

**Priorities for EU relations with the Eastern partnership countries**

**European Parliament resolution of 12 March 2014 on assessing and setting priorities for EU relations with the Eastern Partnership countries (2013/2149(INI))**

*The European Parliament,*

- having regard to the launch of the Eastern Partnership in Prague on 7 May 2009,
- having regard to the commencement of activities by the Euronest Parliamentary Assembly on 3 May 2011 during the seventh legislative term of the European Parliament,
- having regard to the establishment of the Eastern Partnership's Civil Society Forum and its work so far, including recommendations and other documents drafted by the five working groups or during its annual meetings, which comprise: Brussels, Belgium, 16-17 November 2009; Berlin, Germany, 18-19 November 2010; Poznań, Poland, 28-30 November 2011; Stockholm, Sweden, 28-30 November 2012; and Chişinău, Moldova, 4-5 October 2013,
- having regard to the establishment by the Committee of the Regions of the Conference of Regional and Local Authorities for the Eastern Partnership (CORLEAP), whose inaugural meeting was held on 8 September 2011 in Poznań, Poland, and the opinions drafted by CORLEAP thus far,
- having regard to the conclusions of the Warsaw Summit held on 29-30 October 2011,
- having regard to the conclusions of the Vilnius Summit held on 28-29 November 2013,
- having regard to the Commission communications of 11 March 2003 entitled 'Wider Europe – Neighbourhood: A New Framework for Relations with our Eastern and Southern Neighbours' (COM(2003)0104), of 12 May 2004 entitled 'European Neighbourhood Policy – Strategy Paper' (COM(2004)0373), of 4 December 2006 entitled 'Strengthening the European Neighbourhood Policy' (COM(2006)0726), of 5 December 2007 entitled 'A Strong European Neighbourhood Policy' (COM(2007)0774), of 3 December 2008 entitled 'Eastern Partnership' (COM(2008)0823), and of 12 May 2010 entitled 'Taking Stock of the European Neighbourhood Policy' (COM(2010)0207),
- having regard to the Joint Communications of the Commission and of the High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy of 20 March 2013 entitled 'European Neighbourhood Policy: Working towards a Stronger Partnership' (JOIN(2013)0004), and of 25 May 2011 entitled 'A new response to a changing Neighbourhood' (COM(2011)0303),
- having regard to the conclusions of the Foreign Affairs Council of 26 July 2010 and 20 June 2011 on the European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP) and of 18-19 November 2013 on the Eastern Partnership, and to the conclusions of the Foreign Affairs Council (Trade) of 26 September 2011 and of the European Council of 7 February 2013,

- having regard to the European Council conclusions on the Eastern Partnership of 19-20 December 2013,
- having regard to the Joint Communications of the Commission and of the High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy of 15 May 2012 entitled ‘Eastern Partnership: A Roadmap to the autumn 2013 Summit’ (JOIN(2012)0013) and ‘Delivering a new European Neighbourhood Policy’ (JOIN(2012)0014) and their accompanying joint staff working documents of 20 March 2013 (‘Regional reports’, SWD(2013)0085 and 0086),
- having regard to the joint communication of 12 December 2011 of the High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy and the Commission to the European Parliament and the Council entitled ‘Human rights and democracy at the heart of EU external action – Towards a more effective approach’ (COM(2011)0886),
- having regard to the regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council establishing a European Neighbourhood Instrument 2014-2020,
- having regard to the Euronest Parliamentary Assembly Resolution of 28 May 2013 on energy security in connection with energy market and harmonisation between the Eastern European partner and the EU countries<sup>1</sup>,
- having regard to its resolutions of 23 October 2013 on ‘European Neighbourhood Policy, working towards a stronger partnership – EP’s Position on the 2012 Progress reports’<sup>2</sup>, of 14 December 2011 on the review of the European Neighbourhood Policy<sup>3</sup>, and of 7 April 2011 on the review of the European Neighbourhood Policy – Eastern Dimension<sup>4</sup>,
- having regard to its position of 11 December 2013 on the proposal for a regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council establishing common rules and procedures for the implementation of the Union's instruments for external action<sup>5</sup>,
- having regard to its position of 11 December 2013 on the proposal for a regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council establishing a financing instrument for the promotion of democracy and human rights worldwide<sup>6</sup>,
- having regard to its resolution of 7 July 2011 on EU external policies in favour of democratisation<sup>7</sup>,
- having regard to its annual resolutions on the Annual Report on Human Rights in the World and the European Union's policy on the matter, including, in particular, the most recent resolutions on events in the EU’s southern and eastern neighbourhood, namely: its resolution of 18 April 2012 on the Annual Report on Human Rights in the World and the European Union’s policy on the matter, including implications for the EU’s strategic human

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<sup>1</sup> OJ C 338, 19.11.2013, p. 3.

