



## **Answers to the EC JOINT CONSULTATION PAPER Towards a new European Neighbourhood Policy**

*The name of the submitting organization:*

Czech Chamber of Commerce

*Type of respondent (public authority, civil society organisation, think tank, association, citizen):*

Business representative / Chamber of Commerce

*Country of residence or location of headquarters:*

Czech Republic

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Czech Chamber of Commerce (subscribed to the European Commission's Register of Interest Representatives as requested by the European Transparency Initiative, ID number 7829357255-35) is a self-governing organisation of entrepreneurs representing approximately 13 500 members that consistently defends their interests in the Czech Republic and the EU. Czech Chamber of Commerce network consists of 14 regional chambers of commerce, more than 60 local chambers actively operating across the entire Czech Republic and more than 80 trade and crafts associations and unions.

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The importance of building deeper relationships with the EU's partners is not in question.

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

**The ENP should be maintained but it should have a different approach to the South and to the East partners since these are two different political, economic, cultural and social spheres.**

The current framework of the ENP covers 16 neighbouring countries. However, many of the challenges that need to be tackled by the EU and its neighbours together, cannot be adequately addressed without taking into account, or in some cases cooperating with, the neighbours of the neighbours.

*Should the current geographical scope be maintained?*

**The geographical scope should be more flexible and the countries from Central Asia, Middle East and Africa that share the goals of the ENP should be allowed to join in certain activities.**

*Should the ENP allow for more flexible ways of working with the neighbours of the neighbours?*

**The ENP should be working with the neighbours of the neighbours especially on the issues of security, stability but also transport and telecommunications networks etc. The neighbours of the neighbours should be consulted when the economic integration of the partner countries with the EU may have a negative impact on their economic relations with them.**

*How can the EU, through the ENP framework, support its neighbours in their interactions with their own neighbours?*



The representatives of the neighbours of the ENP partners should be invited to conferences, seminars, training and negotiations that may concern their interests.

*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 should search common interests with these countries and regions in the establishment of the area of prosperity and good neighbourhood between them and the EU. It should stress that the ENP is not directed against any interests but its target is political stability and economic development of their direct neighbours which does not exclude anybody and would be beneficial also to their neighbours.

While the ENP is conducted through the EU institutions, greater Member State involvement could lead to greater results.

*How could a more comprehensive approach with more active involvement by Member States give the policy greater weight?*

The activities of Member States towards the ENP neighbours should be more coordinated with the EU policies. The representatives of the Member States should be given opportunity to participate in important EU activities and meetings with the neighbouring countries. At the same time, however, the representatives of Member States should be aware of the EU policies and try to generate their value added in accordance with the EU approach.

*Would stronger co-ownership of the policy be preferred by partners?*

Partners will appreciate a bigger involvement of Member States in the ENP and its coordination with the EU and see it as a proof of the interest of Member States in the development of relations with the neighbours.



The ENP has developed and applied tools for closer political association and economic integration of partners aspiring towards this goal, including far-reaching agreements such as the Association Agreements and the Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Areas (AAs/DCFTAs).

*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?*

**The one-fits-all approach should be changed and the AA and DCFTA should be tailor-made according to the level of interest and readiness of the relevant country to reach a higher degree of integration with the EU.**

ENP Action Plans have framed the development of relationships between the EU and most ENP partners.

*Are the ENP Action Plans the right tool to deepen our partnerships? Are they too broad for some partners?*

**ENP Action Plans are a good tool for streamlining the actions of the countries that have ambitions for closer cooperation and gradual integration with the EU. Sometimes the Action Plans seem too ambitious and lead to a formal adoption of agreed measures by the administration without a real deep political and economic changes of the system. This may lead to a disappointment of the public and civil society about the effects of the ENP and the European orientation.**

*Would the EU, would partners, benefit from a narrower focus and greater prioritisation?*

**Yes, we would support such approach.**

ENP Progress Reports have helped the EU monitor closely progress with each of the ENP partners that have Action Plans, against the jointly agreed objectives set out in those Plans.



*Is this approach appropriate for all partners? Has it added value to the EU's relations with each of its partners? Can EU and/or partner interests be served by a lighter reporting mechanism? Should the reporting be modulated according to the level of engagement of the ENP partner concerned? How can we better communicate key elements?*

**There should be simplified versions of reporting for the partners with less ambitious Action Plans.**

The ENP has provided a framework for sector cooperation across a broad range of areas (including energy, transport, agriculture and rural development, justice and home affairs, customs, taxation, environment, disaster management, research and innovation, education, youth, culture, health, etc.).

