

Renata Kunert-Milcarz

EU INITIATIVES FOR DEMOCRATISATION IN EASTERN EUROPE

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Abstract

Support for democratisation and democracy has become one of the leading topics in a wide-ranging debate over the state of democracy in the contemporary world. The European Union became an important player in global politics, one with an ambitious programme for the spreading and supporting of democracy and the process of democratisation in Eastern Europe. Hence the author's attempt at addressing the following question: what actions and strategies have and are being undertaken by the EU to facilitate the above-mentioned processes? The aim of the paper is to describe and assess the strategies and actions of the European Union in the field of supporting democratisation and democracy in selected countries of the former USSR (e.g. Belarus, Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine), additionally well-fitting to the concept of Eastern Partnership, in the last decade of XX and the first decade of XXI Century. The paper also aims to present which procedures and standards (that are supposed to guarantee their usefulness and effectiveness) are being used by the EU. The emphasis has been placed primarily on the processes of democratisation, their mileage, specificity and possible strategies for supporting democratic development, as well as its potential for consolidation, in the countries of the former Soviet Union. In order to conduct the research it is necessary to assess the political, social and economic conditions in the researched countries. It is to be stressed that one should be aware of the complexity and dynamics of the described processes whilst evaluating the EU's initiatives. The paper's topic was chosen due to the importance and currentness of the researched EU actions and their results.

Keywords: EU initiatives, support for democratisation, Eastern Europe

Introduction

Numerous international actors (such as countries, organisations and various non-governmental organisations) these days, are keen on supporting actions that proliferate democracy, rule of law and human rights on a global scale. Eastern Europe is one of the regions that lies within their scope. Economic aids for the creation of new institutions, as well as trade agreements offered by various actors, are oriented towards promoting the political liberalisation and facilitation of democratic consolidation. The changes in Central and Eastern Europe that started in 1989 concluded in the creation of a new international environment conducive for democratisation. The European Union (EU) is, amongst others, an actor that promotes democracy, rule of law and human rights. One of the main goals pursued by the EU within the scope of Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP) has been the development and consolidation of democracy and rule of law as well as the protection of human rights, fundamental rights and freedoms. Giddens (2007, 201-202) states that 'the events of 1989 more or less completely transformed the nature of EU' and

at the present time it 'faces a new world', i.e. because of the newly created situation which has been linked by origin to the 'open border to the East'.

Such values as democratisation, human rights, rule of law and pluralism have been included in various documents, e.g. *Partnership and Cooperation Agreements* (PCA), declarations of the European Council, Maastricht Treaty, Lomé Convention, Lisbon Treaty. Additionally, the Copenhagen criteria of 1993 for the present incorporation of democratic values such as *conditio sine qua non* for obtaining EU membership. Development aid for post-communist countries has been granted under the condition of warranting respect for human rights (Kubicek 2003, 1). Broader provisions on democracy and human rights have been included in the *Declaration of Human Rights* of 28/29 June, 1991 and in the *Declaration of Fundamental Rights and Freedoms* of 12 April, 1989. Both documents are formally non-binding, however, in a document from 1989, called *Declaration of the European Union on the occasion of the 50th anniversary of the Universal Declaration on Human Rights*, the EU refers to the anniversary of the adoption of the *Universal Declaration of Human Rights*, stressing that the EU 'pledges its continuing support for the further promotion and protection of human rights, in fulfilment of the Treaty on the European Union, the European Convention on the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms and the Declarations of the European Council of Luxembourg 1991 and 1997, and adopts the following Declaration'. The EU has added that it, itself 'is founded on the principles of liberty, democracy, respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms and the rule of law, share the values in which the Declaration is rooted'

