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THE EASTERN PARTNERSHIP IN THE CONTEXT OF THE EUROPEAN NEIGHBOURHOOD POLICY AND V4 AGENDA

Izabela Albrycht : Introduction

**David Král: The Czech Republic and the Eastern Partnership
– from a by-product to a beloved child?**

András Rácz: Hungary and the Eastern Partnership

**Przemysław Żurawski vel Grajewski: The Eastern Partnership
of the EU – main or supporting tool of Polish Eastern Policy?**

**Krzysztof Szczerski: The EU's Eastern Policy
and the strategy of the Visegrad Group**

**Agnieszka Legucka: Comparative study
on the EU Eastern Policy concepts**

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Izabela Albrycht (ed.)

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CONTENTS

1. Izabela Albrycht:	
Introduction	3
2. David Král:	
The Czech Republic and the Eastern Partnership – from a by-product to a beloved child?	5
3. András Rácz:	
Hungary and the Eastern Partnership	19
4. Przemysław Żurawski vel Grajewski:	
The Eastern Partnership of the EU – main or supporting tool of Polish Eastern Policy?	37
5. Krzysztof Szczerski:	
The EU's Eastern Policy and the strategy of the Visegrad Group	51
6. Agnieszka Legucka:	
Comparative study on the EU Eastern Policy concepts	59

INTRODUCTION

Izabela Albrycht – Vice-Chairman of the Board in the Kosciuszko Institute, political scientist (M.A. degree in the Institute of Political Science and International Relations of the Jagiellonian University), specialist in Public Relations (non-degree professional studies in the Tischner European University). Preparation of a PhD thesis in the Institute of Political Science and International Relations of the Jagiellonian University.

The publication *The Eastern Partnership in the context of the European Neighbourhood Policy and V4 Agenda* initiated by The Kosciuszko Institute and prepared jointly with the consortium of European think tanks – the Europeum Institute for European Policy and Centre for EU Enlargement Studies with invited experts, aims to present a project of the European Union – the Eastern Partnership (EaP) as an initiative actively supported by the Visegrad Group (V4) countries.

Since its establishment, the European Union has been representing an arena for the sharp exchange of particular interests of the member states, which determines the dynamics and shape of European integration. With the accession of the new member states, whose national strategies emerged from different historical backgrounds, geopolitical circumstances and internal economic progress, a map of external EU interests became not only wider, but also distinctively developed along new trends. The European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP), the most important instrument of the European External Policy has been a subject of internal tensions between the old and the new member states, as it does not offer any accession perspective for the strategic partners of the latter. Different approaches towards the new EU neighbours have become apparent in the regionalization process of the ENP, in the Eastern Partnership established in March 2009, as well as the Union for the Mediterranean and the Black Sea Synergy. Despite these disagreements, the EaP remains a platform for constructive cooperation in Central and Eastern Europe within the auspices of the V4.

Historical and political perspectives, recalled in this publication, point out that EaP has been one of the most important initiatives of the EU external policy, in which Polish, Czech and Hungarian authorities cooperated with each other. In this process every country played a significant role, which has been presented in this publication through experts familiar with the local political environments and European aims of their countries. The comparative study on Polish, Czech and Hungarian actions shows that the Eastern dimension of the ENP, understood as an aspiration for build-

ding sensible political bounds with the Eastern neighbours, and for democratization and reform assistance in the region of the Eastern Europe, is a key priority of external policy realized in the EU arena by these three countries. The priority differs however, according to geographical factor (some member states support the entire region without exceptions, some are biased in favour of chosen countries) and area factor (the scope of cooperation includes their economic aims).

Poland, the Czech Republic and Hungary, whose positions in the subject of Eastern Partnership were presented in a detailed manner in the publication, are the new EU member states. It is particularly interesting to follow their activities and efficiency in realizing their national interests on the EU forum. It enables to determine the extent to which these countries have moved in the adaptation process within the EU political system and address some fundamental questions. How much did they progress in terms of "learning the EU" (formal effectiveness) or in terms of familiarity with the European political game (informal effectiveness)?

The publication helps to perceive whether during the first five years after accession, Poland, the Czech Republic and Hungary have set the stamp on the EU agenda and if they have been successful in determining their domains in European politics. Furthermore, the question is whether they took advantage of their joint capacity performed within the V4, that they contributed to before the EU enlargement and which then represented their strong political support in reaching the mutual aspirations. In other words, is V4 an institutionally useful tool on the EU arena and have their member states been capable of shaping a tactical force out of solidarity towards their common goals? The Polish, Czech and Hungarian potentials were presented in a particularly interesting way as V4 partners in supporting and developing Eastern Dimension of the ENP, including deepening cooperation with the Eastern European countries within the EaP. All these efforts may bare fruit in 2011.

Next year is essential for Polish and Hungarian European Politics, since the Hungarian presidency will precede the Polish presidency in the EU. Our common political goals in the field of realizing the EaP and the ENP premises need an active support from V4 partners. This is a considerable factor conditioning the success of the first Hungarian and Polish leaderships of the EU. Moreover, it has a vital sense for consolidating the regional development, social and political priorities in Eastern Europe, and for specifying them more precisely on the EU agenda, as well as in the external policies and initiatives. The presidency of both Hungary and Poland will be sort of a test of their European, regional and neighbourly cooperation.

THE CZECH REPUBLIC AND THE EASTERN PARTNERSHIP – FROM A BY-PRODUCT TO A BELOVED CHILD?

David Král - director of EUROPEUM Institute for European Policy, master in law from the Law Faculty at Charles University in Prague. He lectured at the Metropolitan University in Prague and at the Charles University - Faculty of Social Sciences. During the work of the Convention on the Future of Europe and the Intergovernmental Conference 2003/2004 he was a member of advisory groups of the MFA and the Prime Minister, and member of an advisory group on foreign relations to the Vice-Premier for EU affairs before and during the Czech EU presidency in 2009.

The Eastern Partnership as an initiative at the EU level was one of the core priorities of the Czech EU presidency in the arena of external relations. The fact that the initiative was endorsed by the March European Council and that the first Eastern Partnership summit took place in Prague on 7 May 2009 illustrates how much importance was attached to this new EU policy by the Czech political representation. This article will try to explain in more detail the role of the Czech Republic in building the Eastern partnership, as well as strategic considerations underpinning Czech position, their major interests and ambitions concerning the contents of this initiative. This would be impossible without examining a broader context of the Czech “Eastern policy” in the past years.

The place of the “Eastern factor” in the Czech foreign policy

The Czech Eastern policy has been characterized by rather low profile, at least compared to other Visegrad countries, in course of 1990's and at the beginning of 21st century. This is explicable by several factors. First of all, symbolically there was a need to distance itself from the East to prove the European credentials under the motto of “return to Europe”¹. Secondly, the Czech Republic as the only country in

1 Petr Drulák, Elsa Tulmets, Michal Kořan: The Foreign Policy of the Czech Republic towards the Eastern Neighbourhood. Hungarian Institute of International Relations,

the region does not have a direct geographical boundary with any of the current EU Eastern neighbours. Thus, after the division of Czechoslovakia in 1992, the issue of relations with Eastern countries (in this context meaning newly independent states of former Soviet Union) became much less salient in the Czech discourse. There is no substantive Czech minority residing in any of the countries currently falling under the Eastern partnership (unlike Hungarians or Poles living in Ukraine), nor is there any substantial Eastern ethnic minority living in the Czech Republic, like the Ruthenians in Slovakia and Poles or Ukrainians in the Eastern Poland. Possible threats stemming from the Eastern neighbourhood (political instability, frozen conflicts, security and environmental threats or migration pressures) also resonated much less intensively in the Czech Republic than in other countries of the region. The situation has been changing only since early 2000's when a significant influx of migrant workers especially from Ukraine into the Czech Republic started. This again brought more salience to Eastern policy, especially in terms of visa and residence issues concerning the citizens of the Eastern European countries. However, this issue was mainly considered an internal security matter and as such handled by the interior ministry without strong co-ordination with the Ministry of foreign affairs.

Secondly, at the beginning of 1990's following the dissolution of COMECON (Council of Mutual Economic Assistance), the Czech Republic has almost completely abandoned the markets of former Soviet Union states while keeping up the trade relations with former socialist countries (especially Slovakia, Poland and Hungary through the establishment of CEFTA²) and trying to expand to Western markets. The latter was largely facilitated by the association with the European Community (EC) and entry into force of the European agreement with the EC in February 1995. Due to the absence of borders with Eastern countries which would allow for developing of small cross-border trade and lack of interest of the biggest Czech companies in trading with or investing in this region, there was no economic impulse to develop stronger political ties with East European states.

Thirdly, and perhaps most importantly, the overall imperatives of the Czech foreign policy in late 1990's until the EU accession in 2004 were to subordinate all the foreign policy efforts to joining the EU and NATO. This somehow hampered the ambition to develop an autonomous Czech Eastern policy, not least because of the fear that it could somehow undermine or endanger the Czech aspirations to join both blocks. One example clearly illustrating this is the issue of visas. In the framework of negotiating Justice and Home Affairs chapter, the European Commission made it clear that the candidate countries would have to comply with the visa legislation of the EU. That would imply introducing visas for many East European countries that

2 CEFTA – Central European Free Trade Area

maintained visa free regime with the EU candidates, mainly as a result of agreements from the times of the socialist bloc. The Czech Republic has renounced most of these visa free agreements in 2000 practically overnight, justifying this step by the requirements imposed by the EU³. Poland and Hungary have, on the other hand, opted for a different approach (particularly in relation to Ukraine and Moldova), delaying the imposition of visas very close to the actual date of EU accession (only in 2003). This illustrates to a large degree the unwillingness of the Czech Republic to develop its own Eastern policy should it be perceived as undermining its own accession process⁴, although one could probably argue that Poland and Hungary had more compelling reasons for postponing the introduction of visas.

