

**Feedback on the joint consultation paper
“towards a new European Neighbourhood Policy”**

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The structure in my comments follows the questions presented in the joint consultation paper issued by the European Commission and the High Representative.

A. Lessons learnt and the future direction of the ENP:

Should the ENP be maintained? Should a single framework continue to cover both East and South?

In my view the value of the ENP as one single framework is basically that it emphasises the importance to have a special relationship to countries that are geographically close to the EU and perhaps especially with those the EU share common borders.

Still, it still is important that increased differentiation is introduced into this framework. There are very different challenges in the south and in the east, but also within each of the two regions. In order to handle these challenges more adequately, a more flexible framework is needed.

In order to create such a flexible approach, the EU has to make a clearer distinction between the ENP and enlargement. While this is stated clearly in EU documents already, the ENP is still perceived, at least in the east, as a pre-phase for enlargement. This is unfortunate and creates a gap in expectations that may lead to less reform willingness in the partner countries in the long run. It is important to create other alternative, but permanent associations that could be perceived as attractive in themselves and not just a step on the way towards a potential future membership. Maybe parts of the EEA agreement could serve as a model here?

The challenges that the partner countries are facing are very different, especially if we compare the situation in the eastern and the southern neighbourhood. However, in both regions, there is an urgent need to be able to take the geopolitical context into account to a larger extent when formulating a new neighbourhood policy. So far the ENP seem to have been too much of a technocratic exercise, which has been focusing mainly on the regulated processes of adaptation to EU acquis and/or alignment with ENP norms. The geopolitical context and how this association processes are perceived by other actors in the two regions are to a large extent ignored. The role of Russia in the East and the rise of Islamist fundamentalism in the south are important factors that influence both regions. The EU is a powerful actor and its policies could easily be interpreted as imperialistic by other actors with a different normative basis and a different world view. A neighbourhood policy that aims at

creating closer ties and association between the EU and the partner countries need to develop a parallel policy that avoid creating new conflicts. The EU must be less technocratic and more political in its approach to its neighbours and the neighbours to the neighbours.

The ENP must be seen as a special kind of foreign policy that allows for the development of closer association when possible, but where also normal foreign policy instruments (including CSDP) can be deployed when necessary.

Should the current geographical scope be maintained?

It might be useful to distinguish between countries that have common borders with the EU and the others. In addition to this, there should be a distinction between countries that have started a reform process and those that, for different reasons, have not done so yet.

Should the ENP allow for more flexible ways of working with the neighbours of the neighbours? How can the EU, through the ENP framework, support its neighbours in their interactions with their own neighbours? What could be done better to ensure greater coherence between the ENP and the EU's relations with Russia, with partners in Central Asia, or in Africa, especially in the Sahel and in the Horn of Africa, and with the Gulf countries?

The EU has to be aware that the ENP is perceived differently by different actors. While the EU and many partner countries see this association agenda as a way of promoting democracy, rule of law and thereby peace and stability, other actors see this as hidden imperialism from the EU's side. In my view, the EU needs to be more sensitive to how other actors perceive its policies and establish dialogues and cooperation forums with the neighbours of the neighbours.

The EU has to be more explicit on both its interests and its values. In order to be taken seriously by actors with a different world view, the EU has to be more explicit on what its interests are (trade, security, migration control etc) instead of only promoting a normative discourse of democracy promotion etc.

How could a more comprehensive approach with more active involvement by Member States give the policy greater weight? Would stronger co-ownership of the policy be preferred by partners?

As already mentioned, I think it would be useful to have a comprehensive approach that includes more of the normal foreign policy tools. Instead of giving priority to harmonisation and adaptation to acquis, it might be sufficient to make sure that the partner countries initiate a process with alignment to the main ENP norms.

Are the Association Agreements and DCFTAs the right objective for all or should more tailor-made alternatives be developed, to reflect differing interests and ambitions of some partners?

I think it is necessary to develop tailor made alternatives. There is a need to give priority to the most pressing issues and have a flexible framework that makes it easier to deploy different instruments. AAs and DCFTAs are most probably not the most fruitful objective for all partner countries, but useful tools for the most advanced countries as long as it is combined with clever diplomacy and foreign policy towards other regional powers that might see such agreements as a potential threat.

Are the ENP Action Plans the right tool to deepen our partnerships? Are they too broad for some partners? Would the EU, would partners, benefit from a narrower focus and greater prioritisation?

