

European Neighbourhood Watch

Issue 83 • June 2012



Thinking ahead for Europe

History does not move in straight lines

This is the present author's 83rd and last editorial contribution to the European Neighbourhood Watch (which will continue), inviting reflection on what has happened since its first number appeared in February 2005.

This newsletter began in the wake of the 2004 enlargement of the EU with ten new member states, preceded months earlier by the Georgian 'Rose Revolution' and then followed some months later by the Ukrainian 'Orange Revolution'. This seemed to be the EU's hour of triumph, with the huge enlargement going alongside the signing of the Constitutional Treaty also in 2004, following on from the successful launch of the euro in 2000.

These major developments motivated the launching, again in 2004, of the European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP) as a complementary move, signaling that the EU would not be ignoring its new neighbours to its east, and on the contrary wanting to encourage them to converge on modern European values and economic standards. 'Everything but the institutions' was one of the slogans, advanced by Romano Prodi who was presiding the European Commission until November 2004. Initially the ENP was conceived to support the three new direct neighbours, Belarus, Ukraine and Moldova. Given the EU's permanent balancing act between its northern and southern interests, it was decided to extend the ENP to the southern neighbours, which however meant a confusing overlap with the already existing Euro-Mediterranean Policy and its Association Agreements. One consequence of this widening to the south Mediterranean was that the initial exclusion of the three south Caucasus states became a politically untenable proposition for EU foreign ministers, and so they were added.

Expectations for the ENP saw contradictory narratives. Optimists were impressed by the colour revolutions, especially that of Ukraine whose hero Viktor Yushchenko had narrowly escaped assassination by poisoning, with the 'gas princess' Yulia Timoshenko co-starring as heroin. Less impressed were most academics, who commented that without EU membership perspective for the partner states there was unlikely to be the kind of transformative impact suggested by official texts and many speeches.

The Ukrainian Orange Revolution soon degenerated into chronic governance failure, leading to a virtual counter-revolution under President Yanukovich since February 2010, with Yulia Timoshenko imprisoned in order to remove this troublesome political competitor; she thus became Ukraine's counterpart to Russia's Mikhail Khodorkovsky, imprisoned since 2005 as Putin sought to protect his regime against contagion from the colour revolutions. Georgia on the other

hand saw a very impressive economic reform programme, although President Saakashvili became increasingly authoritarian. Georgian political scientist, Ghia Nodia, warned already in early 2005 of the 'banana republic' model, whereby a coup d'état removes a dictator in the name of democracy, only for the new leader to himself become a dictator, and so on to the next coup. However in the Georgian case the next episode was instead war with Russia, after Saakashvili responded to relentless provocation by Russia's proxies in South Ossetia with his militarily catastrophic attack on Tskhinvali in August 2008. President Sarkozy mediated the peace to end Europe's first inter-state war of the post-Soviet period with impressive speed and resolution.

However that was Sarkozy's best moment, while one of the worst was his ill-conceived Mediterranean Union, initially proposed in 2007 to embrace only the northern and southern coastal states of the Mediterranean, and so exclude northern Europe and completely destroy the ENP. Chancellor Merkel put her foot down, insisting that there could be no such initiative that would be the prerogative of half the EU only, and by mid-2008 Sarkozy had given way. Still the Union for the Mediterranean (UfM, as it was renamed) amounted to a confusing overlap with the ENP. Its political aspects were spectacularly inappropriate in view of the underlying causes of the Arab Spring that was soon to follow: the UfM totally eschewed inconvenient political matters like the region's repressive authoritarianism, with Sarkozy inviting President Mubarak to be his co-president.

The failure of the colour revolutions, alongside the resilience of authoritarianism in the Arab world, Russia and China, led some commentators in the mid-2000s to write about 'smart authoritarianism' and the 'backlash' against the spread of democracy, as if this was the new global trend. But then in early 2011 suddenly erupted the Arab Spring. The EU's erstwhile collaboration with the Arab autocracies, and refusal to have relations with democratically-oriented Islamist parties, became instantly the subject of 'mea culpa' declarations. For years officials of the EU institutions had wanted a more muscular human rights policy, coupled to opening of dialogue with moderate Islamist opposition parties. But foreign ministers for the EU's Mediterranean member states ruled this out. Now the discourse changed drastically. There would be support not for any democracy, but for 'deep democracy', with the offer of 'more for more' as the slogan for more serious conditionality. France's foreign minister, who had responded to the Tunisian uprising by kindly offering to President Ben Ali the help of became the French police, was sacked.

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Yet the path to deep democracy is anything but a straight line. The long-term trend may well be an ineluctable tendency for populations in advanced economies with high educational standards to demand political participation. But in the meantime the European neighbourhood sees a wide proliferation of regime types, and notably so in the aftermath of revolutionary regime collapse. We should not forget the 'great revolution' model, with its impressive empirical record (France 1789, China 1911, Russia 1917, Iran 1979), where well-intentioned democrats take power initially, but soon get swept aside by ideological radicalization and reigns of terror, with new authoritarian regimes to last for decades. The European neighbourhood sees no dominant dynamic political model as of now, rather a complete spectrum of regime types, ranging from the very gradual constitutionalisation of some monarchies at one extreme through to the descent into civil war and the nightmare of the failed or failing state at the other extreme, or counter-revolution, or just shaky attempts to work with new democratic constitutions.

The EU's neighbourhood policy may not have an impressive transformative impact in any directly observable manner, comparable to the example of the new member states from central and eastern Europe. The conditionality mechanisms, so strong and comprehensive for accession candidates, are only a faint derivative, with incentives insufficient to drive the politics of the neighbouring states. Still it seems that a certain socialization process is at work. The civil societies of the eastern neighbours in particular, see European standards of human rights and democracy as the model. Moreover, the EU's neighbourhood policy compares distinctly favourably with other attempts at regionalism at the continental level, often bedeviled by the excess weight of the regional hegemon. China's ambitions in the South China Sea are seen to be threatening to the other states of the region. India has been recurrently on the brink of war with Pakistan and the South Asia regional association lacks substance. The presence of the United States in the Americas is so huge as to generate spasms of anti-Americanism, spurred on by some obviously aberrant examples like the Cuba policy imposed by Congress. Closest to home, Russia's attempts to re-integrate the former Soviet space have been all too often been pursued with the aid of coercive measures, or implicit threats of coercion. The EU is at peace with its neighbours and has a reasonable of good level of trust with almost all of them.

Moreover highly interesting opinion polls or surveys now come out of Russia and China, with special implications for their foreign policies in years to come. In Russia the young elite of persons interested in international affairs reject the current nationalist realpolitik of the Kremlin, wanting instead something far closer to European thinking, and for their generation to feel and be seen as a normal part of Europe. In China a recent poll shows a majority disapproving of the stance of their country in alliance with Russia in the UN Security Council over Syria. Both Russian and Chinese regimes may not collapse soon, but the groundswell of political dissent grows.