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

**Yes this could increase the real interest of the partners in the partnership.**

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

**The reviewed ENP should reiterate that its main goal is to create an area of stability and prosperity in its neighbourhood and the degree of closer integration with the EU should be left on the real interests of individual countries.**

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

**We believe that the ENP acquired a lot of experience in using different tools of support of cooperation with partner countries. The range of tools is vast and sufficient so that we do not see the need to add any new elements but we stress the necessity to use them more effectively.**



Visa liberalisation and visa facilitation processes have eased travel and cemented reforms; mobility partnerships have furthered contacts, with programmes supporting these processes.

*What further work is necessary in this area, which is regarded as key by all ENP partners?*

**We suggest to follow country-by-country approach and take into consideration the level of ambitions of the partner countries for the integration with the EU.**

*How can the ENP further support the management of migration and help to draw the benefits of mobility?*

**The experience of countries with managed immigration policies (Canada, Australia) should be studied and used to support the cooperation with the resource countries. The stress should be on cooperation in stopping the illegal smuggling of immigrants.**

The EU seeks to promote prosperity on its borders. Prosperity in the partner countries is negatively affected by structural weaknesses such as inequalities, poverty, the informal economy and deficiencies in democracy, pluralism and respect for the rule of law. In addition, much of the ENP partners' economic and social development has been disrupted by turbulence due to conflict or rapid internal change.

*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 should target its development cooperation and investment policy on the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) to be adopted this year. The ENP agenda should include the need to prepare the national action plans on the implementation of the SDG and/or to align the existing Action Plans with the SDG. The**



plans should include the programmes to fight against the unemployment of young people. The EU should help to put in place enabling environment to achieve the sustainable growth based on the reforms improving the governance and above all the fight against corruption, rule of law, independent judiciary etc.

The EU seeks to promote stability on its borders. To address existing challenges effectively, the EU has to draw on all its cooperation instruments. Activities under the Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP) and the Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP) have until now been conducted outside of the ENP framework. The level of instability in some partner countries not only disrupts progress towards democracy but also threatens the rule of law, violates human rights and has serious impacts on the EU, such as irregular migratory flows and security threats.

*How should the ENP address conflicts and crises in the neighbourhood?*

The EU has only “soft power” to use in the conflicts and crises that is viewed by her opponents as a weakness. In order to have any influence on the disputes and conflicts the EU has to speak in one voice and the agreed position should be strictly adhered to by all Member States. Otherwise the EU would not be taken seriously by the conflicting parties and it would be manipulated by individual interests of Member States.

*Should CFSP and CSDP activities be better integrated in the ENP framework?*

The ENP should be an integral part of the CSFP and CSDP since the destabilization of neighbours especially in the South present the most eminent potential threats.

*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. The EU should use its experience from the settlement of the conflict in the Northern Ireland and Balkans.



*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, under the condition that the partners are also interested in it, in other words it is necessary to build motivation of partners to do so.

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

Everything that will strengthen the security should have priority. In the same time the security policies should respect democratic principles, rule of law, respect to human rights.

The ENP includes a clear objective to promote regional cooperation. Together with partners, the EU has pursued such cooperation through the Union for the Mediterranean (UfM) in the South and the Eastern Partnership (EaP) in the East.

*Is the multilateral dimension able to deliver further added value?*

We believe that the multilateral dimension (Eastern Partnership and UfM) has not brought the expected results yet, i.e. a deeper cooperation between the states of these regions. This may have been partly caused by recent developments (Arabic Spring, Crisis in Ukraine, Euro-Asian Union, etc. Their economies are competitive and not complementary, their mutual relations are in many cases controversial and their political systems are very different. There are only limited common interests in using these multilateral platform for regional cooperation.

*Are these formats fit for purpose?*

The regional cooperation should be based on issues of common interests such as border controls, customs cooperation, environmental issues, transport and communication networks etc.

*How can their effectiveness be strengthened?*





The regional cooperation must bring tangible concrete results for the participants otherwise they will not invest in it their time and money.

*Can we more effectively use other, more flexible frameworks?*

We would recommend to use more sector based approach on concrete issues and problems (environment, water, energy, telecommunications, transport etc.)

*Can we better cooperate with other regional actors (Council of Europe, OSCE, League of Arab States, Organisation of the Islamic Conference, African Union)?*

The cooperation with mentioned regional actors should be useful but the EU should have realistic expectations since some of these organizations are functioning very formally. On the other hand it should be the aim to use the existing networks that have been created by partners themselves.

The ENP works extensively with governments, but also seeks to engage with civil society, including enhancing its monitoring function, particularly in countries where civil society is free, or largely free, to operate.

*How should the ENP further develop engagement with civil society in its widest sense?*

The EU helped activate the civil society especially in the Eastern Partnership by supporting the formation of Civil Society Forum and the National civil society platforms.

