

COSAC Chairpersons Meeting

Eastern Partnership

– *background paper* –

The Eastern Partnership (EaP) is an initiative formulated by the European Commission in its Communication bearing the same name issued on 3 December 2008.¹

The initiative should build on the successful work already accomplished within the **European Neighbourhood Policy** and go even further. It is a policy based on a differentiated approach toward each partner and dedicated to supporting each individual country to progress in its own way and at its own speed. In particular, the strengthened cooperation should for example take the form of negotiation of **Association Agreements, establishment of a free trade area between the EU and the EaP partner countries or a roadmap to visa-free regime**. The conclusion of Association Agreements will be without prejudice to the partners' European aspirations. The EU also aims at including Energy interdependence chapters in the Association Agreements with Eastern Partnership countries. These chapters intend to increase energy security in the partner countries as well as the EU.

Originally introduced jointly by Poland and Sweden in May 2008, the initiative was endorsed by the European Council in June. The European Council tasked the Commission with drafting a proposal on its implementation. The EU's determination for stronger

¹ Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament and the Council – Eastern Partnership, [COM\(2008\) 823](#)

engagement in the region was emphasized following the crisis in Georgia, in August 2008. The Czech Presidency has included this project among its principal priorities.

Eastern Partnership concerns **six countries** with which the European Union wishes to reinforce and intensify mutual relations:

- Republic of Armenia
- Republic of Azerbaijan
- Republic of Belarus
- Georgia
- Republic of Moldova
- Ukraine

The level of Belarus' participation in the Eastern Partnership will however depend on the overall development of EU – Belarus relations.

The EaP will be one of the topics of the spring European Council and an endorsement of the project is expected as part of its conclusions. The official launch of the Eastern Partnership will take place at a special summit on **7 May 2009 in Prague**. The summit will be attended by heads of states and governments of the EU Member States and the partner countries. A political declaration marking the foundation of the partnership should be adopted at the Summit. The declaration is to encompass all the main aims and principles of the Partnership together with general outline of the process of further cooperation. From then onwards biennial summits will be held to provide direction and profile to the Partnership, annual meetings of Foreign Affairs Ministers should review progress and experts engaged should meet twice a year within the framework of four thematic platforms.

Total assistance for the six Eastern neighbours will gradually grow from € 450 million in 2008 to € 785 million in 2013. This will mean allocating a supplementary envelope of € 350 million in addition to the planned resources for the period 2010-2013.