<sup>2</sup> Texts adopted, P7\_TA(2013)0446.

<sup>3</sup> OJ C 168 E, 14.6.2013, p. 26.

<sup>4</sup> OJ C 296 E, 2.10.2012, p. 105.

<sup>5</sup> Texts adopted, P7\_TA(2013)0565.

<sup>6</sup> Texts adopted, P7\_TA(2013)0570.

<sup>7</sup> OJ C 33 E, 5.2.2013, p. 165.

rights policy<sup>1</sup>; its resolution of 13 December 2012 on the annual report on Human Rights and Democracy in the World 2011 and the European Union's policy on the matter<sup>2</sup>; and its resolution of 11 December 2013 on the annual report on Human Rights and Democracy in the World 2012 and the European Union's policy on the matter<sup>3</sup>,

- having regard to its recommendation of 29 March 2012 to the Council on the modalities for the possible establishment of a European Endowment for Democracy (EED)<sup>4</sup> and the establishment in 2012 and commencement of full activities of the EED in 2013,
  - having regard to its resolution of 13 December 2012 on the review of the EU's human rights strategy<sup>5</sup>,
  - having regard to its resolution of 11 December 2012 on a Digital Freedom Strategy in EU Foreign Policy<sup>6</sup>,
  - having regard to its resolution of 13 June 2013 on the freedom of press and media in the world<sup>7</sup>,
  - having regard to Rule 48 of its Rules of Procedure,
  - having regard to the report of the Committee on Foreign Affairs (A7-0157/2014),
- A. whereas the European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP), in particular the Eastern Partnership (EaP), is based on a community of values and on a shared commitment to international law and fundamental values and to the principles of liberty, democracy, respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms, and the rule of law, the market economy, sustainable development and good governance; whereas the EaP aims to extend, share and promote the values and the principles upon which the EU is founded, notably those of peace, friendship, solidarity and prosperity, in order to contribute to building and consolidating healthy democracies, pursuing sustainable economic growth and managing cross-border links, with a view to accelerating the partnership countries' political association and economic integration with the EU; whereas at the Vilnius Eastern Partnership Summit all the participants reconfirmed their commitment to implementing these guiding principles;
- B. whereas successive EU enlargements have brought Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia, Moldova, Ukraine and Belarus closer to the EU, and, therefore, their security, stability and prosperity increasingly impact upon those of the EU and vice versa;
- C. whereas freedoms, democratic values and human rights can only develop within an appropriate environment characterised by economic and social stability, as well as national and international security, as proven by the EU's own history;

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<sup>1</sup> OJ C 258 E, 7.9.2013, p. 8.

<sup>2</sup> Texts adopted, P7\_TA(2012)0503.

<sup>3</sup> Texts adopted, P7\_TA(2013)0575.

<sup>4</sup> OJ C 257 E, 6.9.2013, p. 13.

<sup>5</sup> Texts adopted, P7\_TA(2012)0504.

<sup>6</sup> Texts adopted, P7\_TA(2012)0470.

<sup>7</sup> Texts adopted, P7\_TA(2013)0274.