A certain comeback of Eastern policy can be witnessed in the Czech foreign policy discourse after the EU accession in 2004. Once the goal of the EU accession was accomplished, the Czech foreign policy was clearly lacking a vision or a priority that could be projected through the EU level. The Czech diplomacy tried to build on the fact that as a relatively small country with limited resources, its priorities for the EU foreign policy have to be well targeted, efficiently articulated and the Czech Republic has to have credibility and clear added value for pursuing them. These “niches” where the Czech Republic wanted to take a stronger profile in the EU include particularly promotion of democracy and transformation using the Czech experience, maintaining a close transatlantic link or strong EU involvement in Western Balkans leading to eventual EU accession of the countries in the region. Developing relations with Eastern neighbours was identified as another issue, mainly due to certain historical and cultural links with the region, as well as due to good knowledge of the situation on the ground thanks to intensive contacts from the socialist era. However, the low profile of the Czech Eastern policy in 1990's and early 2000 somehow undermined the credibility of this choice. For instance, Poland was much more active in contributing to the first Commission communications on the *Wider Europe and the European Neighbourhood Policy*⁵, even before the EU accession. Polish delegation worked ma-

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- 3 The issue of introducing visas to citizens of Eastern European countries was subject of the meeting of Visegrád prime ministers in the High Tatras in October 1999 in search of finding a coordinated approach among V4. While the Czech and Slovak PMs were in favour of an early introduction, the Polish and Hungarian PMs were arguing for their postponement. Eventually, there was no co-ordinated approach of V4 with Czech Republic and Slovakia introducing visa for Ukraine in 2000 while Poland and Hungary only in 2003.
 - 4 On the other hand, other examples show that on some foreign policy issues the Czech Republic took a more assertive stance, such as during the Iraq crisis in 2003. However, the Czech position was more ambivalent and nuanced, and there was a cleavage across the then EU as well.
 - 5 For instance in 2003, the Polish MFA circulated a non-paper on „Eastern dimension“ of the European Neighbourhood Policy, whose many elements then were incorporated in the respective Commission communication

inly together with the EU member states (particularly Sweden and Germany), which gave them a much better starting position and, in this respect, enabled to influence the future EU initiatives.

Motives for the growing interest in Eastern policy in the Czech Republic

The growing importance of Eastern policy in the Czech foreign policy discourse after the EU accession facilitated a more pro-active role of the Czech Republic in shaping new EU initiatives targeted at the Eastern neighbourhood of the Union. The Czech activity towards Eastern Europe was built on several presumptions on which there is a relative consensus among the Czech policy-makers: the need to support democratisation and “Europeanization” in the Eastern neighbourhood, and the need to pursue economic integration of the Eastern neighbours with the EU. This is for example visible in the programme of the centre-right government which took office in January 2007, consisting of the Civic Democratic Party (ODS), the Christian Democrats (KDU-ČSL) and the Green Party (SZ)⁶. However, a strong emphasis on democracy as a core value which should be projected through Czech foreign policy is quite well-anchored in the Czech thinking and dates back not only to post-1989 experience but as far as the emergence of independent Czechoslovakia in 1918. Institutionally, the democratisation efforts are channelled through a separate department in the foreign ministry (currently called Department of Human Rights and Transformation Policy), which distributes funds for projects (implemented mainly by NGOs) in a selected group of countries. Four out of the priority countries fall under the Eastern partnership – namely Ukraine, Belarus, Georgia and Moldova. This illustrates that Eastern neighbourhood is a particularly important area where democratisation efforts should be pursued, not only bilaterally but through different EU policies and instruments.

The other motive for a resurgent interest in Eastern Europe is explicable by economic considerations. Unlike in the 1990's when, as it was mentioned, the Czech companies totally swapped markets and reoriented then on trading with Western Europe and other parts of industrialised world, the situation has changed dramatically in mid 2000's. With the economic growth and increased competition from newly industrialising countries, the Czech companies are in a pressing need to look for new markets and also, with increasing labour costs in the Czech Republic, in need to invest in lower-cost countries. From this perspective, Eastern Europe seems to be a natural choice for Czech businesses due to the knowledge of local environment, as well as overly good reputation of Czech industry and products in the region. In recent

6 Coalition agreement between ODS, KDU-ČSL and SZ, 2006, p. 30

years a boost of trade with Eastern European countries⁷ became a reality, although much of this is attributable to high increase in trade in energies (especially oil and gas), approximately 75% of which Czech Republic imports from the region at stake, particularly from Russia and Azerbaijan. Due to a very high degree of integration of the Czech economy with the EU (about 80% of the Czech trade is with EU countries) and the existence of the single EU trade policy, the economic integration of Eastern neighbours with the EU seems to be the best way of securing the Czech business interests in Eastern Europe through the initiatives taken at the EU level.

Last but not least, the Czech interest in Eastern Europe was also precipitated by the resurgence of Russian influence in Eastern Europe. While in 1990's Russia was facing enormous internal problems, and due to this not very much on radar of the Czech diplomacy, after the assumption of power by Putin in 2000 the picture changed substantially and the Czech politicians as well as administration realized that the Russian factor in Eastern Europe will once again become an important, if not the most important, element determining what the region will look like.

The role of the Czech Republic in shaping the Eastern Partnership (EaP)

Let us move on to examining the role of the Czech leadership and diplomacy in shaping the Eastern Partnership – the newest initiative framing the relations between the EU and its Eastern neighbours. Probably the strongest incentives for the Czech Republic to take a highly pro-active role in shaping the EU's relations with Eastern neighbours were the successive presidencies in the Visegrad Group (2007-2008) and subsequently in the European Union (January – June 2009). The preparations for the EU presidency started already in 2006, gaining full speed after the parliamentary elections in June 2006. Already in the initial stage there was a consensus in the Czech government to put Eastern policy among the top priorities of the presidency in the area of external relations. In order to secure a broader support for the Czech proposals once leading the EU, the Czechs prepared consultations with its Visegrad partners as well as other EU member states considered like-minded (such as Sweden, Germany and the Baltic countries) on the enhanced Eastern dimension of European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP) through a non-paper⁸ circulated in 2007. This non-paper was in principle accepted by the V4 which was viewed as a success of the Prague

7 The trade turnover between the Czech Republic and the EU Eastern Neighbours (including Russia) has increased by 63% between 2000 and 2005 on average, with some countries, the increase is substantially higher, e.g. with Azerbaijan over 2000%, in case of Moldova and Ukraine by more than 100%. Source: Petr Drulák, Elsa Tulmets, Michal Kořan: *The Foreign Policy of the Czech Republic towards the Eastern Neighbourhood*. Hungarian Institute of International Relations, p. 3

8 *ENP and Eastern Neighbourhood – Time to Act*, working document (non-paper) – not public

diplomacy, because it provided the basic understanding among the partners and thus increased the capacity of the Czech Republic to work on it further to be adopted by the EU Council. The basic element of the Czech proposal was to develop a multi-lateral, project-based Eastern dimension of current ENP through a flexible framework of relations. This would add a multilateral framework to co-operation on concrete actions, in addition to existing mainly bilateral framework implemented through country specific ENP action plans. However, the proposal was still not concrete and elaborated enough, and as such it was used by the incoming Polish presidency in the Visegrad Group (from June 2008) who, jointly with Sweden, elaborated a more detailed proposal for the Eastern dimension of ENP which was tabled to General Affairs and External Relations Council (GAERC) in May 2008 and endorsed as a concept under the name of Eastern Partnership in June 2008 European Council conclusions. The main difference of the Czech and Swedish-Polish proposals was that while the Czechs stressed flexible, less institutionalized approach, the other initiative aimed at developing a more formal new framework, similar to another initiative emerging in the EU at that time – the Union for the Mediterranean.

Indeed the Czech Republic has seized a new momentum emerging in a progressive development of European Neighbourhood Policy, where the tensions between the southern and eastern dimensions of this policy were becoming ever more obvious from 2007 onwards. The European Council conclusions of 14th December 2007 called for developing “both the Eastern and the Southern dimensions of ENP in bilateral and multilateral formats on the basis of the relevant Commission communications and proposals”. Particularly France became much more active in this respect, not least with the view of its incoming presidency which it was to assume in July 2008. The French proposal for the Mediterranean Union was accepted as a concept by the Council in March 2008, despite some initial controversies particularly between France and Germany, where the latter was very much opposed to including only some of the EU countries in the project and was concerned about the relation of this new initiative to the existing community instruments, such as the ENP and the Barcelona process. The French proposal aimed very much at the same thing as the later the Polish-Swedish initiative, i.e. to provide the southern EU neighbours with new institutional and policy framework mainly of a multilateral character. The acceptance of the French proposal at the EU level thus made it much easier for the Czech EU presidency which was to follow the French one to argue for a balanced approach to the ENP, to push for upgrading the Eastern dimension further and to equip the Eastern neighbours with similar set of policies and instruments that were intended for the southern Mediterranean states.

The acceptance of the Polish-Swedish initiative for launching the Eastern Partnership by the European Council in June 2008, returned the ball back to the Commission's court, as the it was charged with preparing the respective communication which was to

be issued in 2008⁹. The Commission has invited Poland, Sweden and the Czech Republic, as the future Heads of EU presidency to provide an input into this communication. As we can see from the contents of the communication, many of the priorities of the Czech presidency actually resonate in it which will be analysed in the subsequent section.

Another impetus that pushed the Czech government to make the Eastern partnership one of the top priorities for its EU presidency, was the Russian – Georgian conflict in August 2008. The centre-right government of Prime Minister Mirek Topolánek in power at that time was quite suspicious about the intensions of Russia towards its neighbours and convinced of its long-term goal of undermining the credibility of Eastern European countries in the eyes of the EU, and of restoring its “sphere of influence” over the former Soviet republics. The Russian aggression against the Georgian territory, although not being viewed consensually on the Czech political scene¹⁰, was seen as another strong motive that the European Union, if it wants to bring the EU neighbours closer to its orbit, must make a much more attractive offer to them in addition to what is available for the time being.

The Eastern Partnership initiatives during the Czech EU presidency

It is interesting to observe how the Eastern partnership was moving up the priorities of the external relations of the Czech EU presidency. Developing the Eastern dimension of ENP was on the Czech agenda since the beginning, but rather as something that the Czech government was obliged to include, because of its geographical position and history, previous activities in the Visegrad Group and as a perceived priority of its foreign policy. Many external factors in the previous section explain why, as the presidency was approaching, the Eastern partnership was becoming more important. In addition to this, the Czech government was becoming more realistic about what can be achieved in other main priority areas of external relations, namely transatlantic relations and Western Balkans. While in case of EU-US relations the momentum was great after the election of President Obama, the very gradual inauguration of the new administration in fact limited the scope for any real achievements. Despite organising in March 2009, the EU-US summit at the level of heads of government in Prague, Czech-

9 Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament and the Council: Eastern Partnership, COM(2008) 823 from 3 December 2008, available at: http://ec.europa.eu/external_relations/eastern/docs/com08_823_en.pdf

10 Prime Minister Mirek Topolánek condemned the Russian aggression against the Georgian territory, even admitted the possibility of sanctions, pledged assistance worth 150 million CZK to Georgia and called for donor conference helping Georgia to cope with reconstruction; on the contrary, President Klaus accused Georgian leadership of escalating tensions and provoking Russia. The position of foreign minister Karel Schwarzenberg was pro – Georgian but more balanced and in line with the French presidency position, favouring dialogue with Russia

US relations were stranded over many issues including the missile defence and tackling of the economic crisis. Similarly in case of Western Balkans, the main goal of unblocking the Croatian negotiations was not achieved. This slowly paved the way for the Eastern partnership to become the main external priority and a kind of flagship initiative of the Czech presidency, for which it could be remembered and praised.

