



EURONEST PARLIAMENTARY ASSEMBLY

STATEMENT

by the Bureau of the Euronest Parliamentary Assembly

On the urgency of maintaining the level of EU financial assistance to Eastern partners in the MFF negotiations

28 November 2012. We strongly reaffirm our conviction, as Members of the Euronest Parliamentary Assembly, that the European Union and the Eastern European States should continue to work together towards democracy in the neighbouring countries of the Eastern Partnership, on the way towards building-up closer ties with Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine a special relationship.

A democratic, stable and prosperous neighbourhood, sharing the values of the EU, is in the very interest of the EU as such and as a global player.

If the European Union wants to achieve this goal, and to implement Art. 8 of the Treaty on the EU, we should take political and financial responsibility and be prepared to offer Eastern European Partners further support and clear prospects for an enhanced and closer relation with the EU. Indeed, the EU has committed to grant additional support to those neighbouring countries undertaking significant political, economic and social reforms, in line with the "more for more" principle.

We would like that EU Member States take into account that several Eastern Partner countries could have, in the time-frame of the MFF, an Association Agreement, including a Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Area, signed and in force. Association Agreements would contain strong commitments of the Eastern Partners to legal approximation and structural reforms in many areas, like trade, for which the EU has promised to provide financial and technical assistance. However, the real political association and economic integration of the Eastern Partners will not be successful unless they are supported by the necessary financial resources.

We remind that the European Union's Eastern Partners trust in the potential of Art. 49 of the TEU which presents them with a crucial opportunity for their future and on which our Assembly also based its constituent act.

In this context, and in the light of the latest "MFF negotiating box" presented by the Council presidency, in which it is stated that "all headings, sub-headings and sub-ceilings will need to be subject to reduction efforts", we consider it indispensable that the level of financial resources envisaged in the proposal of the European Commission for the 2014-2020 Multi-Annual Financial Framework, Heading 4, be, at least, maintained. We cannot afford that the EU, focused on solving internal problems caused by the financial crisis, weakens and undermines its leadership in international cooperation. This would create great risks for the comprehensive democratic reforms undertaken by the Eastern Partnership countries aiming at a further approximation to the EU and might force them to seek other international partners.

While Eastern European Partner countries follow a demanding path on the way towards European integration, the EU has the responsibility to give a clear and positive signal represented by the Commission's proposals for commitments: taking forward the Eastern Partnership policy is possible and corresponds to a political investment in the strategic interest of the EU.

An adequate EU funding will also stimulate Member States' intervention and cooperation with Eastern Partner countries and regions from which large communities of people already legally resident and working in the EU originate.

We invite the Council, should it not be able to fully endorse the Commission's proposals, to clearly identify the European Neighbourhood Policy, and, in our case, in particular the Eastern dimension of it, as a priority whose projects can not be dropped.

We insist that the share of the financial aid allocated to the Eastern Partners be increased in the overall budget for the European Neighbourhood policy, under the common principle of "more for more" in terms of reforms and further democratisation of the beneficiary countries.

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