



Association
of European
Businesses

Answer to the Joint Consultation Paper

“Towards a new European Neighbourhood Policy”

Submitting organization: Association of European Businesses

Type of respondent: Non-profit organization

Headquarters: Moscow, Russian Federation

Contact details:

Krasnoproletarskaya str. 16, bld. 3,

127473 Moscow, Russia

Phone: +7 (495) 234 27 64

Fax: +7 (495) 234 28 07

E-mail: info@aebrus.ru ; Marie.Rondelez@aebrus.ru

www.aebrus.ru

The Association of European Businesses (AEB) is the self-governing organisation representing and promoting the interests of European companies in the Russian Federation since 1995. Our Association represents more than 600 European firms of all sizes and branches conducting business in and with Russia. On the background of the involvement of European companies in the Russian economy, we are the main representative of foreign investors.

The AEB's mission is to improve the business and investment climate in Russia in the interests of its member companies and promote a favourable image of Russia abroad to improve the business development conditions inside the country and attract foreign investors.

The Association welcomes the European Commission's willingness to review and improve the principles of the European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP) and more particularly the acknowledgement of the need to ensure greater coherence between the ENP and the European Union's relations with “the neighbours of its neighbours”, in our case, Russia.

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Recent developments in Ukraine have demonstrated the urgency for the European Neighbourhood Policy to take into account the links between Russia and the EU's eastern neighbours and use this tool to somehow bring Russia's position closer to the ENP and the Eastern Partnership's policy making process. Thus the AEB warmly welcomes the European Union's efforts to facilitate the trilateral dialogue on the EU-Ukraine DCFTA.

To that purpose, the AEB strongly recommends the European Commission to consider opening an official dialogue with the Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU). The Eurasian Economic Union is a reality that should be integrated when dealing with the Russian Federation. First, we believe that direct negotiations with the EAEU would be more advantageous for the European businesses investing in the Russian Federation, Belarus and Kazakhstan. Indeed, it shall help creating a more favourable business environment on the territory of the EAEU. Second, talks between the EU and the EAEU at a regional level means that we overcome the current difficulties and frustration of bilateral talks with the Russian Federation. Finally it would allow countries like Belarus and Armenia that are either part of the ENP or that could potentially become part of it to get more space when negotiating with the European Union.

In general, the ENP should be designed in such a manner that it will keep in sight the legitimate interests of the Eastern European neighbours as well as those of the Russian Federation. While promoting the interests of the European Union, the new ENP should focus on the aspects of stability and peace, since politically and economically neither Russia nor the EU will gain from a further exacerbation of their relationship. In this sense, new initiatives should also be taken to reduce the potential for conflicts and to finish existing conflicts between the two major players on the European Continent.

The AEB supports the ENP initiative and hopes that its comments will be taken into account when revising the policy's objectives and principles.

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