

COMMISSION PUBLIC CONSULTATION TOWARD A NEW EUROPEAN NEIGHBOURHOOD POLICY

This is a response to the joint consultation paper: “Towards a new European Neighbourhood Policy”, prepared by the European Commission and the European External Action Service.

Questions

II. Lessons learned and questions on the future direction of ENP

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

The need for the EU to promote its values and to protect its interests effectively in neighboring regions has never been more urgent than it is today. ENP must thus be considered crucial in the external action of the EU.

Nevertheless, ENP partners differ in many respects, from their political situations, to their level of economic development and security. A single standard cannot be applied to the entire neighborhood: it will be too ambitious for some of them, and, in many cases, not sufficiently attractive. The EU should therefore focus on a multi-faceted neighborhood policy, tailored to the specific needs and aspirations of each partner, while keeping an active regional and multilateral approach.

- *Should the current geographical scope be maintained? Should the ENP allow for more flexible ways of working with the neighbours of the neighbours? How can the EU, through the ENP framework, support its neighbours in their interactions with their own neighbours? 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?*

Europe, wanting to preserve peace and stability and promoting sustainable growth in the neighboring countries, has definitely an interest in cooperating with neighbors of the neighbors. Bringing them closer together is in fact crucial in order to tackle complex issues such as terrorism or migration.

While keeping the current geographical scope, the ENP should thus encourage cooperation with neighbors of the neighbors on specific issues and projects. The engagement should be tailored, for example, to particular countries and sub-regions. In this framework, the EU can contribute through projects of regional cooperation and exchange, building systematic dialogue and engagement with both regional actors and powerful states that are not included in the ENP.

- *How could a more comprehensive approach with more active involvement by Member States give the policy greater weight? Would stronger co-ownership of the policy be preferred by partners? N/A*

- *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?*

Association Agreements and DCFTAs are crucial to pursue economic integration between the EU and its neighbours, but the 'one-size-fits-all' approach may discourage some partners: the EU should thus think about instruments able to reflect different levels of engagement toward the cooperation with the EU. Moreover, for those partners which would put greater effort in political, social and economic reforms in line with the EU values. This can be especially fruitful for eastern European countries, offering more tangible incentives.

- *Are the ENP Action Plans the right tool to deepen our partnerships? Are they too broad for some partners? Would the EU, would partners, benefit from a narrower focus and greater prioritisation? N/A*
- *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? N/A*
- *Can partnerships be focused more explicitly on joint interests, in order to increase ownership on both sides? How should the ENP accommodate the differentiation that this would entail? Are new elements needed to support deeper cooperation in these or other fields?*

In the past, some partners did not accept the EU template as the model for their own development. Political, economical and cultural differences among them influence their aspirations and commitment to engage with the EU. While not contradicting the fundamental normative principles on which the EU is founded, the new ENP should thus introduce a need-based approach able to equally reflect the diverse views, positions, and experience of all partners involved: this would create a sense of joint ownership.

Differentiated approaches within the ENP entail a clear identification of areas and sectors where the EU and its neighbours have common interests such as security, infrastructure development, energy, private sector support.

In order to increase ownership on both the EU and its partners' side a stronger civil society and a more transparent process of negotiation among social partners will also be required. In this respect, European business can play a role, sharing experiences and know how on public-private partnerships and helping get the voice of the private sector – SMEs especially – heard in our neighbours.

- *What further work is necessary in this area, which is regarded as key by all ENP partners? How can the ENP further support the management of migration and help to draw the benefits of mobility?*

Facilitation of visas to ease the mobility of businesspeople, high-skilled workers and specialists, will support integration and facilitate contacts and good practices exchanges. We should also consider to link mobility with training and education policies in order to encourage neighbours to become more competitive. In parallel, it would also be useful to reflect on the progressive achievement of a higher degree of recognition of professional qualifications.

- *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?*

Social dialogue is crucial to encourage good governance, advance social and industrial peace and stability and boost economic progress. In this respect the private sector should be more involved in the ENP framework: European companies and business associations can in fact provide added value to the partnership promoting local development and improving local standards.