Yet, the EU's own current crisis is hitting its neighbours hard economically, and undermining its reputation as

a model for regional integration. There used to be talk in Brussels of a bicycle theory of integration, according to which you have to keep moving if not to fall off. This theory fell into disrepute as the single market, single currency and constitutional treaty were deemed by some to have brought the EU to the level of a steady state system, not requiring any further radical integration steps. The setbacks in ratification of the Constitutional Treaty, leading to the Lisbon Treaty compromise, underlined the resistances to deeper integration. Yet now the monetary union is seen as needing a banking union, a fiscal union, and a political union in order for it and the EU itself to survive. Further most economists add that there is no extant economic and monetary union among advanced economies that does not also have a powerful redistributive function through the budget (otherwise known as a transfer union). The bicycle theory rides again. History indeed is not a straight line.

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Council conclusions on the ENP Package

Luxembourg, 25 June 2012. [Link](#)

Reaffirming the strategic importance of the European Neighbourhood and recalling the Council Conclusions on ENP of 20 June 2011, the Council welcomes the joint Communication of the High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy and the European Commission of 15 May which reports on the substantial progress made in the delivery of the new European Neighbourhood Policy. It welcomes the good progress made in advancing the Partnership for Democracy and Shared Prosperity with the countries of the Southern Mediterranean and looks forward to the implementation of the Roadmap accompanying the joint Communication, in dialogue and cooperation with partners, also with the aim of developing synergies with the Union for the Mediterranean and other regional initiatives. It also welcomes both the good progress made in the implementation of the Eastern Partnership and the joint Communication of the High Representative and the Commission proposing a Roadmap to guide bilateral and multilateral work in view of the autumn 2013 Summit. It looks forward to the Roadmap's endorsement at the forthcoming Eastern Partnership Ministerial meeting and to its subsequent implementation.

EU and Neighbours a turning point in relations, Interview with Štefan Füle

21 June 2012. [Link](#)

What is your assessment of EU relations with its Neighbours at this point in time?

EU relations with its Neighbours are probably at a turning point. Since the adoption in May 2011 of a new European Neighbourhood Policy, based on mutual accountability and a stronger partnership with societies, the EU has been quick and determined in establishing the policy's new foundations. We can say that we are now better equipped to develop our links with each partner as far as their own aspirations, needs and capacity allow. We have new Instruments and after the Lisbon Treaty a much more coherent approach. This approach is already yielding encouraging results. After years of relative stagnation, democracy is increasingly taking root in the neighbourhood. The general trend points towards a more accountable form of governance and increased respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms. Structural reform, where pursued, has helped to reduce poverty and attract foreign investment, while important social challenges remain. Continued approximation to EU norms and standards has helped to contribute to strengthened trade links, notwithstanding the unfavourable economic climate. Increasingly intense sector co-operation with the EU is helping to address transport and energy bottlenecks and to tackle environmental and climate challenges. The EU and its Neighbours must now keep the momentum to strengthen their relations.

You have travelled across the Neighbourhood extensively. From the feedback you get on the ground, how would you say the EU is viewed? Is it considered an honest and reliable partner?

Without indulging in self-congratulation, I think the EU is seen as a reliable partner that delivers on its commitments. I am not referring only to the views expressed by governments of partner countries but also to the perception of civil society that I had the opportunity to meet frequently in the last year. This perception is supported by facts. The EU has covered a lot of ground in twelve months. Let me give you some examples. We have adapted our policy instruments. We have continued our work to upgrade contractual relations, obtained mandates for new trade negotiations, initiated mobility dialogues, re-oriented and increased our financial assistance (€600 million to support democratic transition, economic development and people-to-people contacts). And through extended EIB and EBRD mandates we have opened the door to substantial additional investments in partner countries.

Obviously, this needs to be sustained. But most partner countries have welcomed the new European Neighbourhood Policy proposed by the EU and have indicated their readiness to pursue political and economic reform with increased determination and to engage more deeply with the EU.

What are the priorities in the East, in particular in the context of the Eastern Partnership?

The overall priority in our relations with Eastern partners is the effective implementation of the ambitious agenda set by the Eastern Partnership Warsaw Summit (29-30 September 2011). We will seek to assist reforms in partner countries in order to complete the process of transformation towards sustainable democracies based on a competitive market economy. Therefore, we have offered our partners close political association and deep economic integration.

Importantly, our cooperation with Eastern partners is founded on a joint commitment to fundamental values of democracy, human rights and the rule of law. Therefore further strengthening of democracy in partner countries remains our overarching priority. In May 2012, the High Representative and the Commission published a Road Map of the Eastern Partnership which would streamline the implementation of the EaP and provide a means for more regular monitoring.

Our main tools in the implementation of the EaP agenda are Association Agreements which include also the aim of establishing deep and comprehensive free trade areas, where appropriate. With Ukraine we have finalised negotiations on the Association Agreement and now Ukraine's performance, in particular in relation to respect for democratic values and the rule of law, will be crucial to the speed of its political association and economic integration with the EU. With the Republic of Moldova, Georgia, Armenia and Azerbaijan, the negotiations of the Association Agreements are under way and our priority is to advance them as quickly as possible so that until the time of the next EaP Summit in autumn 2013

we would be close to their finalisation or even able to initial them.

We also have an ambitious agenda in the area of mobility where our final goal is a visa free regime. Ukraine and the Republic of Moldova are already implementing Visa Liberalisation Action Plans. Georgia continues implementing visa facilitation and readmission agreements and the Commission is to present the roadmap.

Two remaining South Caucasus countries are negotiating similar agreements. The EU has also offered to launch negotiation of such an agreement to Belarus for the benefit of its population.

We will also continue close cooperation with partners on the Comprehensive Institutional Building programmes which aim to strengthen capacities of partners' government administrations. At the same time, we are determined to deepen our partnership with civil society, increase financial assistance for civil society organisations and invest more in young people from EaP countries through increasing their participation in our educational programme "Erasmus for All".

What are currently the objectives and the priorities of the Strategic Partnership with Russia?

Russia is one of our key partners on the international scene: it is our biggest neighbour and we are strongly interdependent. We are tied together in terms of trade and investment, energy, and human links. We need Russia to tackle most global challenges. And Russia needs us - not only as a market, also for her muchneeded modernisation and as a partner on the international arena, where more often than not, our positions are very close.

The key priorities of our strategic partnership with Russia can be summarised as follows:

We aim for an integrated economic space, reaping the full potential of EU-Russia trade complementarities, on the basis of WTO rules and regulatory convergence. A swift wrapping up of negotiations for a New Agreement, with a substantial trade and investment chapter, should be a first step towards this goal. The EU also wants to see an attractive investment climate in an open, diversified and rules-based competitive economy in Russia. Many activities in the Partnership for Modernisation support this goal, and work to this effect continues.

Work is also ongoing with a view to achieving visa-free travel, once all technical conditions will have been met. Energy trade is an area where we are strongly interdependent (Russia needs our market as much as we need her oil and gas). Here, our objectives are effective investment protection, fair mutual access and competition, and respect for all partners' free choices.

