

# **EUROPEAN NEIGHBOURHOOD POLICY. THE EASTERN PARTNERSHIP.**

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## **A DECALOGUE OF DIFFERENTIATION AND REFORM PROPOSALS**

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**PODADERA RIVERA, Pablo**

**CALDERÓN VÁZQUEZ, Francisco J.**

**University of Malaga**

**SPAIN**

### **Background**

We could consider that the neighborhood policy of the EU begins to take shape from the very moment that Robert Schumann and Jean Monnet announced the intention to create an economic community of coal and steel. However, it gains special relevance from May 1, 2004, when the biggest enlargement known until the European Union took place.

The EU grew from 15 members to 25, joining 10 new members, with an added population of 75 million, thus covering political and economic space of 450 million citizens. The fifth enlargement supposed a turn towards Eastern Europe, since most of the new members came from former Soviet republics, and was an old wish of the old Western Europe to expand its borders eastward and complete the "reunification" of the European people divided by the iron Curtain and the Cold War.

The European Commission drew up in 2003 a document entitled "Wider Europe"<sup>1</sup>, on the new neighborhood policy of the Union with its neighbors, both East and South. It was about a new neighborhood policy specially thought for relations with countries in foreign land and sea border of the EU, namely Russia, the Western NIS (New Independent States of the

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<sup>1</sup> EUROPEAN COMMISSION (2003): "Wider Europe – Neighborhood: A New Framework for Relations with our Eastern and Southern Neighbors – Communication from the Commission to the Council and to the European Parliament", COM 104 final, 11 March.

former Soviet Union) and the South of Mediterranean and declaring that "the European Union must try to create a zone of prosperity and a friendly neighborhood - a 'ring of friends' - with whom it has close and peaceful relations based on cooperation."

The European Neighborhood Policy was revised in 2011<sup>2</sup> by the EU and took a strong emphasis on the promotion of deep and sustainable democracy, accompanied by inclusive economic development.

Currently, ENP is configured as one of the important lines of the external action of the Union. The ENP focuses on closer ties and relations with neighboring countries to strengthen political association and economic integration with the EU, improving stability and common security in the wider geographical area of eastern and southern neighborhood.

The ENP is primarily a bilateral policy between the EU and each partner country, but is complemented by initiatives of regional and multilateral cooperation: the Eastern Partnership (launched in Prague in May 2009), the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership (Euromed), formerly known as the Barcelona Process, re-launched in Paris in July 2008, and the Black Sea Synergy (launched in Kiev in February 2008).

### **The Eastern Partnership**

The Eastern Partnership (EaP) is a joint initiative of the EU and its Eastern European partners: Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, the Republic of Moldova and Ukraine. Launched in 2009 at the Prague Summit, it brings our Eastern European partners closer to the EU. The Eastern Partnership supports and encourages reforms in the EaP countries for the benefit of their citizens.

The Partnership is based on a commitment to the principles of international law and fundamental values, including democracy, rule of law and respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms, as well as to a market economy, sustainable development and good governance. The Partnership is founded on mutual interests and commitments as well as shared ownership and mutual accountability.

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<sup>2</sup> COM (2011) 303 de 25.5.2011

Since its launch, the Eastern Partnership has gone through several summits that have established standards of its operation until today: 2009: Launch of EAP summit in Prague, 2011: summit in Warsaw, 2013: summit in Vilnius, 2014: AA / DCFTAS with Georgia, Moldova, Ukraine, 2015: summit in Riga.

Multilateral cooperation in the Eastern Partnership takes place across a wide array of issues, ranging from democracy, good governance and stability to economic issues, energy security and contacts between people. This work is guided by four thematic platforms, supported by various expert panels, flagship initiatives and projects.

The European Neighbourhood Instrument (ENI) is the main source of funding for the implementation of the European Neighbourhood Policy and the Eastern Partnership in the period 2014-2020. It replaces the European Neighbourhood and Partnership Instrument (ENPI) – the main instrument for the region in 2007-2013. Overall, EUR 3.2 billion has been made available to the EaP countries since the launch of the Partnership up to now: nearly EUR 2.5 billion from the ENPI in 2010-2013 and EUR 730 million from the ENI in 2014.

### **Need for a change: Rectify, change, differentiate and prioritize**

Regardless of the balance of the results obtained in the course of a decade of existence of the ENP, it is clear that the context in which they were conceived the objectives of its implementation has varied (events in Arab countries in recent years and Russian confrontation with Ukraine) and a thorough review of it is necessary, as well as redefining objectives more realistic and commensurate with the circumstances.

Not surprisingly, on 4 March, the High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy / Vice-President of the European Commission, and Johannes Hahn, European Commissioner for Enlargement and European Neighbourhood Policy, have launched consultations on the future of the ENP<sup>3</sup>.

