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Toward a more structured and coherent ENP in relation with the EaP countries

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A more structured approach, based on the complexity and implications of the ENP, must take into consideration a clear distinction between two main dimensions:

1. *the need for a multi-actor perspective.* Based on the fact that there are different stakeholders engaged within the EU-EaP countries (EU, institutions, governments of the member states, companies, regional and local authorities, universities, NGO's, civil society, citizens) and each actor has its own interests, preferences and expectations, each actor can particularly contribute and benefit within this relation. Engaging each actor at different levels of implementing the ENP requires a very clear image of each other.
2. *the need for a multi-sector perspective.* A sector approach has the advantage to make clear distinctions between the sectors that represent opportunities which can deliver immediate and positive results and those sectors which have deep political implications and accordingly can negatively interfere in EU-EaP relations. Therefore, identifying and prioritizing the opportunity sectors might be an efficient mechanism to be promoted.

The ENP reform should take into consideration the variables that intervene between and among the above perspectives in order to promote both flexible and focused approach of the EU-EaP countries.

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In the light of the discussions upon the reform of the ENP, we recommend for consideration the following points:

1. There is the need for a comprehensive and coherent approach that must re-evaluate the role of the EU as a regional actor. The experiences of the past twelve years has emphasised that the incomplete implementation and some successive failures have challenged the main idea that the EU is an actor capable to deliver security and prosperity in relation with its neighbours. Therefore, the general framework of the renewed ENP, as well as the instruments that will be engaged, shall contribute to regain and strengthen the Union's credibility among its members and the European citizens, as well as toward its partners. In this perspective, there is a need for a better understanding of interests and preferences of all stakeholders involved in the EU processes, both to respond to the specific needs and expectations of each actor, as well as to gain the necessary legitimacy for the specific actions.
2. The ENP reform should not be considered as a political engagement but as a gradual process which must be delivered on a long term approach. Therefore, the current national preferences within the EU governments must be over passed, by promoting a vision that is in the benefit of the Union's interest. To this end, the goals and specific objectives must be elaborated in such way that their progress can be monitored, quantified, evaluated and if necessary rectified, within a process that will avoid accumulation of negative results. On this matter, the *flexibility* principle must become operational within a *differentiated* approach of each neighbouring country, on bi-lateral basis. Multilateral approaches shall be considered only on specific projects that can deliver positive results on specific issues that represent mutual interest of the participating actors.
3. A functional approach can emphasise the particular role of each actor within a specific sector of cooperation. On short and medium term, the EU must focus upon those projects that can deliver positive experiences of cooperation, which can be perceived as such by the governments and the public opinion. In this perspective, based on the logic of *spill-over* effect, the confidence for deeper cooperation will have the necessary support and full engagement of all actors. As an immediate challenge, there is the need to identify the opportunities and potential of each neighbouring partner and to organise priorities of action.
4. To identify specific identity subdivisions to whom to be addressed focused programmes based on the Cross Border Cooperation Programmes. In the area of the EaP and Black Sea Synergy we can identify the *Baltic Region* (Denmark, Sweden, Finland, Germany, Poland, Baltic states, Russia and Belarus); *Carpathian Region* (PL, SK, CZ, HU, RO, BG, UA, MD); *Ponto-Danube Region* (BG, RO,

UA, MD); *Ponto-Caucasian Region* (BG, RO, TR, UA, MD, RU, GE, AZ, AR). In this area, multi-annual projects shall be developed, involving actors from EU, EaP and other partner countries. A special consideration must be addressed to connection corridors between Baltic-Carpathian- Ponto-Caucasian regions, which will increase trade, transportation and mobility.

5. The cross-border cooperation programs between the Eastern partners and Member States requires a more attention within the financial package. Previously there has been less than 5% but a future approach of 20% can be directed toward strategic projects in order to connect EU member states and partner countries (communications, energy, infrastructure)

6. A specific communication strategy must accompany the new ENP, *and more focused communication strategies must be delivered for each neighbouring country*. A key role within these strategies shall be played by the EU member states that are neighbouring the Eastern partners, being able to gather and promote EU interests within the regional and bi-lateral specific dialogue, in such way that will transform specific communication interests in preferences related to the EU priorities. In this perspective, the role of public diplomacy must focus upon the delivery and dissemination of the opportunities which are associated with the ENP and the common interests of the partners. EU's messages and actions shall be promoted by credible actors, outside of a political engagement. In this perspective, a key role must be played by the universities, as a formative actor for the civil society. The Erasmus+ Program can be promoted and extended by opening the opportunities for exchanges (students, professors, common research projects, cultural and sport ties, media actors, etc.). The European External Action Service together with actors from digital environment can promote through specific instruments the policies and actions of the EU within the EaP area.

7. There must be a deep consideration on the approach and engagement of those sectors and actors that can maintain a balance in stabilization and security process in relation with the Russian Federation interest in the "shared neighbourhood". Trade relations and energy issues can be considered within transnational projects as a factor of stability in the region.