On key foreign policy issues, such as the Middle East Peace Process, Iran, or Syria, but also the protracted conflicts in the common neighbourhood and global challenges (non-proliferation, terrorism, drug trafficking etc), we aim to align

our responses. We do this *inter alia* through our intense political dialogue (we have more meetings with Russia at various levels than with any other third party). There are ongoing talks exploring avenues to strengthen cooperation in the field of crisis management, an area on which we can build on earlier experience.

Finally, strengthening good governance, the rule of law and human rights in the Russian Federation continues to be a guiding principle in our contacts with the Russian authorities, *inter alia* through our twice-yearly human rights consultations.

In this Partnership, what does the EU consider as the most serious challenges that are common for the Neighbours in the East and in the South?

I would mention three major interrelated challenges. First, the resolution of existing conflicts. Finding peaceful settlements to protracted conflicts remains a key challenge throughout the neighbourhood. But let's be clear: the main responsibility for this lies with the conflicting parties, which must enhance their efforts to find agreements in a genuine spirit of compromise. Otherwise, continued international mediation efforts in established formats cannot be expected to lead to a breakthrough. The full realisation of the potential of the ENP will require more credible and sustained efforts on the part of concerned neighbouring countries to make progress towards conflict resolution. Conversely, the EU stands ready to provide necessary support for the implementation of settlements once they have been agreed. Building and consolidating sustainable democracies remains another major challenge. Progress is being made but there is still a long road to go in some countries. Freedom of expression, association and assembly needs to be fully guaranteed in law and in practice, and a strong culture of respect for human rights must be established across the board in particular the protection against all forms of discrimination in politics as well as day-to-day life. This will secure a space where civil society can play its crucial role as an agent for democratisation ensuring the sustainability and inclusiveness in the reform process.

The third challenge is the promotion of inclusive economic development. Unemployment, social exclusion, inequality and poverty are at the heart of people's concerns for the future in all countries. They are among the root causes of instability and unrest and need to be addressed to make democratisation sustainable.

They require partner countries to reform and adopt an integrated approach of economic, fiscal, employment, social and education policies. The EU is ready to support such reforms through targeted measures aimed at promoting social cohesion and employment (in particular for young people).

Could you please elaborate on the "more for more" (more funds for more reforms) principle the EU applies in its policies towards the Neighbours? Does it mean more conditionality?

It is not just about balancing funds against reforms! The "more for more" approach on which the EU is placing increased emphasis means that only those partners determinedly embarking on political reforms and respecting shared universal values of human rights, democracy and rule of law are being offered those elements that relate to the most ambitious aspects of the EU offer, notably economic integration, mobility of people, as well as, indeed, a greater EU financial support.

The EU is the biggest donor in the world. Does the impact of its support to modernisation in the Neighbouring countries match the strength of its commitment?

The impact of EU support to modernisation is considerable. The track record of the last twenty years amply demonstrates this. The EU Member States have themselves undertaken important reforms and modernization efforts, and they have a wealth of experience to share with third countries. I believe that our impact is constrained not so much by the volume of our funding – which as your question points out is rather generous – as by the willingness of our partners' to travel down the road of reform. While we would like to accompany our neighbours in addressing the challenges with which they are confronted, we cannot, and we have no desire to substitute ourselves for them.

How will the EU's policies towards its Neighbours evolve in the near future?

I see a number of areas where, on the EU side we also need to make significant progress in the near future. We need to do more to promote EU investments in partner countries. We need to take forward the mobility agenda both in the eastern and in the southern Neighbourhood *inter alia* by persuading EU Member States to make more systematic use of the possibilities provided by the European Visa Code. We need to do our best to accelerate the process leading to opening DCFTA negotiations in the South. Ongoing bilateral negotiations on the liberalisation of trade in services and establishment should be accelerated. Sector co-operation should be re-enforced with the view to achieving concrete results in the next few years. And progressively we should open EU programmes and agencies to partners' participation. The reviewed European Neighbourhood Policy defines the «end game» in this regard, an ambitious one with a concrete idea about what we want to see as results.

Human Rights and Democracy high on agenda at Foreign Affairs Council

Luxembourg, 25 June 2012. [Link](#)

Today, in Luxembourg, the Council of European Foreign Affairs ministers adopted an important new package on Human Rights and Democracy which sets out, for the first time, a unified EU Strategic Framework for the next ten years.

Together with the Strategic Framework, an Action Plan and the impending appointment of an EU Special Representative

on Human Rights will help implement and enhance the visibility and effectiveness of the principles, objectives and priorities enshrined in this key document.

Catherine Ashton, High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security policy / Vice-President of the European Commission said upon adoption of the package: "Human rights are one of my top priorities and a silver thread that runs through everything that we do in external relations (...)".

The key messages of the Strategic Framework are Human rights throughout EU policy; Promoting universality of human rights; Pursuing coherent objectives; Human rights in all EU external policies; Implementing EU priorities on human rights; Working with bilateral partners; Working through multilateral institutions; The EU working together. The Action Plan itself brings together 97 actions under 36 headings and covers the period until 31 December 2014. Building upon the existing body of EU policy on human rights and democracy such as guidelines, toolkits, agreed positions and various financial instruments, it aims to provide sufficient flexibility on putting the Strategic Framework into practice also in response to new challenges as they arise.

People and policies are at the heart of the actions listed, such as civil society, economic, social and cultural rights, development cooperation, trade, conflict prevention and crisis management, counter-terrorism activities, the external dimension of 'freedom, security and justice', employment and social policy, death penalty, torture, Human Rights Defenders, children and women rights, gender-based violence, international humanitarian law, LGBT rights, religion or belief, expression online and offline, minorities, indigenous people, persons with disabilities.

The responsibility for carrying out the actions resides with the High Representative assisted by the EEAS, and with the European Commission, the European Council and Member States within their respective fields of competence.

Through the Action Plan, the EU commits to presenting its performance in meeting its objectives in its annual report on human rights and democracy in the world. In doing so, all stakeholders in EU policy – including civil society – should be given an opportunity to assess the impact of EU action and contribute to defining future priorities.

The Council also discussed and agreed a series of policy positions today on Bosnia and Herzegovina, Central Asia, eastern Democratic Republic of Congo, the European Neighbourhood policy, Egypt, Iran, Pakistan and Syria.

Related Documents:

Council conclusions on Human Rights and Democracy
[Download here.](#)

EU adopts Strategic Framework on Human Rights and Democracy
[Download here.](#)

EU Strategic Framework and Action Plan on Human Rights and democracy
[Download here.](#)

FACTSHEET: EU Strategic Framework on Human Rights and Democracy
[Download here.](#)

Statement on EU annual report on human rights and democracy
[Download here.](#)

Statement on Salafranca Report – EUSR on human rights
[Download here.](#)

The President of the European Council in the South Caucasus

2 July 2012. [Link](#)

The President of the European Council, H.E. Herman Van Rompuy, will pay a regional official visit to the South Caucasus on 3-5 July. The visit will start in Armenia on 3-4 July, and then continue to Georgia and Azerbaijan.