Another strong incentive to turn the Eastern partnership into the flagship initiative of the Czech EU presidency came soon after its start with the gas crisis between Ukraine and Russia breaking out in January 2009, which seriously affected some of the EU member states. Despite the fact that in the very initial stage the Czech Republic almost refused to interfere, calling the problem a purely bilateral commercial dispute, the active involvement of the top Czech politicians in the upcoming weeks illustrated that the understanding of the nature of the dispute inside the Czech administration has changed dramatically. According to some people very close to Vice-Premier Alexandr Vondra, the main face of the Czech presidency, the whole crisis was viewed as a Russian attempt to undermine the credibility of Ukraine as a transit country, and potentially to undermine the festive launch of the Eastern Partnership during the Czech term in the head of the EU. It also illustrated that issues concerning energy security are going to become a top priority for the Czechs in the context of Eastern partnership.

The upcoming challenge for the Czech presidency was to have the Eastern Partnership endorsed by the European Council, the highest political body in the EU, and to prepare the inaugural summit in the spring of 2009, similarly to the summit of the Union for the Mediterranean organized under the French presidency in July 2008. It took some efforts, as some member states governments were still hesitant about the project. The main points that the Czech diplomacy had to repeatedly underline was that the EaP is not anti-Russian, that it is not seeking re-distribution of ENP funds in favour of Eastern neighbours, that it is not undermining the existing community policies and instruments (especially ENP) and last but not least that it does not mean a green light for the six countries concerned to become part of the enlargement process, i.e. a *de facto* recognition of their candidate status. Despite the latter, the Declaration attached to the Presidency conclusions approved by the March European Council¹¹ states that “work under the Eastern Partnership will go ahead without prejudice to individual participating countries’ aspirations for their future relationship with the European Union”. It was also underlined that the Eastern Partnership remains on the level of concept, which will be elaborated further but in any case will remain under full control of member states, especially when it comes to sensitive issues like visa liberalisation.

11 Presidency conclusions, Brussels, 29 March 2009 http://www.consilium.europa.eu/uedocs/cms_data/docs/pressdata/en/ec/106809.pdf

The brief evaluation of the inaugural summit which took place in Prague on 7 May 2009 would be that it was probably not as spectacular as the Czechs hoped for. First of all, the Czech government was in resignation already, and the summit was the last big showcase before the Prime Minister Topolánek stepped down, but his political leverage over the summit has practically vanished. Also the fact that the summit was not attended by the major EU leaders, such as Sarkozy, Brown, Berlusconi and Zapatero (from the big EU member states only Angela Merkel and Donald Tusk were represented) was interpreted by many observers as an illustration of a virtual lack of interest in the initiative from the biggest EU players (especially compared to the first Mediterranean summit, which was attended by almost all EU leaders). Similarly, regarding the partnership countries, Moldovan president Voronin (due to the internal crisis in Moldova following the parliamentary elections) and Belorussian president Lukashenka (for whom the invitation by the foreign ministry was not issued) have not attended the summit. But some of the Eastern countries represented at the meeting, particularly Ukraine and Georgia, showed disappointment over what the Eastern Partnership is offering them, because they expected more ambitious tasks, for instance, the recognition of membership aspirations, visa liberalisation in a short-term (while it has been set definitely as a long-term goal in the March European Council conclusions) or inadequacy of finances available (600 million € for the period until 2013 is considered as too small). Last but not least, the Russian reaction to the summit was very hostile, with foreign minister Sergei Lavrov calling the initiative “totally unacceptable” and accusing the EU of trying to extend its “sphere of influence” through the partnership¹². All above mentioned points, clearly illustrate the perception gap at the time of the launch of the Eastern partnership – different levels of interest among the EU member states, perceived lack of ambition on part of Eastern neighbours and a hostile attitude of Russia. The Czech presidency did not manage to present the project as an interesting trademark which would be able to foster the relations with East European countries on a qualitatively new basis. Only the reality in the coming years will show if this new EU initiative can bear fruit for both sides.

The Eastern Partnership thematic platforms and the Czech EU presidency's priorities – how do they overlap?

The Czech Republic was active in contributing to the initial Commission proposal for the content of Eastern partnership elaborated in the aforementioned Communication of Dec. 3 2008 and was instrumental in developing them further in the Eastern

12 Rosie Johnston: Was the the Czech EU Presidency's Eastern Partnership summit a success? Czech Radio, talking point, 12 May 2009, <http://www.radio.cz/cz/clanek/116173>

Partnership Declaration adopted by the European Council in March 2009. It is thus interesting to observe that many of the priorities that the Czech Republic has identified generally for the EU in the framework of its presidency found their way also into these documents.

Firstly, the four platforms of co-operation mentioned in the Communication and Presidency conclusions are reflections either of foreign policy priorities of the Czech Republic or the priorities for the presidency. It was already mentioned that support of democracy, good governance and stability (the first platform) represents one of the cornerstones of Czech foreign policy and that Eastern Europe plays a particular role in this area. The Czech Republic already supports many projects targeted at the improvement of democratic governance in the four Eastern partnership countries (Ukraine, Belarus, Moldova and Georgia) and as such has already gained a certain reputation in the European Union. Developing these further through financial instruments available through Eastern Partnership, as well as other community instruments (e.g. EIDHR¹³) can thus achieve a greater synergy effect and can help the Czech Republic pursue its own goals vis-à-vis the Eastern countries.

The same applies to the economic integration of Eastern neighbours with the EU. Firstly, this goes in line with the Czech presidency's idea of open, competitive Europe, which involves removal of economic barriers not only inside the European Union but also vis-à-vis third countries. The idea of deep and comprehensive free trade agreements (DCFTA) is understood in the Czech administration as one of the best ways of achieving economic development, prosperity and stability in Eastern Europe. The Czech Republic is a country that has benefited immensely from economic liberalisation in 1990's and as such can serve as a positive example. Furthermore, the regulatory approximation which will be necessary for the establishment of single economic space with Eastern neighbours (the Neighbourhood Economic Community) will make it easier to adapt to European norms and standards not only economically, but also politically. Economic integration with the EU could also make it much easier for the countries to integrate in financial terms. Their mutual integration would be beneficial for regional co-operation, currently underperforming. As so far, the ENP was based mainly on bilateral approach without much emphasis on regional co-operation, this is exactly where the Eastern partnership can make an enormous difference.

Energy security was also one of the top priorities of the Czech EU presidency. It achieved mixed results in this respect. On one hand, it successfully engaged in the resolution of Russian-Ukrainian gas dispute, pledged further support from member states for Nabucco pipeline as well as for improving energy interconnectivity among member states. On the other hand, it failed to achieve concrete pledges from Central

13 EIDHR – European Instrument for Democracy and Human Rights

Asian countries (especially Kazakhstan and Turkmenistan) to supply gas to Europe by alternative routes (including Nabucco). However, the experience of the January/February gas crisis has demonstrated how much the security of energy supplies depends on the countries in EU's neighbourhood, particularly Ukraine. Plenty of activities in this respect, are envisaged in the framework of Eastern Partnership, including regulatory harmonisation, early warning mechanism and joint response in cases of energy crises, creation of a diversified and interconnected energy market etc. The added value of the Eastern partnership from the Czech perspective is again that it will be much easier to deal with such issues in multilateral framework, including EU and more countries at the time. One issue of concern is to what extent it will be achievable without enormous financial investments, which are not available to the countries involved and the EU is not ready to make them at the moment, due to limited resources earmarked for Eastern partnership.

Finally, the people-to-people contacts also comply with the main motto of the Czech presidency – *Europe Without Barriers* and with the Czech slogan of not only providing the free movement of its own citizens, but also of giving the access to the EU to third country citizens, neighbours in particular. The Czech Republic was strongly advocating visa liberalisation process with Western Balkan countries, which finally moved forward with visas being lifted for citizens of Macedonia, Serbia and Montenegro in December 2009. Similar approach is supported also in case of the Eastern neighbours. With an easier access to the EU, the citizens of the Eastern Partnership countries will gradually build a more positive image of the EU – as so far it is much easier for them to travel to Russia and EU is viewed as something distant and alien. This can greatly help to enhance the effectiveness of other EU policies towards the region. Although, for the Czech Republic people-to-people contacts are not as important as for Poland or Hungary because of the absence of minorities, it has wide experience with managing migration from the region, particularly from Ukraine. However, there is still a discrepancy at the political level – while the foreign ministry strongly supports visa liberalisation as a political tool, the interior ministry and ministry of labour and social affairs take a more careful approach. Furthermore, the Czechs are aware of the fact that this will be a lengthy and difficult process, not least because of the lack of will on part of many member states, the negative effects of the economic crisis and the fear of uncontrolled migration and organised crime.

Conclusion

Strong Czech support for the concept of Eastern Partnership, both in the Visegrad Group and once it assumed the EU presidency, clearly demonstrates the rising importance of Eastern policy in the Czech foreign policy discourse. The Czech Repub-

lic is clearly in favour of developing the Eastern Dimension of the European Neighbourhood Policy at the EU level. Moreover, the Eastern Partnership provides a new platform, which should lead to upgrading the relations and bringing the Eastern countries closer to the EU. At the same time, the relevant officials in the Czech Foreign Ministry see the Eastern Partnership not as something replacing the eventual membership perspective of countries in the region, but rather as a waiting room for the countries to gain a candidate status and become a part of the enlargement process. As the Prime Minister Mirek Topolánek said at the inaugural summit of Eastern Partnership: "This is not supposed to replace or erase a country's hopes of EU membership. This is one of the keystones of the partnership. A country's aspirations to EU membership can run alongside its role as an eastern partner of the bloc. The Eastern Partnership allows countries to strengthen their bilateral and multilateral relations with the EU. It gives countries a chance to choose their own tempo, their own priorities in the course of this process"¹⁴. However, realistically currently an explicit promise of membership for Eastern neighbours cannot be achieved within the EU due to a complete lack of consensus within the bloc. Thus in the Czech view it is important to anchor the Eastern European states functionally in the EU market and precipitate necessary internal reforms in the areas covered by the Eastern Partnership, which – once the time is ripe – will make it much easier to put the membership issue again on the table, although many of these countries would like to receive such offer already at the time being.

The content of the Eastern Partnership still needs to be developed, but those thematic areas that are mentioned in the relevant documents clearly correlate with Czech interests in the region, as well as with those of the Czech presidency in general. Energy security is probably going to be a top priority for the Czech Republic in the area of Eastern Partnership, not least because of a high dependence of the country on gas and oil coming from the region, but also because of the stakes of some major energy companies, especially ČEZ¹⁵, who is planning a major expansion to the region. Democratization and assistance in transformation of the region to European standards is a long-term goal of the Czech diplomacy and Eastern partnership is aimed at helping to enhance the bilateral activities of the Czech Republic and other, mainly Central European, member states vis-à-vis the region.

