Parliamentary Assembly does constitute a promising format to support and consolidate in practical terms the Eastern Partnership, via the four thematic platforms that it covers. We thus believe the EURONEST PA can play a major role in addressing the challenges faced by Eastern European Partners. And since these challenges have a direct impact upon the EU,

their effective solution requires continuous and ambitious engagement on the part of the Union.

Alongside mutual interests and commitments, shared ownership and responsibility, EURONEST PA is founded upon the principle of differentiation. As laid out in the Constituent Act, the aforementioned principle shall not prejudice the rights of individual Eastern European Partners but aims at defining the interests and objectives regarding the relations of each Eastern European Partner with the EU.

Concluding remarks

Georgia believes the EaP should be ambitious in promoting European identity and encouraging the aspirations of partner countries. Deeper integration with EU standards, regulations, and legislation should be supported with relevant political incentives. The EU should be ready to leave its doors open for willing partners committed to the values upon which Article 49 of the TEU is based. The EU should not shy away from determining the lawful long-term prospects of EU membership for its European partners.

We are glad that Article 49 was mentioned in the Communication and we hope all similar EU documents in the future will reference it as well. It is the sovereign right of each European Partner, demonstrating a credible track record with respect to common values, to remain a partner in accordance with Article 8 of the Treaty on European Union or to follow its European aspirations in accordance with Article 49.

In conclusion, allow me to note that in order to keep and further accelerate the current pace of the EaP implementation, the extent to which the EU and the Partner States are willing to engage in the partnership should be clearly predefined. The EU should acknowledge and support our EU aspirations in order to deepen our mutual understanding and make the EaP more effective. For our part, we acknowledge and accept the commitments that our aspirations require, and we stand ready to embrace this historic task.

Thank you.

Conference Closing Remarks: Speech by Jerzy Buzek, President of the European Parliament

It is more than two years since the Eastern Partnership has been launched. Our meeting today in Warsaw, thus, is very timely. It creates an excellent opportunity for us to assess the successes and shortcomings of this ambitious programme.

I also welcome the presence of the two co-presidents of the Euronest parliamentary assembly MEP Kristian Vigenin and Borys Tarasiuk, Chairman of the European Integration Committee of the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine. I thank the organisers for inviting them in their capacity.

The Eastern Partnership also gives us the possibility to show that while the EU's attention is focused on the Southern dimension and the unfolding Arab Spring, the engagement in the East should be maintained and even strengthened, both politically and financially.

While looking back at the last two years, we should not only be proud of our achievements, but also critical. We should be sincere and frank about the fact that unfortunately there has been a clear backtracking in terms of democracy, human rights and rule of law in some of our Eastern partner countries. And I am talking not only about Belarus.

The bad practices of prosecuting political opponents, intimidating independent media, creating obstacles for civil society organisations and pressuring the courts have spread beyond Minsk to some other capitals as well. This is a very alarming trend and the best proof that democracy assistance and empowerment of civil society should be at the core of the Eastern Partnership policy.

The Eastern Partnership is a long term pan-European project but it can not go ahead without a parliamentary dimension, and without the full involvement of civil society. As parliamentarians, we are those who are in everyday contact with our citizens. We provide the political oversight over governments. But increasingly we also provide an element of what I call "parliamentary democracy".

The relationships that exist between parliaments, the exchange of best practices, the peer review and discussions we have, provide an important new dimension to our bilateral and multilateral relations.

This is why I am pleased to announce that two weeks ago the European Parliament held its first session of the EURONEST Parliamentary Assembly. This joins MEP's with Members from the five Parliaments of the Eastern Partnership. Its committees are up and running and its reports are already in the making.

We are tackling crucial issues for all of us—almost 600 million citizens—from economic integration, to energy security to democracy and human rights. This dialogue and day-to-day cooperation is at the heart of what we call our "community method".