- *How should the ENP address conflicts and crises in the neighbourhood? Should CFSP and CSDP activities be better integrated in the ENP framework? Should it have a greater role in developing confidence-building measures and post-conflict actions as well as related state- and institution-building activities? N/A*

Should the ENP be given a strengthened focus on working with partners on the prevention of radicalisation, the fight against terrorism and organised crime? N/A

- *Should security sector reform be given greater importance in the ENP? N/A*
- *Is the multilateral dimension able to deliver further added value? Are these formats fit for purpose? How can their effectiveness be strengthened? Can we more effectively use other, more flexible frameworks? Can we better cooperate with other regional actors (Council of Europe, OSCE, League of Arab States, Organisation of the Islamic Conference, African Union)?*

ENP should support effective cooperation with regional actors, particularly on crossborder links, regional infrastructure and regional trade and cooperation, devoting a larger part of its budget to projects aimed at promoting better economic integration and regional synergies. Moreover, the EU can contribute to enhance the capacity of regional organizations for crisis management.

Finally, the EU should aim at facilitating internal communication and dialogue among the partners themselves, as they are in many cases not sufficiently cooperative with each other, especially in the Southern Neighbourhood.

- *How should the ENP further develop engagement with civil society in its widest sense? Can more be done to network different parts of the partner populations? N/A*
- *What more can be done to promote links between business communities? With and between Social Partners (trade unions and employers' organisations) and to promote social dialogue? What can be done to promote links between scientific communities, universities, local authorities, women, youth, the media?*

In order to promote links between business communities, the new ENP should dedicate a larger budget to programmes and initiatives aimed at promoting contacts and exchanges between businesspeople, such as business and B2B forums, matchmaking events and business training. This will also contribute to strengthen local private sector and enable it to play a more effective role in social dialogue that is a key towards shared solutions, social cohesion and the rule of law. Strong, independent workers' and

employers' organizations with technical capacity and knowledge are, in fact, one of the enabling conditions of social dialogue.

How can the ENP do more to foster religious dialogue and respect for cultural diversity, and counter prejudice? Should increasing understanding of each other's cultures be a more specific goal of the ENP and how should this be pursued? How can the ENP help tackle discrimination against vulnerable groups? N/A

III. Towards a partnership with a clearer focus and more tailored cooperation

1. The challenges of differentiation:

- *Should the EU gradually explore new relationship formats to satisfy the aspirations and choices of those who do not consider the Association Agreements as the final stage of political association and economic integration?*

The new ENP should focus on issues that enable a stronger cooperation between the EU and its neighbours offering attractive political and financial incentives tailored for each partner. By individualizing bilateral cooperation frameworks, the EU will avoid further fragmentation and will achieve stronger unity among the partners.

- *How should the EU take forward the tasking of the 2013 Eastern Partnership Summit in Vilnius of the long-term goal of a wider common area of economic prosperity based on WTO rules and sovereign choices throughout Europe and beyond?*

EU should support and encourage the aspirations of the EU's neighbours, while avoiding to be perceived as aimed at conditioning their sovereign decisions. Introducing economic and financial market reforms is of course crucial to the creation of a wide common area of economic prosperity based on WTO rules. Through the new ENP, EU can provide technical assistance and capacity building to those partner committed to this same target.

- *Is there scope within the ENP for some kind of variable geometry, with different kinds of relationships for those partners that choose different levels of engagement?*

There should be such a scope in the ENP in order to consider peculiar needs of each partner, while keeping a common framework aimed at the creation of an area of economic prosperity and security.

2. Focus:

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

Trade and investments, logistics, security and migration, climate change are definitely crucial for the entire area. Energy and regional infrastructure could also constitute an area of focus since they are at the heart of any development and growth strategy.

- *Which priorities do partners see in terms of their relations with the EU? Which sector or policy areas would they like to develop further? Which areas are less interesting for partners?*

Priorities are different from country to country and sometimes inside the same country different areas have different concerns, but, in general, all partners will agree that socio-economic stability is the base for development. Moreover our partners share the interest in developing private sector, most of all in sectors such as, ICT, green technologies and tourism.