Chosen initiatives of the European Union

The paper attempts to address the following question: what actions and strategies were and are undertaken by the EU to facilitate the above-mentioned processes? This paper is a continuation of the research started during the author's PhD studies. The study demonstrated that there is a broad catalogue of documents regarding the EU's relations with the countries of the former Soviet Union in the context of democratisation. Within the judicial realm of the European Union, a system for protecting human rights started to develop in the late 90's. Its origin has been connected with the deepening integration of the Member States, ongoing work on the EU's Constitution, as well as the *Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union*, proclaimed in Nice, 2000. According to the Helsinki Summit in December 1999, promotion and support for democracy were to become an integral part of the EU enlargement strategy (Whitehead 2003, 416). On the list, the following should also be included: signed PCAs, *European Neighbourhood Policy* (ENP), which has been initiated by the European Neighbourhood Policy Strategy Paper, new cooperation instruments: *Action Plans* (AP) and *Eastern Partnership* (EaP) program, implemented under the framework of the ENP. The last two enlargements in 2004 and 2007 moved the EU border to the East resulting in a new geopolitical situation (see Kapusniak 2009, 58-59). It is imperative that support for democratisation must not be aimed at imposing one's own solutions or securing particular interests. All undertaken actions should warrant and facilitate the autonomous and active participation of citizens in political life.

PCA's were the documents introduced to facilitate trade by helping post communist countries meet the WTO standards. The agreements defined aims in the field of consolidation democracy and the development of the economy of Central and Eastern European countries. The documents included a provision for allowing a free trade area in the future and a number of specific provisions regulating trade according to the program *Technical Assistance to CIS* (TACIS). TACIS was later replaced by the *European Neighbourhood and Partnership Instrument* (ENPI), which is a financial instrument that implements the objectives of the ENP. ENPI was introduced in 2007 on the basis of *Regulation No 1638/2006 of the European Parliament and of the Council* of 26th October 2006. It was designed to promote cooperation between EU and the countries of the so-called 'Circle of Friends', which includes Ukraine, Belarus and the Mediterranean countries. The new instrument is supported by two programs, *TAIEX* and *Sigma*, both designed to help the countries acquire the skills and experience necessary for the implementation of EU legislation (Pazdniak 2009, 23). *TAIEX* is an instrument managed by the Directorate-General for Enlargement of the European Commission. Its scope includes helping partner countries implement new legislation in line with EU standards, to strengthen public administration, to adjust the present legislation to EU standards and to support the implementation of ENP. The purpose of the *Sigma* program is to strengthen public administration in countries neighboring the EU in order to bolster economic and political freedoms and to facilitate economic integration and political cooperation between the EU and its neighbours.

ENP has its roots in the Anglo-Danish project called *New Neighbours Initiative* of 2002, which was to include Belarus, Moldova and Ukraine. ENP was introduced in march 2003. It has been perceived as a framework policy for the relations within the entire EU neighbourhood. Through this initiative, the EU was supposed to play a more active political role aimed mainly at the stabilisation of the enlarged Union (Casier 2007, 73). The countries covered by the ENP were originally divided into two groups: Western Newly Independent States (Ukraine, Moldova and Belarus) and the states of the southern Mediterranean. However, after the peaceful revolution in Georgia in 2003, the European Commission has added a third group consisting of the South Caucasian Republics (Nervi 2011, 66). There were *Action Plans* prepared for every mentioned country. *Progress Reports* were also prepared accordingly, reporting on progress in the strengthening of democracy, rule of law and respect for human rights, as they were designed to present a review of the practical implementation of the ENP. In spite of undertaken actions focusing on the adaptation of EU standards, especially in the field of structural and legislative reforms, the EU stressed the little progress that has been made.

Hence, the next idea was a Polono-Swedish initiative: *Eastern Partnership*, which has been sanctioned by the European Council (March 19/20th, 2009). EaP has been officially inaugurated at the EU's summit in Prague (May 7th, 2009), by means of the *Joint Declaration of the Prague Eastern Partnership Summit*. The programme has been oriented towards Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine. Despite vivid activity at the beginning, Swedish involvement in the program weakened with time (Ivan and Ghinea 2010). Poland however, continued to be an active supporter of EaP which has

been reflected in declarations issued during the Polish presidency (July–December 2011) that proposed the intensification of actions in the eastern dimension. The EU as a whole was not that involved as Nicolas Sarkozy, Gordon Brown, Silvio Berlusconi and José Luis Zapatero were not present at the Prague Summit (Ivan and Ghinea 2010; also see *Joint Declaration...*). Moreover, the critical economic situation in Greece as well as the political crisis in Libya resulted in the changing of priorities in EU foreign policy (Makarychev and Deviatkov 2012).