The NGOs and think tanks in some neighbouring countries are well structured, organized and have certain influence on the local and national politics but in general the governments pay only lip service to the role of civil society. The EU should insist on the inclusion of employers, especially chambers of commerce, and business support organizations and trade unions in the concept of civil society in the neighbouring countries which is opposed by most of the NGOs who consider themselves as the core of the civil society and refuse to deal with employers and trade unions. The social partners should be assigned the role they deserve.



*Can more be done to network different parts of the partner populations? What more can be done to promote links between business communities?*

The EU should enhance the contacts between companies especially SMEs from the EU and ENP countries by supporting the match-making events similar to the Europartenariats or Interprise events from the period of preparation for the enlargement in 2004. The Business Support Organisations (employers associations, chambers of commerce and industry) should play a leading role in management of these contacts and be provided with necessary financial support.

*With and between Social Partners (trade unions and employers' organisations) and to promote social dialogue?*

In many ENP countries the social dialogue between employers and trade unions with the assistance of the government exists only formally and does not fulfil the role of the real social dialogue that would solve the core problems between social partners. It is necessary to support the establishment of the real social dialogue by different programmes including the transfer of know-how from Member States where tripartite councils function well.

*What can be done to promote links between scientific communities, universities, local authorities, women, youth, the media?*

The major contribution to the promotion of the links between the above mentioned players should be the abolishment of Visas for the visitors from these communities or at least provision of the Visas without charge for them.

The ENP seeks real partnership with the EU's neighbours, and this must reflect and embrace diversity.



*How can the ENP do more to foster religious dialogue and respect for cultural diversity, and counter prejudice?*

This is the issue mainly in our relation with the Southern neighbours. The religious dialogue with Islam is necessary to avoid anti-Islamic phobia but the good-will to understand each other must be mutual.

Regarding the neighbours the EU should promote their cultural achievements to show that these countries have deep cultural roots.

*Should increasing understanding of each other's cultures be a more specific goal of the ENP and how should this be pursued?*

Yes, it should be a specific goal of the ENP. The EU should organize or help them to organize e.g. exhibitions of works of art from these countries, concerts, festivals etc. An idea to consider would be a combination of match-making event with cultural presentations of countries (EU Week in ENP and ENP Week in the EU).

*How can the ENP help tackle discrimination against vulnerable groups?*

The ENP should include this issue in the agenda and propose the actions in the National Action plans and control their implementation.

On the basis of our informal consultations to date, the initial assessment is that the EU and our partners have strongest common interest in the following areas:

- **Promoting trade and inclusive and sustainable economic development and enhancing job opportunities** are priorities for our Neighbours and are also in the interests of the EU itself, in areas ranging from traditional rural livelihoods to research and digital markets.
- Both also have strong shared interests in **improving connectivity**, notably in the fields of sustainable transport and energy. There is also a shared interest in increasing energy security and efficiency, as well as energy safety.
- There are currently a number of conflicts affecting the neighbourhood region. **Stability** is a prerequisite for working together on enhanced prosperity. The



EU and its Member States need to do more together with our partners to address the security threats that arise from conflict situations, from organised crime and from terrorism, and to develop our ability to jointly manage crises and disasters.

- Our partners face **governance challenges**. Ensuring rule of law, human rights and democracy is first and foremost key for their own citizens. By enhancing legal certainty, they also address issues that are important for domestic and foreign investors, such as fighting corruption and fraud and strengthening public finance management, including public internal control based on international standards.
- **Migration and mobility** is a key area of co-operation for the EU and our partners. Enhancing mobility, especially for education, scientific, cultural, training and professional purposes, has positive effects on economies and societies alike. Tackling people smuggling and illegal migration is a common challenge.
- Other common challenges with impacts across borders are **health security**, threats to the environment and climate change.
- Increasing **engagement with young people**, including through educational exchanges and other networks, can play a major role in developing a common vision for the future. The EU will continue to support increased opportunities for women. The review is an opportunity to establish a firm understanding between the EU and our partners of those areas of strongest common interest.

This will be the basis for a stronger partnership going forwards. In that regard, we would propose to focus the consultations on the following questions:

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

**We agree. The proposed areas represent the major issues that must be handled by the ENP.**

*Which priorities do partners see in terms of their relations with the EU?*

The partner countries expect mainly the financial/technical assistance to overcome their economic problems. They would like to increase the EU investments in their economies especially in the modernization of their industry and agriculture. For the Southern and to a certain extent also to some Eastern neighbours the migration to the EU is one of top



priorities as they consider it to be the tool to solve the huge unemployment of the young population.

*Which sector or policy areas would they like to develop further? Which areas are less interesting for partners?*

They would like to develop further the transfer of know-how and technological modernization, access to finance, certification, sanitary and phytosanitary controls. The partners administrations are not much and sincerely interested in structural reforms, in good governance, rule of law, transparency etc. They prefer to maintain the present ruling systems and regimes.