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<sup>3</sup>Brussels, 4.3.2015 JOIN (2015) 6 final. JOINT CONSULTATION PAPER Towards a new European Neighbourhood Policy. See also Eduard Kukan, 31.03.2015, WORKING DOCUMENT on the review of the European Neighbourhood policy, Committee on Foreign Affairs

## **Amend / Corrections**

The idea of the ENP of gradual economic integration dependent on an ambitious policy of economic and institutional reforms in partner countries has failed. As Eneko Landaburu (2015)<sup>4</sup> says “We are far from the creation of a stable and prosperous zone by developing the social market economy and by spreading democracy and the values of the EU”.

The proposed goals, the measures implemented, the political context (time of great turmoil) and above all, the focus failed. It cannot be enter in the partner countries, a European "Trojan Horse" to annihilate cultural and religious factors to impose a model of liberal democratic civilization, in many cases, rejected by his excessive westernness, materialism and individualism.

This focus, far from encouraging the differential cooperation, has developed a method (of legal approximation, political, economic) very similar to the EU membership, demanding and, in the context of a neighborhood policy, unrealistic and overly ambitious.

On the other hand, the attempt to achieve geopolitical objectives in the context of significant economic inequalities without operating a powerful budgetary tool to ensure a level of progress that convince and justify the decision to approximation the European project, is already weakened skewed and devoid sufficient credibility from its own definition.

To all this must be added the political turmoil caused by Russia's opposition to the Westernization of these countries and also the implementation of the Eurasian Economic Community in which some of the countries of the ENP see no alternative.

The EU cannot ignore the ENP in the foreign policies of other countries, neither the influence of other global partners such as the United States,

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<sup>4</sup> Eneko Landaburu (2015): NEIGHBOURHOOD POLICY: MORE OR NO MORE? Notre Europe, Jacques Delors Institute, Tribune, 27 May 2015.

Russia or China, or other countries such as Turkey, Iran and the Gulf States (Eduard Kukan, 2015, op. cit.).

This author summarizes the main political shortcomings of the current ENP:

- A flawed conceptual framework based on the enlargement approach of incentives but in a dynamic process with accession perspectives.
- A Eurocentric nature, as the EU seems to fail to take into account the role and influence of other stake holders but also non-state actors (like ISIS for example).
- An inconsistent conditionality resulting from a political compromise between different interests.

### **A Decalogue of Differentiation and Reform proposals**

The next could be a set of proposals for the reform of the ENP, with special emphasis on differentiation.

- The full and sincere engagement of the EU Member States towards the ENP is crucial.
- Ensuring implementation of its commitments under the DCFTAs with Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine and supporting those countries in implementing their commitments.
- Mobility is a core issue for our neighbours. Implementation of the agreements in this regard with Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia and Ukraine and visa liberalization with Moldova.
- Strengthen differentiation: Different types of contractual frameworks for different levels of commitment that reflect the renewal of the ENP. Should be reviewed and improved the arrangements according to the ambition of each partner country, the actual implementation of existing agreements and the resources available.
- Need to reform the ENI the same time as the ENP.
- Allow the participation of partner countries in EU programs with projection technique, knowledge, innovation ... (e.g. TEMPUS, ERASMUS HORIZON 2020)
- The ENP should not be considered as a "prelude" to membership; ENP should be solely and exclusively a policy of cooperation for the

development and prosperity of both parties, based on strategic agreements that provide mutual benefits. This does not mean that any European country wants and can apply for membership in accordance with Article 49 TFEU.

- The diversity of our neighboring countries (level of economic development, political orientation, historical heritage ...) requires differentiation, taking into account the expectations that each of them has with respect to the EU (see Annex).
- Also within this differentiation, it is necessary to consider the relationship that our neighboring countries have with their neighbors, as well as it should be part of the same strategy (e.g. Armenia and Belarus as members of the Eurasian Economic Union with Russia, Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan).
- On the other hand, the EU must interact in their ENP with other international forums with similar tasks, such as the OSCE or the Council of Europe.

### **Prioritizing**

With the ultimate aim of creating an area of prosperity and good neighborliness, the ENP should do an exercise of prioritization and focus its cooperation efforts in the following areas: economic and social development, infrastructure and regional development and integration between partners, environment, SMEs, migration, security, and energy and energy efficiency. This could lead to propose five major programs: economic, social and territorial development; environment; migration; security; and energy. In this way each member country participates in five programs according to their characteristics, with political and financial instruments tailored to each national context.

Meanwhile, local development must be a priority in the ENP focus, so that differentiation should consider the idiosyncratic diversity of the local communities.

### **Conclusions. Prosperity first.**

According to the above and in line with the proposals made, in our opinion, the ENP should give an important turn to leave behind Eurocentric positions to focus on a framework of cooperation, not of membership. First

cooperation for prosperity and then cooperation for competitiveness in the globalized world.

It should be a flexible policy that prioritizes the needs of each partner country, with a focus on local development, within five priority areas: economic, social and territorial development; environment; migration; security; and energy.

The focus of the proceedings should always be proactive, preventive, pragmatic and differentiated. Differentiation could be the key to developing more efficient realistic associations. As it says Landaburu (2015), differentiation and variable geometry are, therefore, the best way to derive the most benefit of our dealings with neighbors and better adaptation to the circumstances and objectives.

This requires new tools, including plans and reports of prosperity and financial instruments help to reduce economic differences between the partner countries.