- D. whereas while the underlying principles and objectives of the ENP apply to all partners, the EU's relationship with each one of its partners is unique, and the instruments of the ENP are tailored to serve each of those relationships;
- E. whereas the Eastern Partnership Summit in Vilnius demonstrated a need to reflect on the EU's policies towards the Eastern partners;
- F. whereas the EaP is directed at Eastern European countries as understood by Articles 8 and 49 of the Treaties; whereas it should support the democratic transitions and reform process and is a response to the European aspirations of the societies of the partner countries;
- G. whereas the EaP countries have deeply rooted European aspirations and are still undergoing difficult transformation processes towards a democratic system based on the rule of law and respect for human rights and civil liberties, following decades of existence within the USSR; whereas in some EaP countries there is a lack of consensus on the issue of their European future;
- H. whereas the current momentum in relations with the Eastern Partners should be used to encourage the peoples of the EaP countries to strive for further democratic reforms; whereas the process of association with the EU has precisely this objective and should be pursued despite current setbacks in some EaP countries;
- I. whereas the EaP should promote the political, economic, geopolitical security, social and cultural dimensions of cooperation;
- J. whereas the European Neighbourhood Instrument is the main tool of delivery of Union's support and assistance to the Eastern Partnership countries; whereas it reflects differentiation and the 'more for more' approach, and provides for significant financial incentives to those neighbouring countries undertaking democratic reforms;
- K. whereas the EaP countries are still looking for political development, and the partnership offered by the EU has been based on their own political will, but has proven an insufficient driver of change and reforms, despite the clear European aspirations of the people of the EaP countries; whereas the recent developments in the EaP countries, as well as the outcome of the Vilnius Summit, highlight the need to strengthen the strategic character of the Eastern Partnership and to make increased efforts to promote and increase awareness of the mutual benefits of the Association Agreements, and are an indication that these countries are still exposed to strong pressure and blackmail by third parties in their sovereign decisions; whereas the EaP countries must be free and sovereign so as to fully exercise their right to determine their future without being subjected to undue external pressure, threats or intimidation; whereas every country has the sovereign right to join any international organisation or alliance and to define its own future without any external influence;
- L. whereas recent developments have demonstrated that the EU's EaP policy is considered wrongly by some geopolitical players as a zero-sum game, and their negative role should therefore be taken into account;
- M. whereas the Eastern Partnership is in no way aimed at damaging or hampering bilateral relations with the Russian Federation, but, on the contrary, is open to developing synergies

with Moscow in order to create the most favourable conditions for the sustainable development of the common neighbours;

1. Recalls the purpose of the EaP, which is the strengthening of the political, economic and cultural European integration of the Eastern Partners, founded on mutual values, interests and the commitment to international law, fundamental values, good governance and the market economy and based on shared ownership and joint responsibility; welcomes, in this connection, the establishment of and the work carried out by the EaP stakeholders – the Euronest Parliamentary Assembly, the EaP Civil Society Forum and CORLEAP – as well as other initiatives such as the Eastern Europe Initiatives Congress; notes, however, that the recent developments in some EaP countries have drawn attention to the fragility of the political, economic and social integration process; stresses the importance of engaging with the broader society as a means of transformation; encourages more frequent and effective engagement with local and regional authorities as well as with parliaments, business leaders and civil society, in order to build constituencies for reform able to influence national decision-making;
2. Expresses its concern at the fact that the EaP as a whole has recently been seriously challenged by third parties, and calls for all participants involved to maintain their commitment to and engagement in the project;
3. Stresses that a European perspective, including the right to apply for membership under Article 49 of the Treaty on European Union, could constitute a driving force for reforms in these countries and further strengthen their commitment to shared values and principles such as democracy, the rule of law, respect for human rights and good governance, and that the EaP countries most committed to deepening relations with the EU and willing to undertake and implement the necessary reforms at both political and economic level should be duly taken into account and supported, thus creating an incentive for further European integration;
4. Recognises that now more than ever the EaP societies in favour of integration with the European Union need strong, proactive and immediate support from the EU, which should be provided via different channels and policy sectors ranging from financial assistance to visa facilitation schemes;
5. Considers that the Eastern Partnership project requires a thorough assessment of its effectiveness, including an accurate evaluation of its successes and failures, and that it needs further reflection, a new impetus and a clear vision of the way forward, focusing equally on political cooperation and partnership with the societies of the EaP countries and on aiming to provide a European choice for those societies; urges the EU, therefore, to focus particularly on investing in immediate progress for citizens, and in this context to establish visa-free regimes, to support youth and future leaders, and to devote greater attention to the empowerment of civil society; highlights the importance of the energy, transport and research sectors for the scope of the European integration of the EaP countries;
6. Believes that the outcome of the Vilnius Summit highlights the need to enhance the strategic character of the Eastern Partnership; recommends, therefore, making flexible use of the tools at the EU's disposal, such as macroeconomic assistance, easing of trade regimes, projects to enhance energy security and economic modernisation, and swift implementation of visa liberalisation, in line with European values and interests;