He is going to meet the President of the Republic, Serzh Sargsyan and the Speaker of the National Assembly, Hovik Abrahamyan. He will address the National Assembly. President Van Rompuy will also make an opening address to the Civil Society Forum "Armenia in Europe" and will visit the National Gallery for the "Yerevan – World Book capital" and "500 years anniversary of Armenian printed book" UNESCO exhibitions. He will make a short visit to Zvartnots cathedral.

During the meetings, H.E. Van Rompuy will discuss issues such as EU-Armenia relations, the internal political situation and regional issues, as well as other issues of mutual interest.

Presidents Van Rompuy and Sargsyan will give a joint press conference.

HRVP spokesperson on serious armed incidents along the border of Armenia and Azerbaijan

Brussels, 8 June 2012. [Link](#)

The High Representative is very concerned at the reported serious armed incidents on 4, 5 and 6 June along the border between Armenia and Azerbaijan and the Line of Contact in

the context of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict and deeply regrets the loss of human life.

The High Representative calls on both sides strictly to respect the ceasefire and exercise restraint on the ground and in public statements in order to prevent a further escalation of the situation, which has been deteriorating during the last several months.

Threat or use of force as well as the status quo do not contribute to a resolution of the persisting conflict.

These incidents highlight the importance of a functioning incident investigation mechanism as proposed by the OSCE. Moreover, they reinforce the need for progress in the negotiation process.

The High Representative urges Armenia and Azerbaijan, as partner countries, to step up their efforts to reach agreement on the Madrid principles, as a basis for peace, and to fully implement the commitments made by their Presidents in the framework of the OSCE Minsk Group. The EU reiterates its full support of the OSCE Minsk Group and the efforts of its co-chairs aimed at a peaceful conflict resolution.

HRVP Ashton following her meeting with President of Armenia

Brussels, 27 June 2012. [Link](#)

High Representative Catherine Ashton discussed today in Brussels with the President of Armenia Serzh Sargsyan the recent evolution of EU-Armenia bilateral relations, and reviewed the implementation of internal reforms in Armenia. She welcomed the efforts by the Armenian authorities to hold the recent parliamentary elections in a more transparent and competitive environment, but highlighted the need to address a number of issues, identified by the OSCE/ODIHR Election Observation Mission's Report, in order fully to meet internationally recognized democratic standards well ahead of presidential elections scheduled for 2013.

The High Representative also welcomed recent reform achievements in Armenia as reflected in the European Neighbourhood (ENP) Progress Report published on 15 May. She noted with pleasure that Armenia had recently launched Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Area negotiations with the EU, having implemented a number of recommendations from the European Commission. At the same time she stressed the need for further reforms in other areas such as human rights and fundamental freedoms.

Catherine Ashton expressed her concern at the serious armed incidents in early June along the border between Armenia and Azerbaijan and the Line of Contact in the context of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict, and regretted the loss of life as well as the hardship of those affected by the conflict. She urged Armenia and Azerbaijan, as partner countries, to step up their efforts to reach agreement on the Madrid principles, as a basis for peace, and to implement fully the commitments made by their Presidents in the framework of the OSCE Minsk Group. The High Representative added that progress

in the resolution of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict is vital if Armenia's political association and economic integration with the EU is to achieve its full potential.

EU starts a visa liberalisation dialogue with Georgia

Brussels, 4 June 2012. [Link](#)

Today, the European Commission started a dialogue on visa liberalisation with Georgia. The aim of the dialogue is to examine all the relevant conditions for visa-free travel to the EU for Georgian citizens. In doing so, the EU is living up to its commitment to closer cooperation and increased mobility in a secure environment with its Eastern neighbours, including Georgia, as asserted in the Warsaw Declaration of the Eastern Partnership summit in September 2011.

Following her meeting with Mr. Grigol Vashadze, Georgian Minister of Foreign Affairs, Cecilia Malmström, EU commissioner for Home Affairs, said:

"Today we demonstrate once more our longstanding commitment to strengthen the ties between our countries and people. The start of this visa liberalisation dialogue indeed marks an important political milestone in the EU-Georgian relations. It recognises the efforts made by Georgia in the different areas relevant for a future visa-free travel to the EU and constitutes a further incentive for Georgia to pursue those reforms".

All EU citizens are already exempt from visa requirements when entering Georgia. The visa liberalisation dialogue which is starting today will allow the EU and the Georgian authorities to examine all the technical preconditions for the establishment of a visa-free regime for Georgian citizens. The visa liberalisation dialogue addresses areas directly related to document security, border management, migration, mobility and asylum, as well as other issues such as the fight against corruption and organised crime, protection of human rights, minorities, and anti-discrimination, which are highly relevant to ensure that mobility takes place in a secure and well-managed environment.

The main instrument to conduct the visa liberalisation dialogue will be the Visa Liberalisation Action Plan (VLAP). The Action Plan will be presented to the Georgian authorities later this year, following discussions in the Council.

HRVP meets with the President of Georgia

Brussels, 27 June 2012. [Link](#)

High Representative Catherine Ashton met today the President of Georgia Mikhail Saakashvili. She welcomed recent reform achievements in Georgia, and congratulated President Saakashvili on the good progress of negotiations on an Association Agreement, including a Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Area, between the

EU and Georgia: this agreement would establish a new contractual relationship based on the sharing of values and comprehensive approximation with EU standards and norms.

At the same time, the High Representative stressed the need to keep up momentum by consolidating democracy and by ensuring an inclusive approach to national development. She underlined the importance of Georgia's parliamentary elections in October, and the need for the electoral process to meet international democratic standards and be conducted in an environment of media freedom, fair competition and transparency. With a solid democratic foundation Georgia can continue to accelerate the process of EU integration which offers stability, prosperity and continuity.

Regarding the situation in the Georgian regions of Abkhazia and South Ossetia Catherine Ashton reiterates the European Union's commitment to Georgia's territorial integrity, and the need to maintain engagement with the populations of both de facto entities to reduce their isolation.

HRVP on the release of the political activist Bahtiyar Hajiyev in Azerbaijan

Brussels, 8 June 2012. [Link](#)

I welcome the decision of the Supreme Court and the subsequent release of youth activist Bakhtiar Hajiyev. Just a year ago, together with other international partners I called upon Azerbaijan to fully respect fundamental freedoms and to guarantee the due application of the rule of law. Although delayed, Mr. Hajiyev's release is in line with Azerbaijan's international commitments and its pledge to move forward on freedoms of speech and assembly. I hope this decision will encourage the release of all other activists in prison, notably the participants to the April 2nd 2011 rally.

Cox, Kwasniewski to monitor Tymoshenko appeal on behalf of EP

Brussels, 06 June 2012. [Link](#)

Pat Cox, former European Parliament President, and Aleksander Kwasniewski, former President of Poland, will monitor court proceedings involving imprisoned former Ukrainian Prime Minister Yulia Tymoshenko on behalf of the European Parliament (EP), EP President Martin Schulz said on Wednesday.