In any case, partner countries should play a more proactive role in identifies priorities and in the decision making process. [c1]

- *Does the ENP currently have the right tools to address the priorities on which you consider it should focus? How could sectoral dialogues contribute?*

To be more effective, the new ENP should become more focused, differentiated, and better integrated with the other components of EU foreign policy. In this last respect, coordination among the different institutions dealing with the ENP should be further improved in order to avoid duplication of procedures or lacunae in the implementation of the ENP instruments. To this end, a clear division of tasks and responsibilities is needed. On sectoral dialogues, although so far they have not always delivered the desired results, they do contribute in furthering cooperation between the EU and its neighbors and should be further promoted.

- *If not, what new tools could be helpful to deepen cooperation in these sectors?*

A greater commitment of all the stakeholders involved can be useful in this respect. Business communities and sectoral association, if correctly supported through ad hoc instruments and funding, can play a pivotal role in promoting a more effective sectoral dialogue and cooperation.

- *How can the EU better support a focus on a limited number of key sectors, for partners that prefer this?*

For partners that prefer a focus on a limited number of key sectors, the EU could build on private sector initiatives in sustainability, access to energy, community engagement or training. The selection of key sectors should respond to the needs of specific partners, while taking into consideration also the potential impact on their economic and social development in a wider sense.

3. Flexibility – towards a more flexible toolbox:

- *How to streamline Action Plans to adapt them better to individual country needs and priorities?*

Needs and priorities should be identified by each partner through public consultation and then be followed in the Action Plans.

- *Is annual reporting needed for countries which do not choose to pursue closer political and economic integration?*

A different system of reporting can be evaluated for these countries, encompassing lighter mechanisms and, for example, bi-annual deadlines.

- *How should the EU structure relations with countries that do not currently have Action Plans?*

The EU should encourage these countries to elaborate Action Plans offering tangible incentives. The “more for more” approach, based on positive conditionality, can be fruitful in this respect. Moreover, multilateral and regional programmes can offer a framework to create forum of discussion with them on their needs and priorities.

- *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?*

In some cases, geopolitical considerations need to be taken into account to make the “more for more” approach more flexible. Some issues, such as security ones for example, could request a stronger engagement of the EU not for the “mores” they deliver, but for the importance they have for the EU in a wider sense.

- *How to assess progress against jointly agreed reform targets when a partner country experiences significant external pressure, for instance armed conflict or refugee flows?*

A flexible approach should be useful in these cases both in terms of deadlines and budget of the new ENP projects.

- *How can the EU engage more effectively and respond more flexibly to developments in partner countries affected by conflict situations?*

The ENP should have a role in supporting economic stabilisation and growth in the conflict-affected countries, also contributing to create a safe business framework for European entrepreneurs.

- *What tools would the EU need to respond more effectively to fast-changing developments in its neighbourhood? N/A*

- *Are the choice of sectors and mechanisms for delivery of EU financial support appropriate? How could its impact and visibility be enhanced?*

The creation of an electronic tool, linked to the EUROPEAID portal, to automatically alert companies on funding opportunities in selected countries and sectors, could help the access to information.

4. Ownership & Visibility:

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

Partner countries seek policies and instruments targeted to their specific and peculiar needs. In this framework, they look for exchange of know how and support in identifying a targeted and fruitful development strategy.

Can ways of working be developed that are seen as more respectful by partners and demonstrate a partnership of equals? How should this impact on annual reporting? N/A

- *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?*

Inclusive decision-making process on priorities and projects to be implemented should be a priority for the new ENP that should encourage a wider participation of social partners in the Action Plans definition and implementation.

- *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? N/A*

- *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?*

Blending facilities and a stronger commitment of the private sector are fundamental to change the donor dynamic. EU investment is crucial for economic development but is not enough on its own. Local public and private actors must work together to create an enabling environment to ensure knowledge transfer and foster economic growth.

- *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? N/A*