7. Calls on the Commission to produce a green paper on the post-Vilnius future of the Eastern Partnership;
8. Calls on the Commission and the EEAS to reflect on the lessons of the recent evolutions of the Eastern Partnership in terms of the definition of bilateral and multilateral priorities of Union as well as funding under the ENI;
9. Considers that democratic transition processes based on the rule of law and respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms are key to building a strong and lasting partnership with the EaP countries;
10. Emphasises the important role played by civil society in transition and reform processes and political dialogue in the EaP countries; calls on the EU to strengthen cooperation with civil society and provide it with support through a range of different funding instruments;
11. Welcomes the 2013 allocations under the 'Eastern Partnership integration and cooperation' (EaPIC) programme, (falling under ENPI), distributed among Moldova, Georgia and Armenia as additional funding to those EaP countries which are making progress in reforms for deep democracy and human rights;
12. Welcomes the Commission's proposal to allow visa-free travel to the Schengen area for Moldovan citizens; highlights that visa liberalisation should be a priority, and calls for more efforts in this area; notes in this connection that visa liberalisation is only one of a number of processes aimed at bringing the societies closer together, and that more efforts are required in this area, particularly with regard to advancing cooperation in the fields of education, science, culture and sport; highlights that the proposal for a directive of the European Parliament and of the Council on the conditions of entry and residence of third-country nationals for the purposes of research, studies, pupil exchange, remunerated and unremunerated training, voluntary service and au pairing is a tool which will have a great impact in the field of education and culture; calls for the prompt adoption of this directive offering the long-term visas and residence permits for third-country nationals for the above-mentioned purposes;
13. Highlights the importance of investing in projects for youth and future leaders, by making full use of the scholarship opportunities under the 'Erasmus +' programme to foster student and teacher exchanges between EaP countries and the EU Member States, by continuing financial support for the European Humanities University in exile, and establishing an Eastern Partnership University and the Black Sea European College, which would provide opportunities for the development of educational programmes on different levels, aiming at the formation of future leaders from EaP countries and the EU Member States, as well as further promoting academic and educational projects which have already proven their value in this field, such as the College of Europe;
14. Urges that more school exchanges be organised between EU Member States and EaP countries, and considers that special funding should be provided for to this end;
15. Stresses the need to enhance youth cooperation within the framework of the Youth in Action Programme's EaP Youth Window, thus strengthening young people's active citizenship, developing solidarity and promoting tolerance among young people; welcomes in this regard the Eastern Partnership Youth Summit that took place in October 2013,

facilitating political dialogue and networking with decision-makers and young people from EU and EaP countries;