14 Rosie Johnston: Was the the Czech EU Presidency's Eastern Partnership summit a success? Czech Radio, talking point, 12 May 2009, <http://www.radio.cz/cz/clanek/116173>

15 ČEZ (České energetické závody – Czech Power Comapany) is the 8th biggest producer of electricity in Europe; the Czech state has a majority stake in its shares (63%)

Eastern partnership – although carefully portrayed during the Czech EU presidency as not anti-Russian – is, however, viewed as a platform to counterbalance the resurgent Russian influence particularly in Western-oriented countries, among which Ukraine and Georgia are the most important. In the Czech view, all the Eastern countries have to be free to choose whether they want to integrate with the EU, but the Czech goal is to anchor them firmly in Europe rather than having a “buffer zone” between Russia and the EU. There is some degree of hesitation in the Czech Republic as to whether the whole concept would be really attractive enough to achieve the abovementioned goals, so it remains to be seen whether once the individual projects and flagship initiatives will be launched, the goal of further “Europeanization” of the Eastern Europe will be successful.

HUNGARY AND THE EASTERN PARTNERSHIP

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The article intends to give a brief summary on the Hungarian perspectives of the Eastern Partnership (EaP), and on the expectations, chances and priorities related to the initiative. The author argues that compared to its activities in the Balkans, Hungary shows only moderate interest in the Eastern Partnership region, and almost exclusively only in the Western NIS area, composed of Belarus, Ukraine and Moldova. Of these three, the Republic of Moldova is the most important target area for Hungary; Budapest conducts a wide range of activities here, both in governmental and NGO levels, not to mention the EU-framework as a definite success area. Concerning policy areas, for Hungary clearly the energy security dimension of the EaP is the most important one, in connection with the country's serious dependency on Russian gas supplies and Ukrainian transit. Therefore this is the field on which Budapest shows the highest level of interest, in addition to it, migration, technical assistance and democracy promotion also enjoy high importance. The objectives of the on-going Hungarian Visegrad Presidency are in line with these priorities: most attention is dedicated to the issue of energy security, to be enhanced not only in the EaP area, but "intra Visegrad" as well. The importance of the relationship with Russia obviously has an effect on the commitment and activities of Hungary in the EaP region. This factor is not likely to change significantly even after the parliamentary elections, which will take place in April-May 2010.

In order to properly define the role and place of the Eastern Partnership initiative, one needs to briefly analyze also its context, e.g. the general priorities and interests of the Hungarian foreign policy, and the perspective of Budapest on the European Neighbourhood Policy.

16 The opinion expressed here is only of the author's own, and no way represents the official position of the ZMNDU Institute of Strategic and Defence Studies.

The ENP in the Context of Hungarian Foreign Policy

Following the democratic transition, the foreign policy of Hungary had three main priorities. These were: the Euro-Atlantic integration, the good relations with the neighbouring countries, and the protection of the interests of the Hungarian minorities living abroad. With the NATO and EU accession, which happened in 1999 and 2004 respectively, and with the further EU and NATO enlargement taking place in 2007, these priorities have obviously been changed, together with the general geopolitical environment. As the External Relations Strategy puts it, the three priorities of the current Hungarian foreign policy are: 1. a competitive Hungary in the European Union, which is about realizing the political, economic and social interests of Hungary in the framework of the EU. About this part, the website of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs declares: "We regard strengthening the eastern dimension of the European Neighbourhood Policy as an important objective, and we regard Ukraine and Moldova as special partners in doing so", besides stating that the Euro-Atlantic integration of the neighbouring states, namely of Croatia, Serbia and Ukraine are key Hungarian interests.¹⁷ 2. Successful Hungarians in the region, which point is again declaring the responsibility felt for the minorities living abroad, for the protection of their rights and interests in order to ensure their welfare and well-being in their home countries. 3. A responsible Hungary in the world, which enumerates the international commitments of Hungary.¹⁸ The strategy uses clear wording regarding the role of the EU in the Hungarian foreign policy: "The European Union is the most important framework for Hungarian foreign policy and action"¹⁹

Concerning security policy, the National Security Strategy, adopted in 2004 promotes the central role of NATO in guaranteeing the security and defence of Hungary. Besides many others, the strategy mentions among the security primary security objectives "the general prevalence of democratic values, including their spreading beyond the Euro-Atlantic region."²⁰ The long term stability of Ukraine and Russia is also declared being a strategic priority.

17 http://www.kulugyminiszterium.hu/kum/en/bal/foreign_policy/hungary_in_the_world/ Last accessed: 9 Dec 2009.

18 Magyarország Külkapcsolati Stratégiája [*Hungary's External Relations Strategy*.] Available: http://www.mfa.gov.hu/kum/hu/bal/Kulpolitikank/kulkapcsolati_strategia/hu_kulkapcs_strat.htm Last accessed: 2 Dec 2009.

19 *ibid.*

20 *The National Security Strategy of the Republic of Hungary*. Available: http://www.mfa.gov.hu/NR/rdonlyres/61FB6933-AE67-47F8-BDD3-ECB1D9ADA7A1/0/national_security_strategy.pdf Last accessed: 2 Dec 2009. p.2.

The foreign policy of Hungary has traditionally two main geographical areas of interests, due to geopolitical, historical, economic and cultural reasons. These two are the Western-Balkans and Eastern-Europe. Of course, in connection with the UN, NATO and OSCE membership, Budapest is ready to get engaged in geographically remote areas as well, mostly in the field of crisis management and development policy: Hungarian forces took part in the Coalition operation in Iraq; Hungary operates a PRT in Afghanistan, etc. However, the two main areas, where Budapest is able to act not only in alliances, but also on its own are the above mentioned two ones: the Western-Balkans and countries of the former Soviet Union. As the Western-Balkans is not part of the ENP at all, this study is going to focus on the issues and interests related to Eastern-Europe.

ENP from a Hungarian Perspective

Since its EU accession, Hungary has been actively participating in the European Neighbourhood Policy. Due to the location of the country, Budapest pays more attention to the Eastern dimension of the ENP than to the Mediterranean relations. Generally speaking, the interests and objectives of Hungary are in line with the ones of the EU – promotion of stability and democratic values in the neighbourhood, support for market economy-oriented reforms, etc. – however, there are a few specific policy areas, which are of special importance for Budapest, concerning the neighbourhood policy towards Eastern Europe.

The first one is the question of Hungarian minorities living abroad, in the particular case of the EU Neighbourhood Policy, in Ukraine. The situation of the approximately 150.000 Hungarians living in Ukraine is far from being ideal, especially concerning their right to use their native language in education and cultural life. These problems are related to the generally restrictive policy of Ukraine towards ethnic minorities, which is mostly connected to the Russian minority living there. Anyways, Budapest keeps the representation and the protection of the Hungarian minorities living in Ukraine constantly on the agenda.

Following the same primary objective of protecting the minorities abroad, Hungary promotes cross-border cooperation with all neighbouring states. This is perceived as a tool for improving the standards of living in those regions, where most minority Hungarians live. Concerning Ukraine, there are numerous small and medium-sized projects realized in the poor *Zakarpattia* region in the framework of cross-border initiatives. Besides, of course, successful cross-border projects help improving the economic situation of the underdeveloped North-Eastern counties of Hungary as well.

The second issue of special Hungarian interest in the general EU foreign policy towards Eastern Europe is energy security, more concretely the serious dependency

of Hungary on Russian gas supplies. The situation can be described as “triple vulnerability”: 1. Budapest has no alternative source of gas supplies, only Russia. 2. There is only one transit route available: Ukraine. 3. Hungary itself is not a transit country, thus Budapest has no bargaining position in this aspect.

In addition to all these, natural gas has a very high share, approx. 45% in the primary energy balance of Hungary, 85% of which is procured from abroad, namely from Russia. This extraordinarily high dependency on Russian gas defines the Hungarian behavior in the Nabucco vs. South Stream debate as well. As the primary interest of Hungary is to decrease this “triple vulnerability”, and as currently no one can tell, which project will be realized earlier (or, which project will be realized at all), Hungary cannot afford to exclusively commit itself to any of them – the only choice left is to support the realization of both projects.²¹

This leads to a third factor, which also needs to be briefly analyzed, namely the role and position of Russia in the foreign and security policy of Hungary. Regarding the Russian factor, the Hungarian situation is not unique at all in the EU (unlike the minority question, for example); however, it still needs to be taken into account. First, energy dependency consists not only of dependency on natural gas, but also on Russian crude oil, and on Russian uranium necessary for operating the Pakistani nuclear power plant. Second, the role of Russia as a trading partner cannot be ignored. According to recent data from the Ministry for National Development and Economy, Russian Federation is far the largest non-EU foreign trade partner of Hungary, taking a share of 3,5% of total exports, and 6,6% of all imports, where the total 100% is calculated together with the EU-markets.²²

The Eastern Partnership and Hungarian Interests...

The Hungarian government has actively participated in the elaboration of the Eastern Partnership concept. During drafting phase of the EaP, Hungary strongly supported the inclusion of Belarus, in order to encourage the already visible, pro-European changes in the attitude of the regime, and to support the reforms. For a long time Budapest has been openly against any efforts to isolate Belarus and has been in favour of establishing as many ties as possible, without violating the U.S. and EU sanctions being that time in place. This policy was well-demonstrated by the opening of the Hungarian embassy in Minsk in December 2007, though the decision was

21 Sz. Bíró, Zoltán: *A Déli Áramlat és a Nabucco* [The South Stream and Nabucco]. In: *Nemzet és Biztonság* [Nation and Security], April 2008. pp. 23-29.

22 Source: *Külkereskedelmi forgalmunk fontosabb EU-n kívüli partnereinkkel, I-IX. 2009.* [Foreign trade with the main non-EU partners, January-September 2009.] Available: http://www.nfgm.gov.hu/data/cms1950906/eun_kivul_oroszag.xls Last accessed: 18 Dec 2009.

criticized some of the Western partners. Besides the above-mentioned political intentions, economic motivations also had a role to play: to support and improve bilateral trade, to encourage Belarusian tourists visiting Hungary, etc.²³

Budapest has warmly welcomed the official launch of the initiative in May 2009. Following the ceremony, Prime Minister Gordon Bajnai has pointed out: “the Partnership is especially important for Hungary and the EU because it improves energy security.” Bajnai stressed the importance of having alternative sources of gas and alternative transit lines, and reminded the journalists that the building of the Nabucco pipeline is the priority for Hungary, together with the creation of a common EU energy policy.²⁴

The geographical priority for Hungary in the Eastern Partnership is clearly the Western-NIS region, thus the trio formed by Belarus, Ukraine and Moldova. The three countries of the South Caucasus are far away, Hungary has practically no historical, cultural ties with them, and economic and political contacts are also very limited.²⁵ In the South Caucasus region Budapest in most cases acts only as a *policy taker*, while in Eastern Europe a definite *policy maker* role is ambitioned, at least in some particular issues, to be discussed below.