Following meetings or other contacts with Cox and Kwasniewski, as well as with Tymoshenko and Ukrainian Prime Minister Mykola Azarov, Schulz made the following statement:

"I am delighted that Pat Cox and Aleksander Kwasniewski have accepted my proposal to go to Ukraine to monitor court proceedings involving Ms Tymoshenko on behalf of the European Parliament.

Mr Cox and Mr Kwasniewski are personalities of high international repute. They command respect for their excellent record in foreign and domestic politics. They enjoy wide support across all political forces in the European Parliament.

I hope their mission will be a breakthrough that will help Ukraine to address problems concerning the rule of law and the independence of judiciary. I hope it will contribute to restoring mutual confidence in EU-Ukraine relations.

Mr Cox and Mr Kwasniewski will have full access to all documents relevant to the case as well as lawyers, prosecutors and other officials involved."

The EP will provide comprehensive legal and logistical assistance.

The EP's envoys will meet Prime Minister Azarov on Monday, 11 June in Kiev. They are also expected to meet Ms Tymoshenko's family and lawyers.

President Schulz will meet Mr Cox and Mr Kwasniewski in Brussels on Thursday at the European Parliament.

The EU and Ukraine organize a debate on investments into energy efficiency

19 June 2012. [Link](#)

The debate organized by the State Agency on Energy Efficiency and Energy Saving of Ukraine (SAEE) will present two opposing opinions: is it better to invest into knowledge or to invest in real projects in energy efficiency? Our ultimate goal is to find combined ways to ensure sustainable energy development of Ukraine.

On 20 June 2012 from 12.00 to 14.00 representatives of the state, diplomatic and higher educational institutions, NGOs and financial structures will meet in Kyiv, under the Arch of Friendship above Europe Square to find best ways for development of energy efficiency in Ukraine. The debates are free of charge and open to everyone interested.

Today, the priority for the development of the Ukrainian economy is the implementation of the policy for efficient use of energy resources. The most topical issue is the high energy intensity of domestic products. As a result, the development of the country's economy remains considerably behind other industrially developed countries of Europe and the world. While in European Union countries energy efficiency and energy saving have become traditional elements of economic development and social welfare, in Ukraine these issues further require both financial and informational support. Taking into account that Ukraine is considerably lagging behind energy efficiency indexes of developed countries, a justified question arises: is it sensible to postpone implementation of projects today and rather invest into knowledge, while Ukraine has already fallen behind in project implementation for several decades?

Background information

EU Sustainable Energy Week is world-wide event, which took place for the first in Ukraine in 2011. Every year hundreds of organisations and individuals participate in the Energy Week by hosting events and activities that promote energy efficiency and renewable energy sources.

18-23 June, “European Sustainable Energy Days” are celebrated in Ukraine and all over Europe. The “European Village”, which is a German-Ukrainian initiative in partnership with the European Union and the City of Kyiv, proposes a colorful, informative and interactive programme for children, students, and all those interested in learning how to save energy – and costs – in their daily lives. Presenting Ukraine and Europe in an interactive and entertaining way, the European Village 2012 will show-case and new initiatives of international cooperation for development and strengthen Ukrainian-European cooperation. We therefore hope to improve the image of Ukraine and Kyiv abroad and to present a colorful, diverse and exciting country.

The SAEE closely cooperates with European Union Delegation to Ukraine in the areas of energy efficiency and renewable energy sources. Currently one of the major tasks on the agenda is to set up an appropriate institutional framework to sustain implementation of the measures agreed in the EU-Ukraine Association Agenda and the Energy Memorandum of Understanding in these areas.

In January 2012 the EU launched the technical assistance Project “Capacity Building of the State Agency on Energy Efficiency and Energy Saving of Ukraine” to strengthen the overall capacity of the SAEE to foster EU-Ukraine cooperation in the area. This project is as part of the Sector Budget Support Programme (SBSP) titled “Support to the implementation of Ukraine’s Energy strategy in the area of energy efficiency and renewable sources of energy” signed by the EU and Ukraine in December 2009.

FULE remarks after the launching of the informal Eastern Partnership dialogue in Chisinau

Chisinau, 5 June 2012. [Link](#)

Thank you all very much for your participation in this very important day for the Eastern Partnership which marks the launching of the Informal Dialogue. This is an important tool to steer our more and more comprehensive partnership. I thank the Republic of Moldova for hosting the first meeting.

This Informal High Level Partnership is not a substitute for the established framework of our cooperation in the Cooperation Council, ministerial meetings or summits.

Today marks a new phase of the Eastern Partnership. The Road Maps covering both bilateral and multilateral cooperation have been presented recently by HRVP Ashton and myself and we will use this Informal Dialogue to guide the implementation of the Eastern Partnership objectives

to help us define our priorities until the next summit which will take place in 2013.

It is not by chance that we are in Chisinau today. Moldova is a very good example of how the determination in the implementation of the agreed reforms and increased EU assistance can move the country ever closer to the EU to the benefit of its citizens

I look forward to continuing these dialogues every 6 months in different capitals of the partner countries but I am also looking forward to discussing concrete issues with our partner countries.

We are building a community of values but it is important to build it on the commitments of our partners to free and fair elections, fundamental rights, the rule of law and it will be their commitment and pace of the reforms that will determine the intensity of our support.

Call for a Greater Involvement of EuroMed CSOs in the Decision-Making Processes

20 June 2012. [Link](#)

More than a year after the Arab revolutions, Euro-Med civil society organizations call for a greater involvement and consultation in decision-making processes at all levels, National, Regional and with the EU.

On the occasion of the Regional Seminar on “European – Southern Mediterranean Relations: Discussing Policies and Partnerships to Support Economic and Social Rights and the Role of Civil Society” Euro-Med civil society organizations discussed the new challenges to the tackled and called for the setting up of a new agenda vis-à-vis the relations with the European Union as to priorities and policy approaches in cooperation and partnerships.

The Seminar that took place in Beirut on June 11-13, 2012, profited from the opportunity provided to discuss and share objectives and actions to undertake in different domains such as employment and social policies and the role of civil society, trade and investment Agreements and human rights, advocacy and the Action Plan of civil society to strengthen the EU-Arab Partnership.

Some 80 representatives from EuroMed civil society organizations took part to the Seminar and a welcome speech was also given by Angelina Eichhorst – Head of the EU Delegation in Lebanon – stressing the EU acknowledgement of the important role played by civil society in the Arab Springs and the “EU’s commitment to support intermediaries between citizens and States”.

Among the preliminary recommendations issued at the conclusion of the Seminar, the need for Civil Society Organizations to be actively involved in decision-making processes at local, national, regional and EU levels was a cross-cutting issue throughout the works.