16. Considers that the difficulties involved in promoting and implementing the Eastern Partnership can be overcome by a rebalanced and reinforced EU engagement that goes beyond political dialogue to tackle and develop the social, economic and cultural spheres as well; calls on the EU to increase its presence in the partner countries using more interactive audiovisual means and social media in the respective local languages in order to reach all of society; calls on the Commission to prepare a clear communication strategy for the societies in the EaP countries, in order to explain to them the benefits of the Association Agreements, including Deep and Comprehensive Trade Areas (DCFTAs), as tools for modernising their political systems and economies;
17. Emphasises that the EU and the Eastern European partners face common political challenges with regard to ensuring a reliable and safe energy supply; recalls that energy security cooperation is clearly identified as a priority under the Eastern Partnership and the ENP; recalls that the Energy Community Treaty lays the basis for establishing a fully integrated regional energy market favouring growth, investment and a stable regulatory framework; considers further progress in the integration of the gas and electricity networks, including reverse-flows, in the region to be essential to achieving the goals of the Energy Community; underlines the importance of focusing more on the consolidation, improvement and efficiency of the energy sector, as one of the main conditions for modernisation of the economy, strengthening energy security and competitiveness as well as developing energy strategies in line with European Energy Community obligations and EU targets; calls for the continuation of gas and electricity market reforms and an adequate share of energy from renewable resources, in line with EU policies and standards; recognises that Eastern Partnership countries' energy dependence on third countries and inadequate diversification of supply complicate the dynamics of European integration, in this regard reminds that projects such as South Stream increase the EU's dependency on Russian gas, and calls on the Commission and the Member States to fast-track projects that will help mitigate the situation; calls on the Commission and Council to make solidarity a fundamental principle of the Energy Community that is expected to be fully respected by all the players active in the EU market;
18. Calls for the insertion of an energy security clause in every agreement with the Eastern Partnership countries, so as to guarantee full respect for the EU internal energy market legislation, as well as the inclusion of an Early Warning Mechanism in such agreements in order to guarantee an early evaluation of potential risks and problems relating to transit and supply of energy from third countries, as well as establishing a common framework for mutual assistance, solidarity and dispute settlement;
19. Calls for a more tailored approach to individual partner countries, also by better taking into account their specific geopolitical vulnerabilities, implementing the principles of differentiation and 'more for more' but with overall coordination; strongly believes that the depth and scope of relations with each partner country should reflect its own European ambition, commitment to shared values, and progress in aligning with EU legislation, assessed on the basis of clear benchmarks and on its own merits; takes the view that the Eastern Partnership architecture must be forward-looking and flexible - institutionally and conceptually – in order to provide long-term incentives for all partners, including the most advanced ones and thus further intensify relations with the EU; further believes that the EaP

should not only focus on normative objectives but also reach the citizens through bottom-up approaches aimed at anchoring the benefits of prospective association to public opinion; recalls that the advancement of the partnership will depend on progress and substantial efforts being made with regard to respect for human rights, reform of the judiciary, public administration reforms, the fight against corruption, and increased citizens' participation in public decision-making;

20. Calls on the Commission to look further into the possibilities of easing trade barriers, where appropriate and even prior to signing and implementing DCFTAs, to enable the societies and businesses of the respective EaP countries to feel more immediately the economic benefits of closer cooperation with the EU;
21. Recognises the importance of inclusiveness in ensuring that the Partnership advances with the participation of all six partners; highlights, therefore, the need to further enhance the multilateral dimension, and encourages the holding of regular meetings at ministerial level across the policy spectrum;
22. Stresses, in this regard, as in the case of Ukraine, the importance of the Council taking immediate action, including increased diplomatic pressure and the introduction of individual targeted measures, travel bans and asset and property freezes directed at officials, legislators and their business sponsors responsible for human rights violations, and of stepping up efforts to stop money laundering and tax evasion by companies and businesspeople of the country concerned in European banks;
23. Expresses its concern at the lack of shared understanding of the essence of cooperation between the EU and the EaP countries; notes with concern that the EU is frequently seen as a donor and partner countries as beneficiaries, while all should perform a double role; warns that this kind of public perception might create unrealistic expectations among the societies of the Eastern Partners;
24. Regrets that the Member States often have divergent views and do not take a common position in relations with, and developments in, EaP countries; notes with concern the lack of understanding among the Member States about the strategic importance of cooperation and of a common position on some issues; calls for a comprehensive review of the ENP, especially as regards the Eastern Neighbours, in the light of recent events and also in terms of concrete and tangible measures, especially concerning EaP citizens;
25. Recommends the further strengthening of the multilateral track of the Eastern Partnership in order to foster a climate of cooperation, friendship and good neighbourly relations that will support the objectives of political association and particularly economic integration and the encouragement of multilateral initiatives for cooperation and joint projects, as well as making further progress on cross-border and regional cooperation, especially in areas such as transport, people-to-people contacts, the environment, border security, and energy security, and recalls the high importance the EU attaches to the Euronest Parliamentary Assembly in this regard; believes that cooperation should nevertheless continue, where possible, on a bilateral basis between the EU, on the one side, and the partner countries, on the other;
26. Stresses that more efforts should go into sharing experiences of democratic reforms, drawing on the rich experience that European countries have in the process of establishing and protecting democratic regimes based on respect for fundamental values and the rule of



law, especially by Member States who could build both on their experience of EU integration and on their close relations with EaP countries, while acknowledging the specificities of individual countries, highlighting the expected mutual benefits and reaching a balance between conditionality and solidarity, also in the interests of the EU's own further development; suggests looking into possibilities of peer-to-peer learning at both political and technical level which would increase awareness and knowledge of democracy-building and the rule of law;