The already discussed Russian factor obviously has an effect on the Hungarian approach to the Eastern Partnership as well. Hungary is not interested in alienating Russia in any ways. On the contrary, Budapest intends to maintain stable, pragmatic political relations with Russia, in the framework of the dialog conducted by the EU and NATO, and “on the basis of bilateral economic interests.”²⁶

Energy security

Energy security is definitely the most important element of the EaP initiative. Especially because the proposal envisages not only the security of supplies and transit, but deals with questions of regulations and ways of using renewables, which

23 For a more detailed list of motivations, see: *Legyen vagy ne legyen magyar nagykövetség Minszkben?* [Should There Be or Should Not Be a Hungarian Embassy in Minsk?] In: *Népszabadság*, 25 Sept 2007. Available: <http://www.nol.hu/archivum/archiv-465308> Last accessed: 8 Dec 2009.

24 *EU Keleti Partnerség Moszkva küszöbén.* [EU Eastern Partnership in the Doorstep of Moscow] Available: <http://www.euractiv.hu/kulpolitika/hirek/eu-keleti-partnerseg-moszkva-kusoben-001651> Last accessed: 8 Dec 2009.

25 Hungary does not even have an embassy in all three countries of the region, only in Tbilisi and in Baku. However, the small Tbilisi embassy currently cannot issue visas, thus visas to Hungary are given by the Latvian embassy. For more information see: http://www.mfa.gov.hu/kum/en/bal/missions/missions_abroad/embassies_consulates/europe.htm Last accessed: 10 Dec 2009.

26 *Magyarország Küllapcsolati Stratégiája* [Hungary's External Relations Strategy.] Available: http://www.mfa.gov.hu/kum/hu/bal/Kulpolitikank/kulapcsolati_strategia/hu_kulapacs_strat.htm Last accessed: 2 Dec 2009.

is also a source of diversification. The EaP might be another way for Hungary for decreasing the above mentioned “triple vulnerability”, and to diversify its energy supplies. The initiative, tacitly favouring Nabucco is in line with the respective Hungarian approach: the government has appointed a special Nabucco Ambassador and organized a huge conference on the pipeline project in Budapest on 26-27 January 2009, just after the Ukrainian gas crisis.

However, one has to add that side by side with this pro-Nabucco approach, on 10 March 2009 János Erős, Chairman of the Hungarian Development Bank and Alexey Miller, CEO of the Gazprom have signed the contract on establishing the joint company, which would conduct the construction works of the Hungarian part of the South Stream gas pipeline. The Hungarian and Russian sides, represented by the MOL and the Gazprom have also agreed on jointly building an underground gas storage facility in the Pusztaföldvár-Dús area with a capacity of 1,3 bcm. The signature ceremony was attended both by Vladimir Putin and Ferenc Gyurcsány. Following the event, Gyurcsány told the press that the more pipeline a country has, the better its energy security becomes. He added that according to the decision of the Hungarian Parliament, Nabucco enjoys priority.²⁷

Some politicians and analysts argued that the earlier, rather balancing approach was radically changed by the January 2009 gas crisis, and as a result Hungary has become clearly committed to the Nabucco project. However, in reality, as demonstrated above, this is only partially true: Hungary has become even more determined to diversification, both of the supplies and of the transit routes. Nabucco, if realized, would clearly be the best option, however, the South Stream must also not be excluded, and especially as currently only the latter’s gas supply seems to be guaranteed.²⁸

In addition to that, Budapest puts significant efforts and resources in constructing gas storage facilities on Hungarian soil, in order to ensure the country’s energy security. The Szőreg-1 facility near Algyő, completed 1 October 2009, is capable of storing 1,2 bcm gas, which – together with the domestic production – is enough for 45 days, even in case of a total import disruption.

Promotion of democratic values and technical assistance

One of the main principles of the Eastern Partnership is to strengthen the rule of law, democracy and respect for human right in the Eastern neighbourhood. Besides,

27 Gyurcsány aláírta a Déli Áramlat építését. [Gyurcsány Has Signed the Construction of the South Stream] www.index.hu 10 March 2009. http://index.hu/gazdasag/magyar/2009/03/10/gyurcsany_alairta_a_deli_aramlat_epiteset/

28 For more information on the lack of ensured gas supplies, see: Sz.Bíró, *ibid.*

the initiative also mentions providing technical assistance to the partner countries, and support their legal approximation to the EU regulatory environment. Development of Comprehensive Institution-Building Programmes is concretely proposed.²⁹ In the case of Hungary these two fields are closely linked to each other.

The External Relations Strategy openly declares that that Hungary intends “to actively support the broad respect for democratic values” and “to support democratic development”.³⁰ However, as Áron Horváth points it out in his paper on Hungary’s democracy assistance policy,³¹ a clear strategy defining the objectives, priority areas, options and ways of democracy assistance is still missing. Though the government intends to coordinate democracy-related activities with international development cooperation, yet not much concrete is visible of it. There is no separate budget for democracy assistance programs; the MFA handles it together with development cooperation funds, and the management of these funds is not very transparent. Besides, Budapest prefers to implement democracy assistance projects with the consent of the hosting government, thus priority is given to work conducted in safe, supportive environment. Though the Hungarian NGO International Centre for Democratic Transition has a few activities, which are less cooperative (NGO capacity building in Belarus, etc.), most of their projects still follow the usual line of avoiding any confrontation with the governments of the targeted region (concerning the Eastern Partnership region, such projects are about training security policy experts in Moldova, organizing workshop on confidence building in Ukraine, etc.)³² Another particularity of the ICDDT is that it operates with receiving significant annual support from the MFA budget – in other words, in many aspects the MFA uses the ICDDT as a tool for international democracy assistance.

The geographical focus of international development cooperation (including democracy assistance) conducted by the Hungarian government is oriented mostly towards the Balkans. As the official MFA document³³ describes, the medium-term partner countries are Bosnia and Herzegovina, Moldova, Palestinian Authority, Serbia and

29 EaP p.7.

30 *Magyarország Küllapcsolati Stratégiája* [Hungary’s External Relations Strategy.] Available: http://www.mfa.gov.hu/kum/hu/bal/Kulpolitikank/kulkapcsolati_strategia/hu_kulkapcs_strat.htm Last accessed: 2 Dec 2009.

31 Horváth, Áron: *Hungarian Minorities, the Balkans... and the Far East. Hungary’s Democracy Assistance Policies and Priorities*. In: Kucharczyk, Jacek – Lowitt, Jeff (eds.) *Democracy’s New Champions. European democracy assistance after EU enlargement*. PASOS, 2008. pp. 51-80.

32 For more information, see the official webpage of the ICDDT: www.icddt.hu Last accessed: 11 Dec 2009.

33 *Tasks for 2008 in terms of Hungarian Development Policy*. Available: http://www.kulugyminiszterium.hu/NR/rdonlyres/06C1F916-0339-49F5-8903-85B444D9295D/0/1_2008nefeKB1h atEN.pdf Last accessed: 11 Dec 2009.

Vietnam. In addition to them, project-based cooperation is going on with countries of the Sub-Saharan Africa, Cambodia, Kosovo, Kyrgyzstan, Laos, Macedonia, Mongolia, Montenegro, Ukraine and Yemen. From these two lists, the prioritized place of the Western-Balkans is clear: all countries of the region are listed (except Albania), while from the Eastern Partnership area only two states are mentioned, with Moldova being a strategic and Ukraine being a project-based partner.

Concerning the policy focus, Hungary intends to share experiences of the political-economic transition, and prefers to get engaged in capacity-building, knowledge-transfer, institution-building, transfer of organizational and planning methods, etc. Further areas of technical development activity are the support of education, agriculture and water management.³⁴

Migration and free movement of people

Due to the sensitivity of the question of Hungarian minorities living abroad, Budapest has been traditionally advocating the liberalization of visa regimes, the free movement of people, the simplification of procedures, etc. The motivation is obvious: through such a policy Hungary intends to support the Hungarians living in the neighbouring non-EU, or non-Schengen countries, in order to maintain and strengthen their cultural and private ties with the mother nation. In the early nineties this was far from being obvious, and even with the EU-accession of Slovenia, Slovakia and Romania, the exclusion of the latter two from the Schengen zone is still a source of problems. The situation of the Hungarians living in Serbia has recently improved a lot with the adoption of the visa-free regime in December 2009. However, the case of Ukraine is still a complicated one.

Another element of why the issue of migration and free movement of people have long been on the agenda is that Hungary is historically in the crossroad of migration flows. Temporary labour immigration from the neighbouring countries has contributed a lot to the Hungarian agricultural sector, and the country was also a target for huge numbers of refugees from the Yugoslav civil war, from the Middle-East, most recently from Afghanistan, not to mention the increasing number of people arriving from Sub-Saharan African countries. Hungary, being on the South-East flank of the Schengen zone is also a primary transit country for illegal migrant travelling to the West.

These factors altogether justify, why the issue of migration, border security, border management and the visa question have always been on the Hungarian agenda.

34 The document describing the policy priorities was made in 2006, but it is still valid: *A Brief Summary of Hungary's International Development Co-operation Activities*. Available: http://www.mfa.gov.hu/NR/rdonlyres/6C909959-3C4A-4881-9096-9C8F368B4748/0/061206_ODA_HU.pdf
Last accessed: 20 Dec 2009.

Therefore this aspect of the Eastern Partnership, supporting the mobility of citizens of the partner countries through visa facilitation³⁵ enjoys wide professional support. Particularly because the elaboration of a common, global immigration policy, described in the Global Approach to Migration is in the essential interest of Hungary.