*Does the ENP currently have the right tools to address the priorities on which you consider it should focus?*

Not always.

*How could sectoral dialogues contribute?*

Sectoral dialogue could be the right tool to involve them in the ENP provided that the sectors are selected by both parties and have a real potential to bring the added value to their economy.

*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?*

No answer

### 3. Flexibility – Towards a More Flexible Toolbox



Over the past ten years, the EU has developed and expanded the instruments of the ENP. It is currently based on the following central elements:

- Relations between the EU and the majority of ENP partner countries are structured in the legal framework provided by Association Agreements (AAs) or Partnership and Cooperation Agreements (PCAs).
- Action Plans or Association Agendas have been agreed to date with 12 ENP partner countries; for each of these countries, there is an annual report on implementation of Action Plan priorities.
- In addition to annual progress reports, the Annual Neighbourhood Package also comprises one strategic communication and two reports on implementation of regional cooperation priorities, one on the Partnership for Democracy and Shared Prosperity with Southern partners and the other on the Eastern Partnership.
- The EU holds regular bilateral dialogues with most ENP partner countries in different formats. This includes formal exchanges foreseen in the AAs or PCAs (Association/Cooperation Councils, Association/Cooperation Committees, sectoral subcommittees). There are also numerous other interfaces, such as Human Rights Dialogues and other sector - specific dialogues.
- Substantial targeted financial support has already been provided to ENP partner countries. A further EUR 15 billion is foreseen for the period 2014 - 2020. A mid-term review is scheduled for 2017, which will be a major opportunity to adjust the allocation and implementation of funding from the European Neighbourhood Instrument in the light of the results of this review and to ensure that the EU is better able to respond more flexibly through its financial cooperation to rapidly changing developments in the region.

*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?*

**Annual report for this kind of countries should be very simple and refer only to a limited number of fields.**

- *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?*
- *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?*

We recommend to launch a special programme targeting the countries that are most advanced in their integration with the EU that would be inspired by the EU cohesion policy. It should link the financing to the clearly defined goals using analogical tools like structural funds and operational programmes with strong monitoring and follow-up mechanisms. Successful implementation of such programmes would attract the countries that lack behind to go further in the cooperation with the EU.

**4. Ownership & Visibility** One of the most often repeated criticisms of the ENP is a lacking sense of ownership with partners, across their societies, and the general public's weak awareness of the policy's aims and impact. It is clear that substantial efforts are needed in the context of the ENP review to improve both the ownership of this policy by partner countries and to improve communication of its objectives and results both within the EU and in the partner countries.

*What do partners seek in the ENP? How can it best accommodate their interests and aspirations?*

There are no uniform interests and aspirations of different players in the partner countries. Governments seek to get additional resources for their economic plans, businesses want to get access to the EU market but at the same time are worried of the increased competition, the trade unions want to raise the standards of workers rights, social protection and salaries, democratic civil society organisations want to establish the





rule of law, independent judiciary, freedom of press. The ENP should try to translate all these aspirations into one common set of goals and actions.

*Can ways of working be developed that are seen as more respectful by partners and demonstrate a partnership of equals?*

The EU should stick to the objectives of the ENP – to establish an area of prosperity and good neighbourliness, founded on the values of the Union and characterised by close and peaceful relations based on cooperation. We should at the same time discuss with the partners what the values are that we can share and search opportunities to cooperate in the fields linked to these values so that the partners feel that the ENP is not one-sided but a joint policy. This will lead to a differentiated ENP – there will be countries that have opted for closer relations with the EU sharing most of our values and others who would share only some of our values and those who are not interested in the European values at all.

*How should this impact on annual reporting?*

We believe that the reporting and its structure should correspond to the degree of the pro-European orientation of the country.

*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?*

We should not retreat from our positions and our values just to attract some partners who would force the EU to make the concessions from its basic policies so that they will feel as equal partners.

The policy “more for more” should be maintained.





*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?*

It would be difficult to deliver benefits within a shorter timeframe, since the partner countries must make necessary structural reforms and this needs time. Some symbolic benefits can be offered in opening markets for the local products, involving local companies in the value added chains, facilitate the visa regime, etc.

*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?*

The EU should establish an ENP investment fund similar to the ESFI that would leverage private investment with guarantees and other incentives. There should be common expert teams to identify the most suitable investment projects with guaranteed return on investments.

*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?*

We believe that the EU must have one ENP and the Member States should follow the same principles in their bilateral relations with the neighbouring states. If it is not existing then we should recommend to establish the ENP Task Force that would include representatives of the EEAS, Ministries of Foreign Affairs of the Member States and relevant DGs of the European Commission that would meet regularly and exchange the information and coordinate the approach to the partner countries.

This phase of public consultation will be crucial in helping to build greater ownership and to pave the way for more effective communication in the future of the ENP.