27. Takes the view that the EU should more proactively encourage the partner countries to combat human rights violations; calls on the Member States to implement the EU guidelines on Human Rights Defenders, and recalls that for serious violations of human rights and fundamental freedoms the EU itself can, in line with the Treaties, consider the introduction of restrictive measures or sanctions in the framework of the CFSP, including an arms embargo, a ban on exports of equipment for internal repression, and visa restrictions or travel bans directed at persons directly or indirectly responsible for serious violations of human rights or the repression of civil society and democratic opposition, or whose activities otherwise seriously undermine democracy or the rule of law, as well as the freezing of assets and financial resources; stresses the need to ensure that sanctions are selective and targeted in order to avoid affecting the lives of ordinary citizens;
28. Welcomes, as a positive conclusion of the Vilnius summit, the initialling of the Association Agreements including a DCFTA with the Republic of Moldova and Georgia, regrets, however, that the outcome of the Vilnius summit did not match all expectations, and urges that association agreements be swiftly signed and fully, rapidly and efficiently implemented, where applicable, with the partner countries, in order to support the modernisation and reform process in those countries, particularly in the fields related to the consolidation of good governance, the rule of law, the protection of human rights and the fight against corruption, and to support the building-up and modernisation of the partner societies' economies, as well as business-friendly legislation; calls on the EEAS and the Commission to identify areas and fields of cooperation under the association agendas in which implementation could already begin in the short and medium term;
29. Deplores the continuous pressure exerted on the EaP countries, through economic, political and military tools, by Russia, which perceives the strengthening of relations between the EU and the EaP countries as actions against its own interests; highlights the need to address this in talks with Russia, as well as the need for a serious discussion among EU Member States on new ways of constructively engaging Russia in initiatives that reflect common interests in the context of a secure, stable and prosperous European neighbourhood, thus overcoming obsolete and dangerous thinking in terms of spheres of influence; calls on the EU to take concrete measures, including economic assistance, easing of trade regimes, projects to enhance energy security and economic modernisation, in order to support the EaP countries in their European aspirations, and to adopt a common strategy vis-à-vis Russia; calls, furthermore, for a frank and open dialogue with third countries in order to maximise efforts to develop synergies aimed at benefiting EaP countries;
30. Recalls that the objectives of cooperation with the EaP countries should be to establish a closer strategic partnership, strengthen people-to-people contacts between the EU and EaP countries, establish networks of social ties with a view to further integration, and support modernisation and pro-European orientation beyond mere stabilisation;

31. Stresses the need to increase awareness of the European Union in the EaP countries; emphasises that the EU Delegations in EaP countries should play a key role in supporting EU visibility campaigns;
32. Encourages the development of closer relations between partner countries and the promotion of stability and multilateral confidence-building; stresses, in this regard, the importance of developing a genuine multilateral dimension in the Eastern Partnership with a view to improving good neighbourly relations, enhancing regional cooperation and overcoming bilateral controversies;
33. Reiterates its view that frozen conflicts hamper the full development of the EaP and exacerbate hate, animosity and tensions among the peoples of several EaP countries; notes the importance of achieving equitable solutions and a long-lasting peace based on principles of international law; to this end, calls on all parties to create favourable conditions by refraining from hate rhetoric and warmongering and by implementing confidence-building measures to address humanitarian, economic and other issues on all sides of the current dividing lines; stresses the importance of regional cooperation and confidence-building initiatives among parties; underlines the importance of strengthening the principle of good neighbourly relations as a crucial element of conflict resolution; expresses concern that the efforts and resources devoted by the EU have not been sufficient for achieving any tangible results so far; urges the Commission to step up confidence-building programmes in conflict areas with a view to restoring dialogue and facilitating people-to-people exchanges; calls on the VP/HR and the EEAS to develop innovative measures and approaches, including public communication strategies, consideration of pragmatic initiatives and informal contacts and consultations, in order to support civic culture and community dialogue;
34. Is of the view that participation and involvement of civil society in both the EU and the partner countries is of significant importance for the advancement of the EaP policy; stresses that the participation and active contribution of the Eastern Partnership Civil Society Forum at all levels of the multilateral platform is most welcome and should be further strengthened;
35. Takes the view that cooperation between CSOs is a good basis for genuine people-to-people contact that should not be limited by state borders; recommends closer cooperation and coordination between the Civil Society Forum of the Eastern Partnership and its EU-Russia equivalent;
36. Considers that the cooperation instruments should be defined precisely, taking account of available instruments and programmes and focusing particularly on education and academic exchange; calls for additional financial resources to be provided for implementation of the EaP and support for reforms, flagship initiatives and projects; calls for the full participation of all six EaP partner countries in Union programmes;
37. Stresses that respect for the rule of law, including the establishment of an independent and efficient judiciary, and deterrence of corruption in both private and public sectors are essential for the protection of democratic values;
38. Underlines that corruption is still widespread in the EaP countries and is an important issue that needs to be addressed;