I have one regret, though: that we can not yet welcome our colleagues from the Belarusian Palata. Belarus should be a full member but it must first return to the democratic community of nations.

Ladies and Gentlemen, a strong partnership with civil society, whose purpose is deep and sustainable democracy, should become an essential part of our Eastern neighbourhood policy. We have the responsibility to strengthen the role of the Civil Society Forum of the Eastern Partnership, both through support for its national platforms, and by setting up a Neighbourhood Civil Society Facility and establishing the European Endowment for Democracy.

The Endowment should enable the EU to react to democracy challenges in a more swift and flexible manner, but this new tool must be employed in a manner complementary to existing European instruments, such as the European Instrument for Democracy and Human Rights (EIDHR).

It should enable us to offer much-needed assistance to civil society, nongovernmental organisations, independent media and reformist movements in the countries in transition. In the long run, democracy, stability and prosperity are all essential elements in rooting democratic values, the respect for human rights and rule of law in our societies.

The European Parliament also attaches a great importance to the improvement of people-to-people contacts. This is why we will continue to push for greater visa liberalisation, which should be an essential element of our neighbourhood policy.

We also believe that we must extend successful EU programmes such as Erasmus and Media + so we can give concrete tools to strengthen civil society. My own experience showed that supporting journalists, teachers, students, trade unions and NGOs is crucial in supporting democratic transitions.

My last remark is that in today's integrated world, our policies can not be sectoral. Our neighbourhood policy as a whole cannot be just a "foreign policy", it needs to be an extension of our internal market.

This is why the European Parliament has urged the European Commission to open the single market to goods, services and capital from our immediate neighbours. The EU should [not only] be at the heart of an ever-enlarging circle of cooperation and trade but also of shared laws and democratic norms. Our Eastern Partnership is about creating a zone of peace, prosperity and partnership for all 600 million citizens we politicians represent.

But to achieve this, we need not only cooperation between governments, but also between Parliaments, and of course, civil society.



Position Paper of the Civil Society Forum To the Eastern Partnership Summit

(Prepared by the Steering Committee)

Warsaw, September 29, 2011

The start-up phase of the Eastern Partnership is over. Today, it is essential to give the Eastern Partnership new energy through actions based on common efforts and official cooperation linking the EU, Partner Countries and civil society stakeholders in all the spheres that have been identified for the Eastern Partnership. In order to develop and use the EaP to its full potential, it is necessary to offer the European neighbourhood countries a perspective in the EU such as sectoral integration. With this position paper, the EaP Civil Society Forum reiterates its role as a full-fledged participant in the development of the Eastern Partnership and suggests mechanisms contributing to its implementation.

Perspectives and Recommendations

1. Strengthen Democratic Societies

1.1. The EaP Civil Society Forum encourages the European Commission and the governments of the partner countries to accelerate the dialogue, cooperation and integration processes within the EaP following the **principles and models proposed by the Copenhagen Criteria**. The Civil Society Forum confirms its role and capacity in strengthening and enhancing the **monitoring of the commitments undertaken by the partner country governments**.

1.2 In order to substantially improve participatory and effective decision-making, **Civil Society expertise** must be taken into consideration at any time in the future steps of the EaP.

1.3. The Civil Society Forum supports the launch of the **Civil Society Facility**, which will allow CSO's to play a more active and efficient role in the EaP. The

Forum confirms the need to engage the National Platforms in each EaP country in planning the priorities of this instrument and how it will operate.

1.4. The Civil Society Forum is in favour of diplomatic solutions allowing democratic CSO's from **non-recognized political entities in the EaP countries** to be part of the Forum, ensuring its participatory, inclusive and cooperative nature. The CSF proposes to emphasise the importance of the **local dimension** represented by NGOs and local authorities of the EaP countries in order to reach the general objectives of the Partnership.