The partnership aimed at the strengthening of relations between the EU and its eastern neighbours contains several points. One of the vital point was to observe the obligations of international law as well as fundamental values such as democracy and rule of law. *Joint Declaration* concludes that ‘The participants of the Prague Summit are confident that the results of the Prague Summit and the establishment of Eastern Partnership will advance the cause of democracy, strengthen stability and prosperity whilst bringing lasting and palpable benefits for citizens of all participating states. The participants of the Prague Summit will work closely to achieve the objectives envisaged by this Joint Declaration.’

Bilateral relations between the EU and EaP countries are built upon *association agreements* (AAs), Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Areas (DCFTA) and visa liberalisation agreements. The multilateral character of the relations encompasses areas related to four thematical platforms: democracy, good governance and stability; economic integration and convergence within EU policy; energy security and people to people contacts. Additionally, there are several flagship initiatives e.g: integrated border management and diversification of energy supply (Ivan and Ghinea 2010).

Based on the EC document *Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament and the Council* from December 2008, the *Eastern Partnership Civil Society Forum* (CSF) has been established with the goal of supporting contacts between civil society organisations that facilitate dialogue with state authorities. A parliamentary component of EaP, named *Euronest*, is an assembly of sixty MEPs and MP’s of the partnership countries (Ivan and Ghinea), with the exclusion of Belarus which has been suspended in 2010 because of the flawed presidential elections.

Post-communist countries as objects of EU initiatives

How particular post-communist countries such as Belarus, Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine have favoured as a result of EU initiatives? Gorbachev’s glasnost’ policy had a powerful impact on the soon to be independent soviet states. Decomposition of the USSR has been received with mixed feelings across the West. The post-soviet countries were commonly believed to be temporary creations. This new geopolitical layout actually forced the EU to try to adjust to the changed environment.

The geopolitical location of Georgia, placed between Armenia, oil-rich Azerbaijan, the Black Sea, Turkey and Russia, as well as its controversial relations with RF, have resulted in Georgia’s importance for western politics. A peaceful *rose revolution* could be considered the first change within the former Soviet Union (apart from the Baltic states), that has been perceived as an significant step towards democracy in the area (Mitchel 2006).

The foundation of the relations between the EU and Georgia is PCA, which was signed in 1996 and came into force on 1st July, 1999. The Individual Action Plan signed in November, 2006 as part of the ENP, was aimed at deepening political and economic cooperation. Ongoing changes were unfortunately hampered by the Russo-Georgian war of 2008, which resulted in difficulties for EU actions within the region. Diplomatic efforts were undertaken and led to a preliminary agreement between conflicting sides. Not without significance are Georgia's internal problems. In November 2007, protests broke out in Tbilisi. M. Saakashvili's response was the introduction of martial law. These events were met with disapproval from the West. The EU unanimously criticised the actions of the president. A major consequence of the November issues was the early presidential election of January 5th, 2008, won once again by M. Saakashvili. Then the introduced EaP, the next step in Brussels-Tbilisi relations was generally well received by Georgian authorities; relief aid provided for the country only strengthened this perception. However, the overall relations between the two actors is not regular and focuses mainly on energy issues whilst efforts to support domestic reforms have not had any significant effect. Right after the *rose revolution*, it seemed that Georgia was ready for the consolidation of democratic achievements. But the problems with territorial integrity, conflict with Russia and the lack of strong democratic neighbours have resulted in a difficult environment for the consolidation of the system and the actions of the EU (see Mitchel 2006). The authoritarian traits of the latest president of Georgia, perceived at first as a liberal and pro-western politician have only added to the problems. Once again, the tension in the country increased in May, 2011. In Tbilisi, there were anti-government demonstrations that ended in clashes with the police, which was a subject of international condemnation. *Bidzina Ivanishvili became the prime minister of Georgia in October 2012, after his Georgian Dream coalition won the election. As for the recent presidential election, the Central Election Commission of Georgia (CEC of Georgia) announced the preliminary results of the October 27th Presidential Elections of Georgia. The preliminary results indicated that Giorgi Margvelashvili, the candidate from Prime Minister B. Ivanishvili's party, received about 62.11 percent of the vote (CEC of Georgia, 2013). Georgia's last elections ended Mikheil Saakashvili's decade-long rule. Helen Khoshtaria, known as an independent political analyst, commented: "This is not only a presidential election, but it's also a major change in the political system in Georgia". So then, where is Georgia going after that? The picture is that the Georgian Dream has taken a similar path, but sought better ties with Russia (M. Antidze, T. Heritage 2013). However, on 17th of November, after the inauguration of the new president, changes in the constitution will come into force: the presidential system, created by Saakashvili, will be superseded by a cabinet-parliamentary one. As a result of the changes, the present government will be replaced by a new one, most probably headed by Irakli Garibashvili (Civil Georgia 2013).*