The Seminar was organized by ANND (Arab NGO Network for Development) in the framework of the “Civil Society” Regional Programme ENPI-South aiming at contributing to strengthen the capacities of civil society so as to improve democratic debate at national level, within the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership and the Union for the Mediterranean

Council conclusions on Syria

Luxembourg, 25 June 2012. [Link](#)

1. The European Union strongly condemns the brutal violence and massacres of civilians, many of them children and women, such as in the town of Houla on 26 May, and in the villages of Qubair and Maarzaf in Hama province on 6 June. It is also appalled by reports on the use of children as human shields. The EU welcomes the UN Human Rights Council resolution adopted on 1 June, condemning the deteriorating human rights situation in Syria and the horrific killings in Houla. It urges the Syrian regime to end immediately the killing of civilians, withdraw the Syrian army from besieged towns and cities and to allow for a peaceful transition for the sake of the country. President Assad has no place in the future of Syria. The EU looks forward to the outcome of the investigation by the Independent Commission of Inquiry on Syria into the massacre in Houla. The EU urges the Syrian authorities to fully and immediately cooperate with the Commission. The EU recalls that all those responsible for widespread, systematic and gross human rights violations must be held accountable.

2. The EU recalls its full support to Joint UN- League of Arab States Special Envoy Kofi Annan’s mission and his six-point plan. It welcomes the full deployment of the United Nations Supervision Mission in Syria (UNSMIS), but regrets that the escalation of violence led to the suspension of UNSMIS observation activities on 16 June. It recalls that the Syrian authorities are responsible for ensuring the security and safety of the mission and for facilitating the resumption of the unobstructed work of the mission. It strongly condemns the attacks against UN monitors.

3. The EU condemns all actions aimed at obstructing the implementation of Annan’s six point plan. It reiterates that the main responsibility for the ceasefire and the implementation of the plan lies with the Syrian authorities. The EU warns against further militarisation of the conflict and sectarian violence which will bring enormous suffering to Syria and risks having a tragic impact on the region. The EU calls on all parties to refrain from using violence and in particular on the regime to fully implement the Annan plan. The EU recalls that the six-point plan is not an open-ended offer.

The European Union condemns the unacceptable shooting down by Syria of a Turkish military plane on 22 June. It offers its sympathies to the families of the airmen involved, and commends Turkey’s measured and responsible initial reaction. The European Union notes that this is a matter which needs to be investigated thoroughly and urgently.

It calls on Syria to cooperate fully with Turkey and allow full access for an immediate investigation, and for the international community to give its support to such efforts. The European Union urges Syria to ensure that it complies by international standards and obligations.

4. The EU calls on all the States concerned, and in particular the Members of the UN Security Council, to continue to support Kofi Annan and use all their influence to ensure that UNSC resolutions 2042 and 2043 are fully implemented. The EU calls for united action by the UNSC to add more robust and effective pressure, including the adoption of comprehensive sanctions under Chapter VII. In this respect, it welcomes Annan’s efforts to work with key international partners exercising a positive influence in the region to move the political process forward. The EU takes note of the discussion on Syria during the EU-Russia Summit on 3-4 June and reiterates the importance of Russia’s engagement in support of a peaceful political process which must lead to a democratic transition.

The EU looks forward to the next meeting of the Friends of the Syrian People Group that will be held in Paris on 6 July to maintain international pressure on the Syrian regime and support Annan’s six- point plan.

5. The European Union remains committed to the Syrian people’s struggle for freedom, dignity, democracy and human rights. The EU continues to urge the Syrian National Council and other opposition groups to put aside their differences and to agree on a set of shared principles and start working towards an inclusive, orderly and peaceful transition in Syria. A stronger and more united opposition that represents a credible alternative for all Syrians is essential. The EU calls on all opposition groups to actively and fully support the implementation of the Annan plan.

6. The EU welcomes the outcome of the third Syria Humanitarian Forum held on 5 June. The EU calls on the Syrian authorities to fully cooperate and ensure the rapid implementation of the humanitarian response plan, including immediately allowing full unhindered and safe access to humanitarian workers and delivery of humanitarian aid. The EU fully supports the humanitarian initiative to urgently evacuate non-combatants and the wounded from Homs and calls on all parties to allow the evacuation of children, women, elderly and injured from conflict zones. The EU will continue to support the efforts made by neighbouring countries to host Syrian refugees who fled violence in Syria.

7. The EU approved today the designation of new persons and entities to be subject to restrictive measures. The EU will continue its policy of imposing additional measures targeting the regime, not the civilian population, as long as repression continues. The EU will also continue to urge the international community to join its efforts, in taking steps to apply and enforce restrictive measures on the Syrian regime and its supporters. In this context, the EU welcomes the second meeting of the International Working Group on Sanctions which was held in Washington on 6 June. It calls on all Syrians to dissociate themselves from

the repressive policy of the regime in order to facilitate a political transition.

European Commission boosts its humanitarian aid for Syria as Commissioner Georgieva visits Syrian refugees

Brussels, 20 June 2012. [Link](#)

The European Commission is increasing its humanitarian aid by EUR 10 million for those affected by the escalating violence in Syria, Commissioner Kristalina Georgieva announced today during a visit to a refugee camp in Turkey.

The Commissioner for International Cooperation, Humanitarian Aid and Crisis Response made the announcement at Kilis, where she met Syrians who have been forced to flee their country because of the deteriorating situation. She was accompanied by Turkey's Minister for EU affairs, Egemen Bağış.

The doubling of humanitarian aid brings to EUR 43 million the amount being spent by the European Commission in response to the Syrian crisis. EUR 23 million of it comes from the European Neighbourhood and partnership Instrument. Humanitarian activities will provide shelter, food, medical and health supplies, clean drinking, improved sanitation as well as basic household supplies. It will reach an estimated 700,000 people affected by the continuing violence both inside Syria and in neighbouring countries. The European Union's Member States have provided EUR 24.6 million in humanitarian aid.

More than a third of the estimated 87,000 people fleeing from the violence in Syria have found refuge in Turkey. Speaking at Kilis Commissioner Georgieva said: "At this desperate time my thoughts are with all those people who are suffering grievously as a result of the indiscriminate violence taking place in Syria. A lingering civil war beckons and I expect the scale of the humanitarian challenges to rise dramatically. We will continue to stand with the innocent victims of violence and today I repeat my call to all the parties to the fighting to spare human life, respect human rights and to afford all protection and assistance to those who are trying to provide relief to the most vulnerable."

Her visit to Turkey's border with Syria is taking place on World Refugee Day. "On this day I am standing shoulder to shoulder with Syrians but I cannot forget the men, women and children around the world who, through no fault of their own, find themselves far from their homes, hungry and fearful. From Myanmar to Congo the fate of refugees is merely glimpsed by those of us fortunate to live in comfort and security. Let us reflect upon the generosity of countries such as Yemen, which hosts hundreds of thousands of African refugees yet is one of the world's poorest countries with dire humanitarian needs itself.

"It is a shining example to all of us of the indomitable human spirit of solidarity which reaches out to less fortunate souls in their hour of need."

The Commission will continue to channel its humanitarian funding through partners, including the International Committee of the Red Cross and the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies as well as the United Nations' Refugee Agency.