I would agree with the latter. The partner countries would benefit from greater prioritisation that needs to vary according to the individual partner country's needs and the geopolitical context. Still, some kind of progress reports might be useful. However, what is needed is greater differentiation and prioritisation in the action plans as well as a clear idea of what the progress should lead to. This should be done in dialogue with the partner country in order to ensure ownership and avoid a top down approach.

Is this approach appropriate for all partners? Has it added value to the EU's relations with each of its partners?

Probably not for all and there are good reasons to believe that more tailor made approaches will be more fruitful.

Can EU and/or partner interests be served by a lighter reporting mechanism?

Most probably. So far the process seems to be quite cumbersome. It has been developed on the template of the enlargement process and one may ask why this is the case if the ENP is to be perceived as being different from enlargement. Is it really necessary that all the partner countries adapt to the EU acquis?

Should the reporting be modulated according to the level of engagement of the ENP partner concerned?

I think this is a good idea and it will create more differentiation. However, it is important to find a way to motivate the partner countries to continue to undertake more reforms. Perhaps more focus on mutual benefits and cooperation is the key.

How can we better communicate key elements?

The EU member states have to agree on what the aim of the ENP is in relations to the different partner countries, and then this has to be communicated clearly to the partner countries in order to avoid misunderstandings and gap in expectations.

Can partnerships be focussed more explicitly on joint interests, in order to increase ownership on both sides?

Yes, this should be the ambition. It is only through joint interests and mutual benefits that real progress will occur. The positive development in Morocco seems to be an example in that regard.

How should the ENP accommodate the differentiation that this would entail?

This is compatible with a revised ENP, that is seen more as an overarching framework for countries with borders to the EU, and that each partner country has specific bilateral agreements where clear priorities are identified.

Are new elements needed to support deeper cooperation in these or other fields?

New elements are probably needed in order to respond to the different challenges.

More financial assistance is needed and more of the Union's development aid should be directed to the neighbouring countries.

What further work is necessary in this area, which is regarded as key by all ENP partners? How can the ENP further support the management of migration and help to draw the benefits of mobility?

The mobility partnerships are crucial and it is important to continue to focus on agreement with the partner countries to provide more visa liberalisation for skilled workers in exchange for cooperation and assistance in the fight against illegal immigration and international crime.

How can the EU do more to support sustainable economic and social development in the ENP partner countries? How can we empower economically, politically and socially the younger generation? How to better promote sustainable employment? And how can these objectives be better linked to indispensable reforms in the fields of anti-corruption, judicial reform, governance and security, which are prerequisites for foreign direct investment?

The EU is doing many good things already, but more is needed and this will require budget increase. Development and stability in the neighbourhood is crucial and should be given priority. An effective ENP should be considered as one of the most important task of the EU. But it should be linked to foreign policy and not be seen as a prolongation of the enlargement process

How should the ENP address conflicts and crises in the neighbourhood? Should CFSP and CSDP activities be better integrated in the ENP framework?

Yes, definitely. This is important in order to reach a balance between democracy promotion, norm diffusion and security. For instance, smaller CSDP operations should be ready to be deployed in the region to assist local police and military to ensure security and stability when this is required requested by the country.

Should it have a greater role in developing confidence-building measures and post-conflict actions as well as related state- and institution-building activities?

Yes, it is important to be involved in the whole crisis or conflict cycle. The ENP should be seen as an instrument for security community building.

Should the ENP be given a strengthened focus on working with partners on the prevention of radicalisation, the fight against terrorism and organised crime?

Yes, this should be a priority, especially in the south.

Should security sector reform be given greater importance in the ENP?

Yes, this is already happening in relations to Ukraine and should be an integrated part of the ENP. This follows also naturally from a closer integration of ENP with CFSP and CSDP instruments.

Is the multilateral dimension able to deliver further added value? Are these formats fit for purpose? How can their effectiveness be strengthened? Can we more effectively use other, more flexible frameworks? Can we better cooperate with other regional actors (Council of Europe, OSCE, League of Arab States, Organisation of the Islamic Conference, African Union)?

The multilateral dimension is important. But rather than strengthening the Eastern Partnership or the UfM, I think it is more important to focus on bilateral agreements within a common ENP framework and work multilaterally through other IOs that also includes the so-called “neighbours of the neighbours” in order to prevent that new dividing lines occurs. OSCE and CoE might be important framework in the East, while League of Arab States, Organisation of the Islamic Conference and African Union can be useful frameworks in the south.

How should the ENP further develop engagement with civil society in its widest sense? Can more be done to network different parts of the partner populations?

It is likely that more can be done. Strengthening civil society facility is one option.