Focus on Ukraine and Moldova

As mentioned above, the stability, democratic development and Euro-Atlantic approximation of Ukraine is declared to be a priority in the key Hungarian foreign and security policy documents. In 2003 the so-called “Nyíregyháza Initiative” was launched by the MFA in order to actively support the reform processes in Ukraine, but in reality not much visible is being done concerning Ukraine as a whole. Most attention and resources dedicated to the *Zakarpattia* region: capacity-building, educational programs, support for small and medium enterprises, etc. The visibility of the Nyíregyháza Initiative³⁶ is hampered by the fact that the activities conducted in its framework are done by an NGO, Euro-Clip Public Foundation. The actual Hungarian priorities regarding Ukraine were clearly visible during the latest visit of Péter Balázs, Minister of Foreign Affairs to Ukraine on 22-23 Dec 2009: security of energy transit and educational rights of the Hungarian minorities.³⁷

The Republic of Moldova is the only country in the Eastern Partnership region, where Hungary ambitions a real policy-making role. Budapest holds important individual EU-positions related to Moldova: not only the EU Special Representative is Hungarian, but the EU Border Assistance Mission is also led by a Hungarian police general, Ferenc Banfi. In the framework of a TAIEX Programme, an advisor from the Hungarian Parliament is working near the Moldovan Parliament and very successful Common Application Center is operating in the Hungarian embassy in Chisinau, where Moldovan citizens can obtain visas to numerous EU countries, which do not maintain a diplomatic representation in Chisinau. Moldova is a stable, medium-term partner in international development cooperation, and intensive, high-level contacts are maintained between the two governments. Interestingly enough, not only the government, but also the op-

35 EaP, p.7.

36 Taking into account that it has no own website, and Google gives only 176 hits to the search word “Nyíregyháza Initiative”, one might be tempted to question the real international importance of the initiative. The Hungarian version, “Nyíregyházi Kezdeményezés” generates altogether 493 hits. Test conducted: 23 Dec 2009.

37 The official MFA communique about the meeting: *Előrelépés a kárpátaljai magyar iskolák tankönyvellátásának ügyében – a külügyminiszter kijevi tárgyalásai*. [A Step Forward in the Issue of Textbook Supplies to the Hungarian Schools in Transcarpathia – Negotiations of the Minister of Foreign Affairs in Kyiv.] Available: http://www.kulugyminiszterium.hu/kum/hu/bal/Aktualis/Szovivoi_nyilatkozatok/BP_Kijev_091223.htm Last accessed: 25 Dec 2009.

position pays attention to maintain good contacts with Moldova: recently Viktor Orban, Chairman of Fidesz, the strongest opposition party has met Moldovan Prime Minister Vlad Filat, and declared that if Fidesz wins the next parliamentary elections, strategic partnership “in all fields” will be established with Moldova.³⁸

...in Context of the V4 Presidency

Hungary holds the presidency of the V4 from July 2009 to June 2010. From the four priorities listed on the introductory website of the Hungarian V4 presidency³⁹, two includes the Eastern Partnership, the first one refers to the need of V4 cooperation in Eastern Europe, and the fourth one speaks about “democracy building in our neighbourhood.” The full version of the presidency program is, of course, much more definite. It declares that the realization of the Eastern Partnership is one of the main priorities of the Hungarian presidency, both in bilateral and multilateral format. It emphasizes the need of active engagement, though with using a pragmatic approach. This pragmatism characterizes the whole presidency program. Emphasis is put on the need of strengthening the ties between the European Commission and the Eastern partners, and also between the countries exercising the EU presidency and the Eastern partners.⁴⁰ This reflects to the fact that Hungary is well aware of the limitations of her size, economic and political power, if compared either to the Eastern Partnership region or to the EU in general. Among such circumstances, obviously multilateralism and pragmatism is the most viable strategy for a small state to realize its own interests.

The wording of the program demonstrates that Hungary envisions the Visegrad cooperation and its role in Eastern Europe not as a sole entity, not as an actor working only on its own, but as part of a greater community of actors, namely of the European Union. With other words, the Hungarian V4 presidency strategy properly realizes that the V4 cooperation has the best chance to become a strong player in Eastern Europe, if it manages to direct and maintain the attention (and the resources) of the EU as a whole to the Eastern Partnership region. This is also fully in line with the already mentioned statement of the External Relations Strategy: “The European Union is the most important framework for Hungarian foreign policy and action.”

38 For more information see: Összefoglaló Orbán Viktor bonni tárgyalásairól [Summary the Bonn Negotiations of Viktor Orbán] Available: <http://www.fidesz.hu/index.php?Cikk=143061> Last accessed: 11 Dec 2009.

39 2009/2010 Hungarian presidency. Introduction. Available: <http://www.visegradgroup.eu/main.php?folderID=942&articleID=23256&ctag=articlelist&iid=1> Last accessed: 8 Dec 2009.

40 A Visegrádi Csoport magyar elnökségének programja. [Program of the Hungarian Presidency of the Visegrad Group]. Available: <http://www.visegradgroup.eu/download.php?ctag=download&docID=127> Last accessed: 8 Dec 2009. p.6.

Geographic priority on the East is the West

The analysis of the Hungarian V4 presidency program is quite telling about the geographical priorities of Hungary concerning the Eastern Partnership region. For Budapest the three Western countries of the six Eastern partners are clearly of much higher importance than the three countries of the South-Caucasus. In the External Relations Strategy only one country is mentioned of the Eastern Partnership region, Ukraine. The V4 presidency program speaks in a detailed way about the three Western-NIS neighbours, however, of the three South Caucasus states Georgia is mentioned only twice in the text, while Azerbaijan and Armenia are completely left out. This is in line with the overall interests and resources of the Hungarian foreign and security policy, for which the South-Caucasus region, as stated earlier, is definitely not among the priorities.

Contrary to this, the presidency program devotes separate chapters to the cooperation with Belarus, Ukraine and Moldova, and there is also a fourth one, dedicated to Russia. Of course, as the presidency program is to be approved by all V4 countries, it does reflect mainly the joint V4 priorities, while national ones are represented only to a limited extent.

V4 + Belarus

About Belarus the intensification of cooperation enjoys the support of the presidency, provided the suspended conditions are met. Dialogue should be strengthened mostly in technical matters: tourism, consular issues, energy security, environmental protection, etc.

V4 + Ukraine

The ambitions are probably the highest about Ukraine. The program attaches great importance to maintain dialogue with Ukraine in order get the country closer to the European standards and practices. Cooperation is envisioned in many fields, including good governance, energy security, border control, mobility, visa issues, people to people contacts, etc.

V4 + Moldova

About Moldova the presidency program uses a rather laconic wording: strengthening the rule of law, democracy and fundamental human rights is of essential importance. In addition, the V4 should provide political and technical support to Moldova, mainly in the field of administrative capacity building.

V4 + Russia

Concerning the relation with Russia, the presidency expects the improvement of the EU-Russia relations. The key element of the program is that in the post-PCA situation the V4 would approve a new, comprehensive EU-Russia agreement, which would contain detailed, legally binding elements in the field of energy security.

Policy-oriented priorities related to the EaP

If one intends to map out the concrete policy-related priorities of the Hungarian V4 presidency, the results are mostly in accord with the national priorities analyzed before, though, of course, with the adequate "Visegrad" characteristics of the program. The Hungarian presidency intends to organize a large-scale Eastern Partnership conference and meeting of foreign ministers in Budapest in spring 2010. This event will be the focus point of the actual Hungarian activities directed towards Eastern Europe, both in the wider framework of the EU, and in the Visegrad cooperation. The spring event will follow the trends set by the Western-Balkans conference, which took place in November 2009.

Energy policy

The program devotes more than one page to the question of energy security. The initiatives proposed are in line with the EaP, and in certain areas they go even further. The program ambitions to foster cooperation in order to get the region's energy security interests included into the EU Energy Security and Solidarity Action Plan: 2nd Strategic Energy Review. In general, great attention is paid to ensure cooperation between the Visegrad states in order to reach their joint objectives on various EU forums dealing with energy. Besides, the construction of Central-European interconnectors is strongly supported, which is in accord with the diversification objectives of the EaP. The program argues that the Visegrad countries should support the inclusion of Moldova and Ukraine to the energy-related *acquis communautaire*, in order to ensure stability and transparency in energy business in the whole region. New element is the proposal to build Central-European gas storage facilities in joint venture of the V4 countries. Similar cooperation is encouraged between national electricity markets.

Migration and free movement of people

Along with the EaP, the presidency program also refers to the EU Global Approach to Migration. Hungary intends to continue the Czech initiative of establishing

migration partnership with the eastern and south-eastern neighbours. The program proposes migration data exchange on migration tendencies between the Visegrad countries, concerning particularly the migration originating from Asia.

Technical assistance in administrative capacity building

The program attaches particular importance in assisting the eastern neighbours in capacity building and in improving the performance of the national administrations. The fostering of cross-border cooperation belongs here too, due to its mostly technical nature. Though the EaP itself was not too concrete on these issues, the recently adopted *Vademecum on Financing* document openly declares that national administrations will profit the most from the Eastern Partnership.⁴¹ This approach seems being rather similar to the one of the Hungarian government, e.g. that development cooperation and capacity building assistance should be aimed mostly at governmental structures, and only to a limited extent at the civil society and the NGO sector.

An Additional Way to Reach Objectives: Visegrad Cooperation in EU Presidencies

The above analyzed Hungarian V4 presidency program mentions that in 36 months, three of the four Visegrad countries exercise the EU presidency: the first one was the Czech Republic in the first half of 2009; the second will be Hungary from January to June 2011, and the third one Poland, taking the position right after Hungary. The document envisions that Budapest is going to have a bridging role between the Czech and Polish presidencies. In fact, not much is visible of this bridge-like role, if one puts aside the existence of the Eastern Partnership initiative in general, which was adopted during the Czech presidency, and some migration-related initiatives. However, the direct succession of the Hungarian and Polish presidencies in 2011 offer real chances of meaningful cooperation, in many foreign policy issues related to the Eastern Partnership region. The argument is used also by high-ranking officials from the MFA, for example Gábor Iván, State Secretary for European Union Affairs.⁴²

41 *Vademecum on Financing in the Frame of the Eastern Partnership*. 16 Dec 2009. Available: http://ec.europa.eu/external_relations/eastern/docs/eap_vademecum_14122009_en.pdf Last accessed: 21 Dec 2009.

42 Iván, Gábor: *Stratégiai irányok a spanyol-belga-magyar elnökség programjában és a trió együttműködésének más területein*. [Strategic Directions in the Spanish-Belgian-Hungarian Presidency Program, and in Other Fields of Cooperation of the Trio.] In: *Európai Tükör* [European Mirror.] 2008/11. pp. 84-91.

Without attempting to create a full list, it is worth to enumerate some of the factors, which might pose foreign policy-related challenges in Eastern Europe in 2011:

- Presidential elections in Belarus in Spring 2011
- Possible Azerbaijan-Armenia conflict over Nagorno-Karabakh
- Growing instability in Russian North-Caucasus
- On-going domestic political and economic crisis in Ukraine
- New possible “energy wars” between Russia and its neighbours, affecting also the EU

From the above-listed five, the presidential elections in Belarus will surely take place, so starting to prepare for the coming crisis would be high time. As Hungary, which will exercise the presidency right that time, has neither the resources, nor the field knowledge, nor the contacts for extensively working with non-state actors in Belarus, there would be a clear room for close cooperation with Poland (both bilaterally and in the framework of the EU), enabling Warsaw to directly continue joint initiatives started by Budapest, etc. Such cooperation would also be suitable for strengthening the role of the Visegrad cooperation in Belarus. Some experts say that there are already some informally cooperation initiatives going on between parties of the Polish political right and of the Fidesz in Hungary, however, these are not yet finalized.