Council conclusions on Egypt

Luxembourg, 25 June 2012. [Link](#)

1. The EU welcomes the peaceful conduct of Presidential elections and congratulates Mohammed Morsi on his election as President of Egypt. The EU congratulates the Egyptian people for this significant milestone in Egypt's democratic transition and historic moment for the people, the country and the region. The EU looks forward to working with President Morsi and welcomes his statement that he intends to form an inclusive government that governs on behalf of all the Egyptian people and reaches out to all political and social groups.
2. The EU reiterates its full support to Egypt's democratic transition and underlines the need for a full and swift hand-over to civilian authorities, and recalls previous commitments in this regard. The EU stresses the fundamental importance of the democratic process and institutions and separation of powers, as well as the duty to respect the rule of law and to protect human rights and fundamental freedoms for all, including freedoms of expression, assembly, and religion or belief. In this context, the EU recalls the important role of an active and independent civil society as a key component of any democratic society.
3. The EU is seriously concerned about recent developments, in particular the dissolution of the Parliament and the Constitutional Declaration by the Supreme Council of the Armed Forces of 17 June, which delay and hinder the transition and full handover to civilian rule.
4. The EU emphasises the importance of an inclusive and transparent drafting process of Egypt's new Constitution, which should reflect the aspirations of the Egyptian people for dignity and justice by ensuring human rights and fundamental freedoms for all, and safeguard the democratic separation of legislative, executive and judicial powers.
5. The EU stresses that security and public order should be maintained with restraint and full respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms. While the end of the State of Emergency on 31 May was an important step forward, the EU is concerned about the decree issued on 13 June granting the military broad powers of arrest and detention of civilians for a wide range of offenses.
6. The EU fully recognizes the serious social and economic challenges Egypt is facing and reiterates the EU's readiness to provide assistance, in close partnership with Egypt's new democratic authorities in coordination with the international community. In this context, the EU underlines the importance for Egypt to engage in the necessary social and economic reforms, to allow the effective use of available

international assistance and to improve the business environment.

7. Egypt remains a key partner in the region. The EU stresses therefore the importance of Egypt's continued commitment to the goal of building stability, peace and prosperity in the Mediterranean and Middle East region.

EIB and SGBL: 15 Million Euros to Support Investment by Lebanese SMEs/SMIs

Luxemburg & Beirut, 19 June 2012. [Link](#)

A partnership that will enable Lebanese SMEs of less than 500 employees, wishing to finance new projects or expand existing projects, to contract loans with EIB preferential conditions throughout the SGBL network.

The Societe Generale de Banque au Liban and the European Investment Bank (EIB) signed an agreement for the establishment of a credit line of EUR 15 million to partially finance investment projects of Small and Medium Enterprises (SME) and Industries (SMI) in Lebanon. This operation is part of chapter III of the plan for financing private sector investments in Lebanon, launched by the EIB in October 2011. The plan of a total value of €55 million, targets the Lebanese SMEs operating in the sectors of industry, tourism, health, education and high technology.

This partnership will enable Lebanese SMEs of less than 500 employees, wishing to finance new projects or expand existing projects, to contract loans for a minimum of five years and a maximum of ten years, with EIB preferential conditions throughout the SGBL network.

The line of credit was signed on Wednesday, June 13, 2012 between EIB and SGBL, the latter being represented by Mr. Gerard Garzuel and Mr. Georges Saghbini, respectively SGBL chief operating officer and deputy general manager.

On this occasion, Mr. Georges Saghbini said that through the signature of this protocol, SGBL reconfirms its commitment to the drivers of the Lebanese economy that are SME / SMIs. He added that support for the development of the Lebanese economy has always been at the heart of SGBL concerns and that the refinancing agreement signed with the EIB is part of this long-term process.

As the first financial investor in the Mediterranean, the EIB has placed the development of both the private sector and the SMEs at the heart of its operational priorities. More than 442 million Euros have been granted since 2002 to support and develop Lebanese SMEs, more particularly in the key sectors of tourism and industry. In the whole Mediterranean region, there are more than 2 300 SMEs that have received support from BEI since 2002, creating thus 30 000 jobs in this region.

EU sanctions against Iran

Luxembourg, 25 June 2012. [Link](#)

The latest package of EU sanctions against Iran will apply as earlier decided. Following a review of the measures, the Council confirmed that they would remain as approved in January.

This means that two exemptions will end, as scheduled, on 1 July: Contracts for importing Iranian oil that were concluded before 23 January will have to be terminated by 1 July. From the same date, EU insurers may no more provide third-party liability and environmental liability insurance for the transport of Iranian oil.

This latest package of sanctions against Iran was adopted in January 2012 and targets the Iranian nuclear programme and its sources of finance. The measures were taken in relation to the EU's serious concerns over Iran's nuclear programme. The objective of the EU remains to achieve a comprehensive, long-term settlement on the basis of meaningful negotiations between the E3+3 and Iran.

Statement ahead of the technical meeting between the E3+3 and Iran in Istanbul on 3 July, 2012

Brussels, 2 July 2012. [Link](#)

As agreed between High Representative/Vice-President Catherine Ashton and the E3+3 Political Directors and Dr. Jalili in Moscow, a technical-level meeting will take place between the E3+3 and Iran in Istanbul on 3 July, 2012.

The meeting will aim to provide further clarification of the E3+3 proposal; increase the E3+3 understanding of the Iranian response given in Moscow; and study the issues raised by Iran during the sessions. Technical experts from the E3+3 and Iran will attend. Ahead of the meeting, High Representative/Vice-President Ashton stated:

"We hope Iran will seize the opportunity of this meeting to show a willingness to take concrete steps to urgently meet the concerns of the international community, to build confidence in the peaceful nature of Iran's nuclear programme and to meet its international obligations."

EU and Albania sign a framework agreement for the participation of Albania in EU crisis management operations

Brussels, 5 June 2012. [Link](#)

EBRD President Thomas Mirow visited Tunisia, the cradle The Executive Secretary General of the European External Action Service (EEAS) Pierre Vimont and the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of

Albania Edmond Haxhinasto, signed today in Brussels a Framework Agreement on the participation of Albania in EU crisis management operations.

Albania is already a partner in the area of the EU's Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP), having negotiated ad hoc arrangements for its participation in two European Union military operations: EUFOR Tchad/RCA in Chad and the Central African Republic, and EUFOR Althea in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

The agreement will set out a legal framework for possible future Albanian participation in the full range of EU-led military operations and civilian missions, and represents a step towards more structured cooperation between the EU and Albania in the security field.

This new framework instrument will allow on a case-by-case basis the smooth involvement of Albania in on-going and future EU crisis management efforts across the world, avoiding unnecessary delays where Albania is invited and agrees to participate in EU operations. The agreement comes in response to Albania's strong desire to contribute with personnel and assets to the EU efforts, offering enhanced effectiveness and flexibility in response to future crises.