1.5 The CSF welcomes the approach of the European Commission and the EU member states to consider the civil society in **Belarus** as a partner despite *de facto* suspension of cooperation with the Belarusian government, and it highly appreciates Belarusian CSO's as an inseparable part of the Forum. The CSF also follows the development of the situation with democratic freedoms and human rights in **Azerbaijan** after the protests and subsequent arrests in April 2011. It calls upon the Azerbaijani authorities for the swift release of all prisoners arrested before and during the democracy rallies.

2. Associate Via Sectoral Integration

2.1 The convergence with EU policies in such fields as migration, trade, energy, transport, environment, SME and innovations, education, etc., creates the appropriate conditions for a gradual sectoral integration of partner countries with the EU. Proper space should also be given to non-institutional networks promoting exchanges of youth, volunteers and culture. **Visa liberalization agreements, DCFTA, ACCA agreements** and other relevant institutional frameworks should serve as a legal mechanism for deepening such *approchement*. The Civil Society Forum in particular calls for taking steps **towards full visa liberalization** as soon as individual EaP countries meet the agreed conditions.

2.2 **Greater regional cooperation among EaP** partner countries at all possible levels would secure more sustainability and synergies between various initiatives deepening European integration.

3. Anchor the EaP Civil Society Forum in the Family of European Institutions

3.1. Given the growing potential capacity of the CSF, the technical difficulties restricting its role are becoming more evident. The establishment of a permanent **Secretariat** of the CSF would allow the Forum to operate much more efficiently. The **participation of civil society from the EU** must be secured in order to allow a full partnership from both the EU and EaP countries.

3.2 The CSF suggests that civil society organizations should be regarded as partners of the EU, the EU Member States and of the EaP states when it comes to planning, implementing, monitoring and evaluating programmes of the Eastern

Partnership. **The highest possible level of active interaction and access to information in these processes should be ensured.**

Civil Society Forum and the Challenges of Today

The EaP Civil Society Forum is a non-state actor involved in a policy-shaping body. This is innovative and should be supported to the maximum extent. The Forum demonstrates the possibility for a paradigm change of huge significance. With the new developments, the EU should institutionalize that role, providing civil society with real decision-making power and legitimacy to influence the process. By raising Civil Society to an unprecedented level of influence, it proves the European model and practice to be both innovative and progressive.

The situation and democratic processes in the EaP region still prove to be volatile and unstable: the Russian-Georgian war in August 2008, the events during the presidential election in Belarus in December 2010 and the public unrest in Azerbaijan in April 2011 all emphasized the need to further strengthen Europe's ties with the countries of the region. Therefore, the CSF considers it crucial to react when violations of democratic principles and human rights endangers stability. However, the role of the CSF should not be limited to expression of opinions, concrete mechanisms of cooperation between official structures and civil society on securing stability are needed.

Over the last two years, the EaP CSF was one of the most dynamic components of the Eastern Partnership initiative in its multilateral track. Its achievements are especially important as an example of self-organization of civil society, through its ability and actual capacity to support the goals of the Eastern Partnership. The contribution of the Forum in the future could be more significant, because the ability of civil society is still limited by an underestimation of its potential in the EaP process. The democratic shortcomings among NGO's in some EaP states also pose a challenge to the overall development of the CSF and its contribution to closer relations among the EU, its Member States and the EaP states. The huge potential of the CSF—where delegates representing all six partner countries and the EU participate and cooperate successfully together—is insufficiently used. The ability of the delegates in the Forum to define common values, interests and goals is not transferred to the interstate level efficiently and convincingly enough.

However, it is a historical lesson, including the most recent developments in the Arab world, that in imperfect or far-from-perfect democracies, politics determine economic relations to a very high degree; the rules of the game are bent to suit the people holding power. The subordination of the development of real democratic institutions to economic reform, approximation to formal EU standards, and a lack of proper conditionality both weakens the consistency of efforts to support democratization and diminishes the role of civil society.

PHOTOS



Participants



Keynote speech



Session One



Session Two



Session Three



Session Four



Session Four



Closing remarks

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