



**SEIMAS OF THE REPUBLIC OF LITHUANIA
COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN AFFAIRS**

**OPINION
ON THE REVIEW OF THE EUROPEAN NEIGHBOURHOOD POLICY**

Vilnius
10 June 2015

The Committee on Foreign Affairs of the Seimas of the Republic of Lithuania (hereinafter referred to as the Committee), responding to the call for public consultations on the future of the European Neighbourhood Policy, expressed in the joint consultation paper “Towards a new European Neighbourhood Policy” by the European Commission and the High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy on 4 March 2015 (JOIN (2015) 6 final), submits the following opinion.

1. The Committee notes that the European Neighbourhood Policy (hereinafter referred to as the ENP), launched in 2003, is an important dimension of the EU external relations policy in implementing the provisions of Article 8(1) of the Treaty on European Union whereby the Union pursues to “develop a special relationship with neighbouring countries, aiming 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”. Democratic and well-governed neighbours, adhering to the European values, are a prerequisite for security and stability in the EU. However, since the launch of the policy, particularly in recent years, fast-changing circumstances and the developments in the EU’s Eastern and Southern neighbourhood have clearly demonstrated that the **existing ENP is unable to respond to them properly and rapidly and that the methods and means employed are insufficient to ensure the effectiveness of the policy**. The Committee, therefore, welcomes the extensive consultation process on the ENP launched by the European Commission and the European External Action Service.

2. The Committee considers that the ongoing ENP review must be carried out in a responsible manner, taking account of the discussions underway on other strategic matters on the EU agenda, including the European Agenda on Migration; migration processes in the

Mediterranean Sea; the European Agenda on Security; prevention of terrorism and radicalisation; fight against organised crime; protection of EU external borders; the review of the European Security Strategy; hybrid threats; energy and cyber security; consolidation of the Common Security and Defence Policy; preparation of an action plan on EU strategic communication; and development cooperation policy. It is necessary to follow a comprehensive approach to crucial, highly complex and interrelated matters, such as violations of human rights, armed conflicts, terrorism, strengthening of energy, cyber and information security, challenges posed by migration, and human trafficking, and **to ensure maximum harmonisation of measures applied in different EU policy areas, in order to respond properly to challenges posed by the changing situation.**

3. The Committee takes the view that the existing ENP platforms targeting Southern and Eastern neighbourhood of the EU, namely the Eastern Partnership and the Union for the Mediterranean, must continue to be used as instruments for the development of cooperation, but **the work in the platforms should be qualitatively updated, taking into account the changes in the geopolitical and political circumstances and the security situation, and projecting possible developments in the future. It would be appropriate to strengthen the forecasting and analytical capacities in EU institutions and Member States and make EU crisis prevention and management instruments more efficient, in order to ensure not only ‘reactive’ but also ‘proactive’ EU policy in the neighbourhood.**

4. The Committee notes that the **differentiation between the ENP countries is required and necessary**, because they differ in many aspects, including their geographical situation (we have ‘European neighbours’ in the Eastern neighbourhood and ‘neighbours of Europe’ in the Southern neighbourhood), security environment, domestic political situation, and aspirations and expectations towards the EU. It is therefore necessary to rethink the Union’s policy towards the ENP countries, taking into consideration the dynamics of bilateral relations between the EU and each ENP country individually, the existing policy measures, and the interests of partner countries. **In accordance with the ‘more for more’ principle, additional incentives and instruments should be offered to those countries which demonstrate clear determination to carry through political, legal and economic reforms necessary for the deepening of the relations with the EU.** It would be appropriate to make an inventory of all the ENP tools at the disposal of the EU in order to make the ENP a more strategic and more flexible policy capable of consolidating geopolitically the role of the EU

as a global player. The EU must make use of all available instruments, including direct financial support, trade opportunities, visa dialogue, energy security projects, and initiatives to strengthen civil society.

