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Policy Paper | 15.06.2020

## The Eastern Partnership

### Future Made to Measure

*A policy paper from the Foreign Affairs Working Group*

The starting point of our European solidarity must be the support for a **free choice** of the citizens of our Eastern European partners to determine a free, democratic and sustainable future for their countries as our partners and eventual EU members.

The EU must devise a **sustainable and credible strategy for long-term engagement**, focusing on not only stabilisation and market-access but more so on **democratisation** and **people's well-being**, with ambitious and transformational goals:

- Achieving high standards of democratic practice is a continuing struggle in all EaP countries. While a side note in the Joint Communication, the EU has to **focus on genuine rule of law reform**, which is core to **democratic transformation** and countering the growing authoritarian tendencies in many EaP countries.
- The EU should offer real **perspectives for the integration of EaP countries**, including eventual EU membership. The full implementation of the current agreements between the EU and EaP countries is the first step in this gradual integration process, after which more incentives modelled on partnerships with other non-EU countries should follow. The EU should advocate for more bold interpretation of the “more for more” principle, thus suggesting that the **membership perspective**, as a final stop of the policy, is not ruled out within the EaP framework. As the incentives of the Association Agreement or its perspective are wearing off, the EU should come up with **strong additional incentives** to reinvigorate the conditionality approach. Offering the perspective of the labour market to some and visa liberalisation to the other EaP countries can be one such incentive.
- We deplore any policies based on dividing spheres of influence and stand firmly against any expansionist attempts to crash sovereignty and the free choice of the citizens in our partner countries, as well as against occupation or domination by foreign powers. The EU cannot ignore the geopolitical character of the region and its perceived role as a **security** actor by some EaP countries. A lack of EU presence and inaction vis-a-vis partners in the EaP will create space for **other global players** to take up. Increased cooperation with like-minded actors could mitigate the

negative effects of third powers' rise. The EU and NATO should, therefore, strategically target their perception within the region and take a strong stance on individual cases of third actors' interference. In cooperation with the EaP countries, the EU and its Member States should also establish a **more coordinated policy towards Russia**. Against this backdrop, we reconfirm once more our strong support for the OSCE principles, such as sovereignty, territorial integrity, peaceful settlement of disputes, and the right to self-determination and the free choice of alliances of all EaP countries.

- It must continue its **holistic approach** to the EaP by maintaining an open door and support for all partners, while offering enhanced perspectives and **tailor-made incentives** to the partner countries, which implement genuine democratic reforms. Devising a separate framework for the associated countries would only split up the partners into different groups, leaving some behind and damaging the EU's credibility and commitment to these partnerships. For example, specialised task forces like the Support Group for Ukraine should also be established for the other associated countries, while keeping the option open for the others, as all EaP countries benefit from targeted help in implementing reforms.

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