In addition to the possible crises listed above, there are some technical, administrative matters related to the EU – Eastern neighbourhood relationship, in which close coordination would be necessary among the Visegrad states, in order to strengthen the role of the V4 in the EU. Some of these issues are:

- Preparing the EU External Action Service for reaching the operational status to 2012, as prescribed in the Treaty of Lisbon.
- All the EU-Ukraine, EU-Moldova and the EU-Georgia Action Plan expire in the end of 2011, thus preparation of the new Action Plans will fall mostly to 2011.

These are also such issues, in which the general interests of the V4 states are clearly overlapping, thus close and coordinated Visegrad cooperation on various EU forums could be of good use.

Domestic policy considerations

All the above mentioned external factors together constitute the context, in which the Eastern Partnership can be interpreted from the Hungarian perspective. However, in addition to the already enumerated ones, domestic political environment also has a role to play. First, no one can ignore the global financial crisis, which has badly impacted Hungary. The situation was further worsened by the domestic economic crisis, altogether resulting in an approx. 6-7% of GDP decrease, growing

unemployment, etc. This obviously had its effect on foreign policy as well, the budget of the MFA has been significantly cut, a number of embassies and consulates have been closed, etc.

Second, the battle of words between the government and opposition parties has become much more intense, as the parliamentary elections of April-May 2010 are approaching. In the field of foreign policy, the debates are not much about EU policies in general, but on certain foreign policy-related issues, in which the government and opposition parties have remarkably different standpoints. The two most important ones are the protection of the Hungarian minorities living abroad, and the relations with Russia. On both topics there are widespread, open debates between the government and opposition, while united stand is visible only in times of serious crises (gas supply disruption in January 2009, the recent law on language use in Slovakia, regulation on minority language education in Ukraine, etc.).

The question of Hungarian minorities living abroad is only partially related to the Eastern Partnership. The Eastern dimension of the question is mostly a bilateral Hungarian-Ukrainian issue, in which Budapest intends to use various international forums as well, if necessary. The relationship to Russia is a more interesting and complex problem. While the ruling Socialist Party government of Gordon Bajnai, and especially of his predecessor's, Ferenc Gyurcsány's maintained remarkably close ties with Russia, the strongest opposition party, Fidesz has constantly kept criticizing the government of "opening the doors for Russian infiltration", "selling the country to Russia", etc.⁴³

Concerning energy policy, Fidesz has been strongly pro-Nabucco, while the Socialist governments have pursued the already described pragmatic, dual policy, supporting (at least tacitly) both the South Stream and Nabucco projects. However, as probably Fidesz will win the April-May 2010 parliamentary elections, a significant change has already become visible in the Russia-policy of the party. In late November Viktor Orbán, Chairman of the Fidesz was invited to St. Petersburg to the congress of the "United Russia" party, where he negotiated with Vladimir Putin.⁴⁴ Fidesz communicated the meeting as a great success story, and in the domestic media Orbán kept stressing the importance of the good relations with Russia. Seemingly Fidesz is already preparing for governmental work, and the sudden change of tone represents the takeover of pragmatist considerations over the earlier populism. If this

43 For example see the interview of Polish Weekly 'Wprost' with Viktor Orbán: *Zadzroszczę Polsce. Rozmowa z Viktorem Orbánem, byłym premierem Węgier*. In: Wprost, 43/2008. Available: <http://www.wprost.pl/ar/141904/Zadzroszczę-Polsce/?l=1348> Last accessed: 4 Dec 2009.

44 *Számunkra normális, hogy Orbán és Putyin találkozik*. [For Us it is Normal that Orbán and Putin Meet]. Interview with Russian Ambassador to Budapest, H.E. Alexandr Tolkach. In: Népszabadság, 12 Dec 2009. Available: http://www.nol.hu/kulfold/20091212-ne_feljenek_moszkvatol Last accessed: 13 Dec 2009.

new, less assertive and more cooperation-oriented Russia-policy of Fidesz will last, no significant change is probable in the Hungarian approach to the Eastern Partnership.

Due to the coming elections attention will mostly be diverted from the last months of the Hungarian V4 Presidency. It is yet unknown, to what extent the subsequent personal and organizational changes in the administrative structures will affect the efficacy and functioning of the governmental structures responsible for foreign policy making. Most experts and analysts agree that the change in power will not result in an earthquake-scenario simply due to the approaching EU Presidency;⁴⁵ however, a definite change of tones might well be expected. Anyways, if the mentioned large Eastern Partnership conference will be successfully organized and conducted in spring 2010, it will surely be a significant step forward, not only concerning the Hungarian interests, awareness and level of knowledge on the Eastern Partnership, but also for the whole Visegrad region.

En lieu of a Conclusion

The neighbourhood policy of Hungary is mostly oriented towards the Western-Balkans, while the eastern neighbourhood enjoys only moderate attention. Concerning the Eastern Partnership region, the Hungarian approach is characterized by its pragmatic, non-ideological nature. Budapest is carefully respecting the Russian sensitivities to a certain extent, is in favour of avoiding confrontation, though of course, the interests of the EU are of primary importance.

Concerning geography, clearly the three Western-NIS states are the prioritized ones; the South Caucasus is practically missing from the Hungarian political agenda. However, from the three western states of the eastern neighbourhood, significant Hungarian activities are conducted only in Ukraine and in Moldova. The Ukraine-related projects are focused mostly on the *Zakarpatya* region, directly bordering Hungary, and populated by – among others – ethnic Hungarians. Thus from the six countries of the eastern neighbourhood, Budapest takes up a policy-maker rule only in Moldova, where the Hungarian political presence is relatively strong and high-level projects are going on.

Concerning policy, the energy security element of the Eastern Partnership initiative is considered being the most important one. It is expected to strengthen the energy security of Hungary in many ways. In short term, via improving the regulatory environment and perhaps contributing to the maintenance works of the pipeline

45 Gergely Romsics – Zsuzsanna Végh: *Managing the Future? Prospects of the 2011 Hungarian EU presidency*. In: *International Issues and Slovak Foreign Policy Affairs*. No. 3. /2009. Research Center of the Slovak Foreign Policy Association. pp. 25-48.

system in the eastern neighbourhood, the security of transit is going to be enhanced. While in the long run, the EaP might well contribute to the diversification of supplies as well.

The Hungarian Visegrad presidency has envisaged a set of objectives being not only in line with the principles of the Eastern Partnership initiative, but in some aspects further developing them. However, the presidency period lasting from July 2009 to June 2010 has been partially overshadowed by the global financial crisis and by the internal hardships of Hungary. Moreover, due to the parliamentary elections, scheduled to take place in April-May 2010, in the first half of 2010 most attention will obviously be turned to domestic policy. Regardless of the outcome of the elections, the general geographic and policy-related priorities of Hungary will not be modified, simply because they are defined by external factors, e.g. by the energy dependence, the minorities living abroad, etc. Thus the pragmatic, moderate nature of Hungarian foreign policy towards Eastern-Europe is not likely to change.

THE EASTERN PARTNERSHIP OF THE EU – MAIN OR SUPPORTING TOOL OF POLISH EASTERN POLICY?

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The Eastern Partnership (EaP) is currently a leading governmental initiative in the sphere of Polish foreign policy. The EaP project is undoubtedly valuable and worthy of support political idea. Therefore it would be harmful for Polish interests if the EaP became a bartering tool in domestic inter-party clashes. Furthermore the EaP should be seen in a proper context and dimension. The real debate about the EaP should be free of a total critique and at the same time should keep proportion to make both decision-makers and public opinion see the EaP as a useful tool for achieving particular and (which should be noted) very limited aims. However the EaP should not be treated as a panacea for all challenges posing in the East, ranging from the war in Georgia to the gas crisis. To find an answer to the question of the real meaning and scope of the EaP initiative, one should start by relating it to Polish interests. The EaP is an instrument used in the realisation of Polish interests, not a goal in itself.

The fundamental objective of Polish foreign policy is to maintain the independence of the state. The Polish perspective, being simultaneously a policy goal, denies Moscow from being a sole influence in the territories to the east of Poland's border. The rest is rather a mean of achieving this objective. Therefore Polish membership in the EU and building a strong position within its structures is a tool not a goal. More-

over strong position is crucial and highly desirable for Poland, and should be occupied actively, however it is neither a goal, nor an action. Using “Polish active position” in the political discourse as a goal of the Polish foreign policy, is an attempt to hide lack of real programme behind a catchy slogan and serve as an excuse for taking up no real action at all.

The principle goal can only be achieved under the circumstances of bringing Ukraine, Belarus, Georgia, Moldova, Azerbaijan and Armenia closer to the West (keeping this peculiar order reflects the importance of neighbouring countries in Polish national security affairs), which means the adoption of the Western systemic changes and leaning towards European and Euro-Atlantic integration, in contrast to integration with Russia (this process could be described as “the occidentalisation programme”⁴⁶). Such an ambitious task requires the mitigation of underdevelopment of these states caused by long lasting Russian/Soviet domination, thus investing considerable financial resources which Poland does not possess (Poland also deals with a similar problem, but on a smaller scale however). Therefore the nature of “the occidentalisation programme” concerning the described region clashes with the imperial ambitions of the Kremlin.

The programme implementation requires prestigious and strong political background which would enable to enhance efforts of modernization and democratization in the mentioned countries, and at the same time would protect those efforts from being destroyed by the Russian military intervention – just like the one we could observe in the summer of 2008 in Georgia.

Military security of “the occidentalisation programme” spread throughout countries of the EaP agenda yet could not be directly supported by the military forces of those countries due to their insufficient potential. One of the solutions used by the post-soviet countries is relying on the USA playing a Russian counterbalance. This fact has been a base of their pro-American attitude, which is unwillingly seen by some influential states and political environments in the EU. The fact that Poland and the Baltic States are regarded as staunch US allies, or as the Russian propaganda declares “as makers of the Washington’s orders”, weakens the capabilities of those states to force through new concepts for Eastern policy throughout EU forums.

This political factor is easy to discern, however it is not the decisive argument for the revision of a pro-Atlantic direction in Polish foreign policy. Unfortunately, there

46 Taking into consideration the historical grievance of the term ‘occidentalisation’ in the context of the cultural traditions of the region in question it is worth stressing that it should be understood only in the sense of the westernisation of the political and economic system of the partner countries and in the sense of their foreign policy strategic political orientation to the West. They should become a part of the West in the sense in which Greece is i.e. without renouncing their cultural heritage and tradition which link them to the Greek-Byzantine culture rather than to the Latin one.

has been a gradual weakening of Polish-American relations since Polish troops withdrew from Iraq, and especially since the fiasco concerning the antimissile shield project in Poland and the Czech Republic. The pro-American character of Polish foreign policy is melting down rapidly since the new government came to power in Poland in 2007, so is the interest of Washington in the Central Europe under its new administration of Barack Obama. The recent declaration of the new Polish-American project launch, based on the implementation of the SM-3 1B rockets planned to be started for 2015, does not alter the situation. Moreover, a gesture made by the USA – a new proposal for Poland in the field of antimissile defence – did not have any psychological impact on Russia as the US Vice President Joe Biden's visit to Poland (20-22 October 2009)⁴⁷, was regarded in Russia as a "comforting visit"⁴⁸.