In Georgia, there are constant efforts being undertaken to restore South Ossetia and Abkhazia to the borders of the state. The absence of strong democratic neighbours and endless conflicts with Russia have created a complicated context for the consolidation of democracy. Supporting democracy should focus on local participation and the practices of a *bottom-up* approach to complement the traditional *top-down* procedures. Georgia's

experience illustrates how difficult and complex a task it can be building a sustainable democracy, despite adequate funding and commitment from both the side of the U.S.A. and of Europe (Pan 2009).

Relations between the EU and Moldova have developed slowly. PCA with Moldova was signed on 28th November, 1994 and came into force on 1st July, 1998. It turned out however, to be an insufficient platform for cooperation between Brussels and Chisinau. Popescu (2009) believes that 'because the Voronin governments were not interested in democratization, Moldova ended-up in quasi-isolation with only a handful of foreign dignitaries ever visiting the country and EU only reluctantly cooperating with Moldova.' An invitation to join the ENP issued in 2004 to Moldova, has been received with a good dose of content. The Act of AP between the EU and the Republic of Moldova, formed as a part of ENP, was supposed to reflect, at least partially, the stances of both sides. The main goal became support for political, economic and institutional reforms. Amongst the priorities were listed: designing a solution for the Transnistria question, support for institutions warranting democracy and rule of law, strengthening independence of the media, support for administration and juridical system, introducing actions aimed at reducing poverty and the facilitation of stable economic growth.

The results of the progress report in Moldova were much argued about. The government was claiming successes, yet NGOs were presenting mostly critical approaches to the driven reforms. Furthermore, EU institutions were expressing their concern as well. The chief culprits were the incompetency and ineptitude of the policy makers. In the document *Planul De Acțiuni Ue-Rm: restante Sau ESeC Total? Mîzărari* (2008) is listed a catalog of obstacles hindering the implementation of the Action Plan and a set of possible solutions to amend the situation without the promotion of any party interests. The author pointed out i.a. the lack of political will to implement the reforms planned in the AP and the influence of the imperialist RF. From the standpoint of Moldovans, especially after the last EU enlargement, visa policy is one of the most sensitive areas (Ghinea and Chirilă 2010).

The crisis within the European Union (the failure of the adoption of the Constitutional Treaty) and the disappointment in Chisinau's slow progression in implementing reforms caused a deterioration of the already poor relations between Brussels and Chisinau. However, in connection with the accession of Romania to the EU, Brussels found itself under pressure to solve the problem of Moldova's expectations in relation to integration into the EU and additionally the role of EU policy in Moldova has increased significantly.

ENP was aiming at reforming the electoral law, juridical system, fighting corruption and developing a solution for the conflict in Transnistria. For Moldova, EaP meant progress in relations with the EU, however the lack of prospect of membership was received with disappointment. Among the factors hindering democratic changes could be listed governments formed by communists (2001-2009), double-track policy led by V. Voronin, political crisis within the pro-integration faction, a disastrous economic situation, strong polarisation between pro-European and pro-Russian orientations and the frozen conflict in Transnistria.

In May 2011, Moldovan authorities issued a document in the form of a non-paper addressed to the European Union: *Proposals of the Republic of Moldova on the future*

development of the Eastern Partnership. This act expressed the position of Chisinau on the Eastern Partnership as a political instrument, which in Moldova's opinion should include a clear statement of the prospect of membership for those countries that would be able to comply with the Union, calling for a redefinition of the priorities of the EaP. The authorities stressed, that in the long run EaP will become more important for the RM, as long as it is closer to achieving the goal of integration into EU structures.

Relations between Brussels and Chisinau are deepening at a fairly slow pace. This is caused by the Transnistrian conflict, internal problems and the presence of Russian troops on the territory of RM. What is more, in the view of researchers, EU elites continue to perceive Moldova through the prism of the Soviet republics belonging to the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS), not as part of Europe. An important factor here is the indecision to take action to confront Russia and its influences.