What more can be done to promote links between business communities? With and between Social Partners (trade unions and employers’ organisations) and to promote social dialogue? What can be done to promote links between scientific communities, universities, local authorities, women, youth, the media?

It is important to promote joint projects between research institutions and companies in the EU/EEA and partner countries. This will increase business and scientific diplomacy, which could be important factors in an on-going reform-process

How can the ENP do more to foster religious dialogue and respect for cultural diversity, and counter prejudice? Should increasing understanding of each other’s cultures be a more specific goal of the ENP and how should this be pursued? How can the ENP help tackle discrimination against vulnerable groups?

These aims can only be achieved through active engagement of domestic civil society groups in the partner country. The EU must be conflict sensitive and apply a bottom up approach in order to succeed in this endeavour.

B. Towards a Partnership with a Clearer Focus and More Tailored Cooperation

1. Differentiation

Should the EU gradually explore new relationship formats to satisfy the aspirations and choices of those who do not consider the Association Agreements as the final stage of political association and economic integration?

Yes. While some sort of EEA light could perhaps be considered at least for some of the most advanced countries, other cooperation agreements might be more suited for the countries that (for different reasons) have undertaken fewer reforms.

How should the EU take forward the tasking of the 2013 Eastern Partnership Summit in Vilnius of the long-term goal of a wider common area of economic prosperity based on WTO rules and sovereign choices throughout Europe and beyond?

Is there scope within the ENP for some kind of variable geometry, with different kinds of relationships for those partners that choose different levels of engagement?

I think it is, or at least that it should be, within the scope of the ENP. However, that would require an ENP that is less modelled on the basis of EU’s internal policy, but more as a

specific foreign policy towards neighbouring countries with mutual interests in closer cooperation and sometimes association.

2. **Focus** (in this section I did not have the time to answer all questions)

- *Do you agree with the proposed areas of focus? If not, what alternative or additional priorities would you propose?*

I agree with these areas, but I think that in the current situation, there need to be a prioritisation between short term (security) and long term (other areas).

- *Which priorities do partners see in terms of their relations with the EU? Which sector or policy areas would they like to develop further? Which areas are less interesting for partners?*
- *Does the ENP currently have the right tools to address the priorities on which you consider it should focus? How could sectoral dialogues contribute?*

In order to be able to handle the pressing security issues, the ENP do not have the right tools. But the EU has the tools, so by integrating other policy areas into the ENP this can quite easily be done.

- *If not, what new tools could be helpful to deepen cooperation in these sectors?*
- *How can the EU better support a focus on a limited number of key sectors, for partners that prefer this?*

3. **Flexibility** (I have not had the time to answer all questions)

- *How to streamline Action Plans to adapt them better to individual country needs and priorities?*
- *Is annual reporting needed for countries which do not choose to pursue closer political and economic integration?*
- *How should the EU structure relations with countries that do not currently have Action Plans?*
- *How can the EU adapt the 'more for more' principle to a context in which certain partners do not choose closer integration, in order to create incentives for the respect of fundamental values and further key reforms?*

This shows that the ENP has to provide other incentives than higher level of integration. Different types of cooperation and associations must be considered. But if a “more for more” approach is to be effective, it has to be matched with a “less for less”. The EU has to apply both positive and negative conditionality.

- *How to assess progress against jointly agreed reform targets when a partner country experiences significant external pressure, for instance armed conflict or refugee flows?*
- *How can the EU engage more effectively and respond more flexibly to developments in partner countries affected by conflict situations?*

- *What tools would the EU need to respond more effectively to fast-changing developments in its neighbourhood?*
- *Are the choice of sectors and mechanisms for delivery of EU financial support appropriate? How could its impact and visibility be enhanced?*

4. Ownership and visibility (I have not had the time to answer all these questions)

- *What do partners seek in the ENP? How can it best accommodate their interests and aspirations?*
- *Can ways of working be developed that are seen as more respectful by partners and demonstrate a partnership of equals? How should this impact on annual reporting ?*
- *Can the structures of the ENP be made more cooperative, to underline the partners' own choices and to enable all civil society actors across partner countries to take part?*
- *Can the ENP deliver benefits within a shorter timeframe, in order that the value of the policy can be more easily grasped by the public? What would this require from the EU? And from the partner country?*
- *How can the EU financial support be recast in an investment rather than donor dynamic, in which the partner country's active role is clearer?*
- *How can EU Member States be involved more effectively in the design and implementation of the policy, including as concerns foreign policy and security related activities? How can the activities in EU Member States be better coordinated with the ENP?*