39. Recognises the effects of the economic crisis on the economic development of the Eastern Partnership countries; highlights the importance of fostering economic cooperation in order to move the EaP project forward, inter alia by raising awareness of the complexity of the economic problems, promoting good governance in the financial sector and cooperation with international financial institutions, adopting a sectoral approach, and encouraging legislation conducive to the development of the SME sector; highlights the need for the conclusion and provisional application of DCFTAs as the main tools for modernising the economies of the EaP countries and enabling recovery from the financial crisis;
40. Calls for greater efforts to strengthen the business dimension of the Eastern Partnership, including through improving the business environment in partner countries to the benefit of local, regional and European SMEs and businesses and promoting business partnerships between the EU and the EaP;
41. Considers, furthermore, that promoting joint activities with other strategic partners and cooperation in international and European organisations would be beneficial to all concerned;
42. Emphasises the need to promote social and cultural ties, thus putting the EU motto ‘united in diversity’ into practice;
43. Highlights the importance of information and cultural exchange between the EaP countries and the EU for the purposes of building contemporary, well-informed societies and promoting European values;
44. Highlights the fact that the European Endowment for Democracy (EED) has an important role to play in EaP countries by strengthening, in a rapid, effective and flexible way, civil society and promoting the rule of law and respect for human rights, and by supporting or developing pro-democracy movements in countries which have not yet made the transition to democracy or which are in the process of doing so; invites the Commission, the EEAS and the Member States to support the work of the EED, and make full use of the potential for cooperation and synergies; urges the EU and its Member States, in this context, to ensure that appropriate and stable funding is made available for the activities of the EED;
45. Considers that, in order to improve cooperation among the Eastern Partners, the EU should refrain from imposing a restriction to one language in joint projects, and should promote multilingualism, notably in local government, civic and educational initiatives;
46. Highlights the importance of promoting and supporting joint efforts in research and innovation, including exchange programmes for students, in virtual multilingual projects, in dialogue between cultures through joint film productions and joint resources for literary translations, in joint research on the legacy of Nazism and Communism and of totalitarian regimes and on common history in Europe, inter alia through the ‘Europe for citizens’ programme and by promoting cooperation with the Platform of European Memory and Conscience;
47. Calls for the gradual development of a Common Knowledge and Innovation Space, in order to pull together several existing strands of cooperation in research and innovation;
48. Encourages further regulatory approximation in all areas of transport and in implementing transport infrastructure projects, across the Eastern Partnership transport network through

existing EU programmes and instruments, while also seeking closer involvement of European and international financial institutions and prioritising projects that improve connections with the TEN-T core network;

49. Calls for understanding that the EaP is an ambitious programme whose results may become more obvious in the long-term perspective; stresses that, while the EaP is being widely criticised, the success of the initiative is dependent on the engagement and political will of both the EU and its Eastern neighbours; further notes that it is essential that any criticism of the EaP should be constructive in character and should be targeted on improving it rather than discrediting it;
50. Instructs its President to forward this resolution to the Council, the Commission, the Vice-President of the Commission / High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, the European External Action Service, the Committee of the Regions, the governments and parliaments of the EaP countries, the OSCE and the Council of Europe.