Of the countries participating in EaP, Moldova is at present the only one where the majority of the population supports the idea of the integration and which keeps on a strong pro-European course. In Chisinau, there is a strong determination to join EU structures. This, however, is not reflected in the EU's political elites' perception for further enlargement. To recapitulate the above-mentioned, it could be concluded that the actions of the EU towards Moldova are not the result of a coordinated and deliberate political strategy. While they are implemented, it is mainly under the pressure from new members seeking to boost their influence on shaping EU policy in the East. The association agreement and DCFTA will initialise at the Vilnius Eastern Partnership Summit in November 2013.

Summarising the above issues, it can be concluded that the EU's policy towards Moldova is not a result of a coordinated and deliberate political strategy. Most of the actions are undertaken under the pressure from new members seeking to extend their influence on the formation of EU policy in the Eastern dimension.

Relations between Ukraine and the European Union from the mid 90s were mainly being developed within the second and third pillar, and in particular at the level of CFSP common strategies (which ceased to be binding in December, 2004).

The first step in the strengthening of relations was the signing of the PCA in June, 1994 which came into force on 1st March, 1998 in order to provide a comprehensive and broad framework for cooperation between both actors. The European Union's approach has not changed significantly post the *orange revolution*. The authorities in Kiev have accepted the European Neighbourhood Policy being dismayed and simultaneously being placed in the same category as the countries of North Africa and the Middle East (Gromadzki and Suszko 2005, 4). It has also been stressed by Kubicek (2007, 1), who argued that the term 'neighborhood' was unfortunate in the eyes of Ukrainians, possibly indicating that Ukraine lies outside of Europe. It is worth noting that a positive opinion on the implementation of the Action Plan, prepared by the European Commission in late 2006, primed economic growth and opened the prospect of further funding. However, the political crisis within the pro-integration faction and the slowing down of internal reforms were the limiting factors affecting the development of relations with the EU.

It could be argued that the EU does not have an overall strategy regarding Ukraine. It has been suggested that Ukraine is seen primarily as a part of relations with Russia.

The philosophy of ENP has turned out to be unfavorable. The EU placed high demands, offering no prospect of membership in return and treating Ukraine through the prism of „neighbor“ of Europe. The ambiguous attitude of Ukraine should also be noted, particularly its slow progress towards democracy since the end of the peaceful revolution. A new proposal for cooperation is EaP, which aims at integration with EU policies and the common market. It could be an encouragement to the continuation of the internal reforms. Lack of recognition of the principles of democracy, rule of law, free market and their actual application in public life as well as the attitude of the citizens towards the EU is inhibiting the EU in promoting democracy. Potocki (2001: 222-223) concludes that ‘the desire to unite with Europe is for the average citizen of Ukraine comparable to the desire of the peasant’s son to marry a nobleman’s daughter it is both comfortable and ennobling, but on the other hand, weird’. This comparison may be considered rather offensive for the inhabitants of the western part of Ukraine, however. On the other hand, Nowak mentions a role, which Ukraine plays in the international environment, paying attention to the region and its special relationship with RM and Belarus. He stresses that Ukraine has become an important entity in the European security system, e.g. a guardian hampering illegal cross-border movement, trafficking, drugs and arms smuggling, plus a significant actor in UE foreign policy (Nowak 2008, 57-58). The Head of the European Union Delegation to Ukraine, Ambassador Jan Tombiński, while inaugurating the European Cultural Week in Kiev on May 14th, 2013, said that “*Ukraine is (...) a part of Europe’s cultural space and we hope it will come closer to the EU this year*” (Euukrainecoop 2013).

Ukrainian authorities’ skepticism of the EaP is a result of the fact that the priorities of the two parties do not seem to be compatible. One of the main tasks of EaP would be to strengthen their contact, but in return for this, Ukraine would still be expecting a real possibility of membership into EU structures. As it may seem, there is hope for stronger cooperation between those two entities. Wrobel adds that, the program should have begun with improving mutual ties at the lower level: citizens instead of politicians, in accordance with the *principle of small steps* (Wrobel 2010, 61). Petro Poroshenko, Ukraine’s former trade minister, while at a discussion forum in the Black Sea resort of Yalta in September, 2013, said that “*For the first time in our history more than 50% of people support European integration, and less than 30% of the people support closer ties with Russia*” (Walker 2013). It is expected that the Association Agreement (which was launched in March, 2007) between Ukraine and the European Union will be signed at the Eastern Partnership summit in Vilnius in November, 2013 (according to EC, IP/13/436). This document is a base for deepening political and economic relations between Ukraine and Europe. It may provide Ukraine with better conditions for economic cooperation and better access to the EU Internal Market (Soldak 2013).