5. The Committee underlines that, by signing association agreements with the EU, the three associated Eastern Partnership countries, namely, Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine, have clearly demonstrated the intention to deepen their political association and economic integration with the EU. Notably, these countries are situated in the part of the European continent where the EU's efforts to create an area based on democratic values is overlapping with the Eurasian Union, an integration area informed by other principles. **The EU must therefore come up with a contingency plan for defending the geopolitical self-determination of all the three associated partners. The renewed ENP should clearly maintain the principle that the ENP neighbour countries cannot and will not have a decisive say in bilateral relations between the EU and those countries that have opted for a path of democratic reform and EU integration.**

6. Conscious of the fact that the EU enlargement policy and the ENP are separate policy areas, the Committee points out that, **in accordance with Article 49 of the Treaty on the European Union, ENP countries as European states have the right to apply for EU membership, provided they respect the European values.** The Committee notes that the implementation of the association agreements, including agreements on the deep and comprehensive free trade area (DCFTA), will help these countries to meet the criteria and conditions for EU membership.

7. Having regard to the fact that as many as 11 out of 16 ENP countries are directly affected by conflicts, **the Committee calls for priority focus on security issues during the ENP review process.** The debate on matters related to the security of the ENP countries and the EU itself as well as the solutions to security challenges should be informed by greater coherence and coordination of the ENP initiatives with the instruments under the EU Common Foreign and Security Policy and the Common Security and Defence Policy. This aspect also needs due attention during the review of the European Security Strategy. The Committee is of the opinion that frozen conflicts in the Eastern Neighbourhood countries are a serious obstacle to economic and social development and to improvement of the living standards; peaceful resolution of frozen conflicts and territorial integrity are essential for

security and stability in the region. Therefore, the Committee calls on Vice-President of the Commission and High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy to ensure that the EU plays a more active role in the resolution of these conflicts and crafts measures to prevent possible conflict escalation or repeated attempts to create scenarios that would produce similar frozen conflicts.

8. The Committee points out that the European Neighbourhood Instrument (ENI) is an important tool for funding the ENP and its use for the implementation of the reviewed ENP should go beyond the attribution of a country to either the Eastern or the Southern Neighbourhood region; rather, individual assessment of the efforts made, objectives set and results already achieved by each country is needed for establishing eligibility for funding. The ENI should provide more flexibility together with more effectively targeted assistance. In-depth analysis of the effectiveness of this instrument is also needed, with a view to ensuring better and more efficient use of the funds allocated for the ENP on the basis of the principle of ‘more for more’. On the other hand, the Committee points out that EU support alone is not enough to warrant sustainable development and implementation of long-term social and economic reforms; therefore, **partner countries should actively mobilise domestic resources and involve the civil society and business community in project implementation, thereby giving them a greater sense of responsibility with a view to obtaining positive results.**

9. The Committee is of the opinion that **the updated ENP must accord the necessary attention and financial resources to the EU’s strategic communication, with a view to promoting positive messages and raising awareness on EU activities, values, and advantages in the ENP countries, on the one hand, and with a view to informing the people of the EU Member States of the importance of a safe and stable neighbourhood, on the other.** Efforts should focus not only on enhancing the visibility of the EU, but also on building resilience of societies in the EU and the ENP countries to any misleading information, disinformation and propaganda aimed at sowing discord; there is also a need to create and promote alternative sources of dissemination of information.

10. The Committee stresses that **it is appropriate to strengthen the parliamentary dimension of the ENP**, which, given the increasingly strong voice of national Parliaments in the European Union, makes the role of parliamentary activities and parliamentary diplomacy

crucial for involving societies, political parties, and parliamentarians in the ENP countries into the debate on the European agenda and thus for contributing towards making the European idea and European values closer to these societies. In order to implement this objective, it is necessary to continue to use, as effectively as possible, the existing multilateral parliamentary formats (the Interparliamentary Conference for the Common Foreign and Security Policy and the Common Security and Defence Policy, joint meetings of the representatives of the European Parliament and the national Parliaments, EURONEST and EUROMED Assembly meetings, etc.) both for holding discussions among EU Member States and for having discussions with representatives of the ENP countries.

11. The Committee is looking forward to the planned submission, in the autumn of 2015, of the communication setting out proposals for the future of the European Neighbourhood Policy, which will summarise the results of the public consultation, and is willing to continue to play an active role in the debate on the implementation of the European Neighbourhood Policy.

Benediktas Juodka

Chair of the Committee