Commission delivers visa roadmap to Kosovo government

Brussels, 14 June 2012. [Link](#)

Today, European Commissioner for Home Affairs Cecilia Malmström handed the roadmap for visa liberalisation over to the Kosovo government. This document sets out a comprehensive list of reforms that Kosovo will be requested to implement to fulfil requirements related to the freedom of movement, such as reintegration and readmission, document security, border and migration management, the fight against organised crime and corruption and fundamental rights. The pace of the visa dialogue will depend on the Kosovo government's progress in fulfilling these requirements.

"I am particularly pleased to be able to present this eagerly anticipated document to the Kosovo government. Today's handover ceremony brings the citizens of Kosovo a step closer to visa-free travel. The roadmap to visa liberalisation sets out reforms that the Kosovo government will need to implement to create a secure environment for visa-free travel. Whether and how soon visa-free travel becomes a reality depends on the government's commitment to implementing these difficult reforms on the ground. The European Commission stands ready to assist the Kosovo authorities in their efforts," said Cecilia Malmström.

In the past, the EU launched visa liberalisation dialogues with five Western Balkans countries to allow their citizens to travel to the EU without visas. Following an assessment on the progress made by these countries in implementing major reforms, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Montenegro and Serbia joined the EU's visa-free regime in

December 2009 (IP/09/1852) and Albania and Bosnia and Herzegovina in November 2010.

EU Commissioner Cecilia Malmström on the initialling of the EU-Turkey Readmission Agreement

Brussels, 21 June 2012. [Link](#)

Today in Brussels the negotiators of the Commission and Turkey have initialled a Readmission Agreement, which reflects our shared interest in a more effective migration and border management.

I very much welcome this important development.

The agreed text sets out clear obligations and procedures to follow by the authorities of Turkey and of EU Member States in order to swiftly return persons who are irregularly residing on their territories, in full respect of international law and fundamental rights. It is similar to readmission agreements concluded by the EU with other third countries.

I am now looking forward to the formal signature of the agreement as well as its entry into force, which will further enhance our dialogue and cooperation with Turkey in the field of Home Affairs policy.

This will also enable us to make progress in the perspective of visa liberalization, as a clear sign to the Turkish population and authorities that the EU stands up to its commitment to improve the mobility of our citizens

Council conclusions on Bosnia and Herzegovina

Luxembourg, 25 June 2012. [Link](#)

1. The Council reiterates its unequivocal support for Bosnia and Herzegovina's (BiH) EU perspective as a sovereign and united country enjoying full territorial integrity. To that end, the Council reaffirmed the March 2011, the October 2011 and December 2011 Council Conclusions and the strategy they set out. The Council also supports Peter Sorensen's active, effective and constructive approach as EUSR/Head of Delegation, who has significantly contributed to anchoring the EU agenda at the core of the political process in BiH. The Council also reaffirms its intention to further reinforce the EU role in the country as of July 2012, including by further increasing EU's presence in the field and on law enforcement, rule of law and economic matters, also following the closure of EUPM.

2. The Council welcomes political progress in BiH since the start of 2012, particularly the formation of the Council of Ministers at state-level, adoption of the State Aid and Population Census Laws, the passing of the 2012 State Budget, and the reaching of a political agreement on state and immovable defence property. However, the Council expresses concern over the lack of implementing political agreements, the continued use of divisive ethnic rhetoric,

and a difficult economic situation. It condemns any attempts to minimise or deny the genocide which took place in Srebrenica. Noting the current political events, the Council calls on the political leaders to swiftly ensure that governments on all political levels retain their capacity to act and focus on the implementation of the EU agenda.

3. The Council reiterates that BiH, as a matter of priority, needs to bring its Constitution into compliance with the European Convention of Human Rights (Sejdic/Finci ruling). A credible effort in this regard remains necessary for the entry into force of the SAA (Stabilisation and Association Agreement).

4. Completing the implementation of the Sejdic/Finci ruling and having a satisfactory track record in implementing its obligations under the SAA/Interim Agreement would be key elements for a credible membership application to be considered by the EU. The Council also underlines that establishing an effective coordination mechanism for engagement with the EU as well as ensuring fiscal sustainability remain key priorities. In this context the Council looks forward to the European Commission's High-Level Dialogue on the EU accession process with BiH political leaders on 27 June 2012.

5. The Council welcomes the outcome of the meeting of the Peace Implementation Council Steering Board held in Sarajevo on 22/23 May, including the decision of the Supervisor of Brcko to suspend his functions and the accompanying closure of the High Representative's office in Brcko. Positive and tangible developments on the ground contributed to this decision. The EU will continue to support and encourage further progress in this regard.

6. In the context of the EU overall strategy for BiH, the Council looks forward to continuing discussion with the international community on the reconfiguration of the international presence, including its downsizing and possible relocation of the OHR, in the appropriate forum. In this regard, it notes the ongoing discussions on overlapping tasks between the OHR and the EU. It calls on BiH to meet the outstanding objectives and conditions which remain necessary for the closure of the OHR.

Moving the EU from a Laggard to a Leader in Democracy Assistance: The Potential Role of the European Endowment for Democracy

Authors: Hrant Kostanyan, Magdalena Nasieniak
15 June 2012. [Link](#)

[Abstract]

In their assessment of the proposed European Endowment for Democracy (EED), Hrant Kostanyan and Magdalena Nasieniak conclude that an instrument along the lines currently envisaged could and should take on the challenge to make the EU a truly committed, pro-active and effective leader of democracy assistance. A flexible and fast-track path of assessing needs and granting funds could become the most visible results of the EU's assistance in this area, delivering almost immediate tangible results. They argue that the EED therefore needs to become an instrument free of nationally-driven decisions, European 'turf wars' and cumbersome bureaucracy.

Hrant Kostanyan is a Visiting Research Fellow at CEPs and a PhD candidate at the Centre for EU Studies at the University of Ghent, Belgium. Magdalena Nasieniak is a PhD candidate at the Department of Politics, International Studies and Languages at the University of Bath.

Russian Foreign Policy: What is not seen from the Kremlin

Larisa Deriglazova, Andrey S. Makarychev, Oleg Reut
06 June 2012 . [Link](#)

[Abstract]

In their assessment of the proposed European Endowment The rising generation of Russian foreign policy experts and commentators, especially outside Moscow, is increasingly sceptical about the key premises of Russian diplomacy and see more failures than achievements in Russia's relations with its closest partners, including the EU and neighbouring states. This is the conclusion that stems from a series of interviews and focus groups carried out with young Russian professionals about Russia's current foreign policies. The study reveals a strong cognitive dissonance between the official diplomatic discourse of the Kremlin and the perceptions of young experts who work in a variety of fields dealing with international cooperation either at a lower level of the state hierarchy or in different professional domains. This paper summarises the key findings of this project and discusses their practical implications.

Larisa Deriglazova is Professor of International Studies, Tomsk State University, Russia; Andrey Makarychev is Visiting Professor at the Institute for East European Studies, Free University of Berlin; and Oleg Reut is Associate Professor of International Relations, Petrozavodsk State University, Russia.

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CEPS Neighbourhood Watch Editorial address

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