The paper also focused on the regime of Alexander Lukashenka. Bilateral relations were based on the adoption of a PCA negotiated in 1995 and a temporary trade agreement. There is no Action Plan encompassing Belarus since it is not party to the ENP. Until 1994, relations between the EU and Belarus could be considered to be correct. Later the EU started to apply various forms of pressure on the regime in order to force it to begin democratisation on all levels. At first, the EU mostly ignored violations of human rights,

then, roughly since 2003, it has introduced a strategy of 'carrots and sticks,' which is a strategy of small steps. This was an *ad hoc* response to the violation of the standards of democracy, mainly in form of the introduction of visa policy restrictions, the freezing of accounts of regime members, whilst increasing financial aid and preparing the plan of democratisation of Belarus.

For the first time in Belarusian history such a basic element of democracy as the separation of institutional powers (the trias politica) was included in the draft version of the constitution, which was approved in 1991 and finally adopted in 1994. During this period, most of the articles changed their original meaning. Right after Lukashenka became the legitimate president, winning the second round of elections on the 10th of July, 1994 he ordered a row of referendums which equipped him with strong presidential prerogatives (Lukashuk 2001, 298 and 308). Formally, the political system was based on the Constitution, which had been amended on the initiative of Lukashenka. The amendments shifted the balance of power towards the president at the expense of the competence of other authorities.

In Eastern Europe, there are plenty of significant factors such as lack of institutional reforms, corruption, economic difficulties, lack of civil society, the legacy of communism etc. Using democratic rhetoric and facade elections, 'civil society' controlled by the state is being used to hinder or even stop the pressure for changes and has created the illusion of democracy. The EU's balancing between the policy of denial at one end and the easing up of sanctions on the other, as well as avoiding an open debate have not brought visible results. Brussels influence on the process of democratisation is rather limited which is mainly caused by the lack of democratic traditions in the region. Besides, it ought to be stressed that periods of Belarusian nationalism have not been long-lived: they were rather weak and lacked widespread support (see Dryzek and Holmes 2002, 79). The EU has imposed sanctions and has appealed for respect for human rights and reiterated demands for the release of political prisoners (e.g. the case of A. Kazulin), has monitored the elections and cooperated with the opposition, has taken measures to support independent media and has granted scholarships to students expelled from universities. Belarus has also been included, albeit conditionally in EaP. On the other hand, the Belarusian population is largely not interested in change, except for the group surrounding the opposition. What is more, the building of a civil society on the basis of a population saturated with axioms of Lukashenka is extremely difficult. TACIS has been proven ineffective as well after the EU stopped it in response to the taxation imposed by the Lukashenka's regime (Marcus 1998, 154).

At the present it is not possible to predict whether EaP will work in favour of democratic changes in Belarus or strengthen the authoritarian regime. However, it cannot be dismissed that the success of supporting democratisation depends on the strengthening of the democratic opposition and independent media in Belarus, providing aid to the oppressed and a change of visa policy for Belarusians. Unfortunately, Lukashenka's artificial society, subordinate to the interests of the state, makes support for the democratic changes very difficult (Čavusaŭ 2009, 99-100).

Conclusions

Regarding the creation and implementation of the eastern dimension, the EU has proven rather reluctant. The ENP has been assessed as an agency which does not allow for membership. The progress reported in various neighbouring countries turned out to be much slower than expected. Neighbouring countries have also not performed the broader domestic reforms necessary for the process of adaptation to EU requirements. EaP on the other hand, has proven to be a more structured mechanism and as a result is more attractive. Yet, the programme has often been accused of lacking established action instruments and the dearth of perspective for accession has been discouraging for Eastern European countries. With the implementation of ENP, the former European Commission President Romano Prodi characterised the relationship as 'everything but institutions'. Tugui (2011) notes that the current rule 'more for more' seems to be a more flexible concept, even if not as entirely precise. For most of the countries enrolled in EaP (except for Belarus), this program is treated as a temporary stage. For the EU it is a platform for their own institutional policies (Makarychev and Deviatkov 2012).

The European Union has not fully developed the mechanisms related to the enlargement of the states in Eastern Europe. The EU is not ready for deepening its relations with partnership countries. In the study of the Slovakian Foreign Policy Association, cited by Makarychev and Deviatkov (2012), EaP has been criticised for 'unclear political leadership' and 'missing political guidelines'. The Polish Strategic Yearbook (2010, 151) states that future enlargements involving countries from Eastern Europe are not yet being discussed within the EU. For the EU, Russia is more important than democratisation in Eastern Europe, in accordance with the slogan 'Russia first' (Lynch 2003, 36-37). What is more, Russia treats the whole of Eastern Europe as its exclusive sphere of influence. E.g. as rightly observed by Popescu (2006), 'the local 'security' institutions in Abkhazia, South Ossetia and Transnistria are often headed by Russians or officials who are *de facto* delegated by state institutions of the Russian Federation'. It should be expressed that the EU is not ready to accept the challenge from Russia and its influence. RF refuses to take part in ENP and, seemingly not concerned by EaP, is developing its own integration projects under the names of The Eurasian Economic Community and The Eurasian Union (see Makarychev and Deviatkov 2012).

The activities of Chisinau and Tbilisi are focused on European integration and the associated challenges. The functioning of a stable and consolidated system in both countries in the future is in some respects as uncertain as the future of relations between these actors and the EU. Especially for Moldova, the vision of a 'return to Europe' is an incentive for the hard work which is unavoidable in order to fulfill EU requirements. Moldova is considered a 'flagship project' of EaP. Among the countries participating in EaP, Moldova is the only country where the majority of the public supports the idea of integration. Additionally, authorities are heavily involved in the negotiations with the EU. This statement does not reflect the perception of further enlargement of the Union by the political elites of the EU Member States and societies, in particular the old EU countries that are skeptical about such prospects. There is no indication that Ukraine and Georgia

will enhance the present relations with the EU. It is still not clear whether these countries' capabilities to pursue political, social and economic reforms as well as the abilities of the EU itself will lead to the enlargement of the EU. For Belarus, however, this possibility has been ruled out: the state is often described as the 'last authoritarian regime' in Eastern Europe. Prior to the conclusion of the Association Agreement, Ukraine should modernise the state and carry out the necessary reforms.

Eastern Partnership countries with unresolved issues of territorial integrity, internal instability and weakness of the implemented economic reforms may adversely affect the national security of EU member states. Furthermore, the EU is not institutionally prepared to deepen relations with partner countries. In addition, the current program, which fits into the dimension of EU policy in Eastern Europe, which is Eastern Partnership, suffers from a lack of clear prospects and successes. However, it is important to remember that EaP is not driven exclusively by economic or security benefits (or issues about inclusion in EU structures), but it was founded to strengthen and support democracy in the region and European principles and norms to the East (see: Klatt 2012, 115-116).

The most recent snapshot of the situation follows: Belarus is *de facto* stranded outside of EaP, Moldova is faced with an internal crisis, caused i.a. by the inability to elect the president for three years in a row, which caused a political stalemate. Ukraine has been criticised for the prosecution of Julia Timoshenko and recent parliamentary elections, Georgia and Armenia will be undergoing further tests of democracy (Georgia in implementing reforms in good governance, and Armenia in the upcoming presidential elections in 2013). Azerbaijan has been trying to create the image of the most reliable partner in the field of energy (see: Makarychev and Deviatkov 2012). Worth noting are asymmetrical relations between Brussels and Minsk and Baku. In the first instance, the EU frequently tried to coerce Lukashenka's regime, while the Azerbaijani authorities were treated with more forgiveness (Ivan and Ghinea 2010). The Freedom House (FH) *Nations in Transit 2011* annual report classified Belarus and Azerbaijan as consolidated authoritarian regimes. Ukraine and Georgia, described as transitional governments or hybrid regimes, were recently joined by Moldova, that advanced in the FH's scheme from the group of semi-consolidated authoritarian regimes which includes Armenia.

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