There was a lack of significant reaction from Washington about the Russian invasion in Georgia. Furthermore an announcement was sent from the Obama administration that the US wishes to reset relations with Russia, hoping that Kremlin will be eager to sign an agreement on strategic nuclear arms control, as well as seeking Russian support in solving problems with the Iranian nuclear program or with the Afghan war. All these political moves have created the impression that the US no longer wants to keep the role of the security guarantor in East-Central Europe.⁴⁹ The shift of the American role in Eastern Europe can be a cause for destabilisation and can undermine independence and territorial integration of countries situated in the region. Could the EU replace the US role of the Post-Cold War as the order stabilising force, or indeed a propagator of Western values and political systems in this part of the world? What is the new role that should be played by the EaP? These are the questions I will attempt to answer.

Since Poland joined the EU, Warsaw has hoped to gain an institutional influence on the shape of the EU Eastern policy. There have already been some encouraging examples to set up other initiatives: in 1995 Spain initiated the Barcelona Process creating Mediterranean dimension of the EU Policy⁵⁰, since 1997 Finland with Sweden

47 More about: *Biden: Nic o was bez was (rozmowa z Piotrem Gilertem)*, „Rzeczpospolita”, nr 247(8453), 21 październik 2009, p. A11; compare: W. Lorenz, P. Gilbert, *Polska bierze nową tarczę*, „Rzeczpospolita”, nr 248(8454), 22 październik 2009, p.A11. A. Cohen, *W Polsce żadnej tarczy nie będzie*, „Rzeczpospolita”, nr 248(8454), 22 październik 2009, p.A17.

48 *Rosyjska prasa: Biden przyjeżdża pocieszyć Polskę*, Interia.pl, (Tuesday, 20 wrzesień 11:32), <http://fakty.interia.pl/raport/tarcza-antyrakietowa/news/rosyjska-prasa-biden-przyjezdza-pocieszyc-polske,1384892>

49 R. Pipes, *Rosja jest teraz dla Obamy najważniejsza*, „Rzeczpospolita”, nr 248(8454), 22 wrzesień 2009, p.A11.

50 More about: *The Euro-Mediterranean Partnership*, European Commission, External Relations, Euro-med, http://ec.europa.eu/external_relations/euromed/index_en.htm and: G. Bernatowicz, *Polityka śródziemnomorska Unii Europejskiej*, „Sprawy Międzynarodowe”, nr 4 (XLVIII), październik-grudzień 1995, pp.63–80.

have been building the Northern Dimension⁵¹. In 2007 the European Commission started to promote the Black Sea Synergy⁵². Poland has not been invited to participate in this initiative; however it has posed a challenge for the Polish government to avoid situation when relations EU-Ukraine, – Moldova, – Georgia etc. would be decided without Polish participation. On the other hand, this initiative required finding a place in the EU policy towards Belarus, which is included neither in the Northern Dimension, nor in the Black Sea Synergy programmes.

During the pre-accession period (at the turn of 2002 and 2003) Poland launched the first initiative for the creation of an Eastern Dimension in EU relations⁵³. At that time it ended in failure. The second attempt was made in 2008 and resulted in the joint Polish-Swedish initiative of the Eastern Partnership.

Therefore what role within the Polish occidental project targeted to closer and further Polish Eastern neighbours, should be taken by the EU and how the role of the EaP should be shaped within it? How much space does this role leave for the EaP initiative pioneered by Poland and Sweden? What were the circumstances of launching the EaP? Who supported the EaP and why? What is its nature and essence? What is its “added value” in the context of already existing solutions? What are the chances for activating EU Eastern Policy using the EaP as a tool and directing it in favour of Polish interests? Which countries are eager to support the EaP and on what scale? What partial goals approaching us to the strategic goal can be achieved by the use of the EaP? What are its advantages and weaknesses? Should we take them into account while thinking about the Polish influence on its Eastern neighbours? Should we treat them as determinants, or as supporting factors in meeting the challenges standing in front of us? What kind of challenges can or cannot be dealt with using the EaP? What short-term goals should Poland set within the EaP construction?

Circumstances surrounding the creation of the Eastern Partnership

The announcement of the creation of the Union for the Mediterranean by the President of France, Nicolas Sarkozy (13 August 2008)⁵⁴ created a good climate for

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- 51 More about: P. Żurawski vel Grajewski, *Polityka Unii Europejskiej wobec Rosji a interesy Polski 1991-2004*, Kraków-Warszawa 2008, pp. 592-646.
 - 52 More about: *Black Sea Synergy*, European Commission, External Relations, http://ec.europa.eu/external_relations/blacksea/index_en.htm
 - 53 More about: P. Żurawski vel Grajewski, *Eastern Dimension as and Aspect of Common Foreign and Security Policy Execution*, [in:] “Eastern Dimension of the European Union”, ed. by Monika Zamarlik, ISS, Kraków 2004, pp.67-89..
 - 54 *Barcelona Process: Union for the Mediterranean*, Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament and the Council Brussels, 20/05/08 COM(2008) 319 (Final), pp.1-13.

the regionalisation of European Neighbourhood Policy – ENP. Since its creation, the ENP has been criticised for unifying all EU neighbourhood countries within one scheme. Undertaking similar activities for the East, as are used with the EU partners from the Mediterranean Basin, seemed to be a natural decision. The Sarkozy's initiative has made any criticism of the EaP by the influential Mediterranean lobby less probable since less credible especially if launched by those who had just created such a precedent of the regionalisation of the ENP. On the other hand the French initiative has been treated by the Germans with reserve. Germany is the leading donor to the EU budget and the only big country of the "old" EU the main priorities of which are oriented rather towards the East than towards the South of the continent. In such favourable conditions, the Polish-Swedish initiative could have relied on German support as they are interested in slowing down French ambitions that are based on drawing attention and attempting to direct the majority of EU funds to the Mediterranean basin i.e. to the areas outside of the German scope. Such an essential conclusion leads us to the supposition that German support for the EaP initiatives has more instrumental than strategic meaning. Motivation is a will for building a counterbalance to the French initiative, yet not for the real intention to open the EU towards the East. Therefore, it should not lead to the conclusion that Berlin is politically and financially ready to be active within the occidental programme integrating Ukraine, Belarus, Moldova, Georgia, Armenia, and Azerbaijan with Western structures. This is worthy of note and as has already been shown; the programme in its nature is contradictory to the Russian imperialistic aspirations, which are politically tolerated by the powers-that-be resting on the Spree river. Thus, Germany will support the EaP in order to limit financial resources transferred to the South, but not to develop any perspective for the future accession of Ukraine to the EU.

When the EaP was accepted at the first EU-EaP countries summit in Prague (7 May 2009), the president of France, along with the prime ministers of Great Britain, Italy and Spain, were absent at the meeting. The only top-level representative of a large EU member state was Germany's chancellor, Angela Merkel. The biggest concern of the German representatives, supported by the Dutch, was that the invited neighbourhood countries were not called "European partners" (this could have been interpreted as approving their ambitions concerning future membership in the EU) but as the Eastern-European partners. Additionally, this happened according to German preferences⁵⁵. This fact should not comprise a delusion, however, as to what extent Germany can support projects promoted by Warsaw in the EU's policy towards the East.

55 *Joint Declaration of the Prague Eastern Partnership Summit Prague, 7 May 2009*, Council of the European Union, Brussels, 7 May 2009, 8435/09 (Presse 78), p.5.

The other issue worth examining is that the EaP has come into power at the time of the global financial crisis, which has been much more painful for Russia and for the Commonwealth of Independent States, than for Poland and the rest of the EU. As a result, the Russian economy has lost its capability to attract EaP countries which are looking for solution to overcome the economic collapse in the EU. The EU has suffered less than Russia during the crisis. This situation might lead to the reinforcement of the reorientation of the Eastern economies towards the EU.

The circumstances of the EaP's birth have shown the positive economic context that accompanied the naissance of the initiative still a merely declarative support of the main EU countries for the EaP initiative. The conclusion is the project unfortunately, has small political potential regardless promising trends in the regional economy.

Allies

In the above described example, the Polish-Swedish initiative can be strongly supported by its main promoters and a group consisted of the three Baltic States, the Scandinavian states and the Czech Republic. There is also a chance in the evolution of the Hungarian politics after upcoming elections, however its traditional scope on the national minority issue around the Trianon borders, do not show promising signs for the future cooperation with its neighbours. The minority problems among Slovakia, Hungary and Romania can be used by Russian agents to paralyse cooperation in the region (the current assignment of the Polish government is to hinder Russia from realising this scenario in relation to our Eastern neighbours).

Keeping the cabinet of the Slovak Prime Minister Robert Fico does not allow counting on Slovakian support for the EaP strategic goals. However, this does not exclude pragmatic cooperation in the border regime issues. Maybe the Slovakian attitude towards Russia can change after the recent Russian "gas war" with Ukraine. The question is to what extent and for how long can this situation remain?

One of the challenges standing in front of the Polish government is to gain Romania as a closer cooperation partner. For now, Romania in the field of the EU Eastern policy, especially within the Black Sea Synergy, acts as a Polish competitor. Therefore, it would be natural to accept the Romanian role in the realm of Moldovan projects within the EaP (conditioned to the Polish disagreement about the establishment of "the second Kaliningrad Oblast" in Transnistria – a pro-Russian self-proclaimed soviet-style state that should not be turned into a next exclave of the Russian Federation).

In the context of the Black Sea region, it is important to define the right role for Turkey within the EaP. Ankara cannot be treated by the Polish government as one of the EU's neighbourhood countries, but as an approved candidate. Poland's aim should be to convince Turkey that they have an important role in influencing the future of the EaP

countries as a Polish, not a Russian, ally. Poland should also convince Turkey that the EaP is a useful tool to scrap the Franco-German project of placing Turkey in a position of an eternal neighbour which cooperates with the EU merely on the ground of the exclusion from the institutional process of co-decision (everything but decisions rule)⁵⁶.

It is probable that Great Britain, as one of the “old” EU Member States, would support the EaP. Especially since the Alexander Litvinenko murder, Great Britain has been conducting more realistic policy towards Russia than the other European states, and has been in favour of the geographic enlargement of the EU.

The nature of the project

The EaP in its nature concerns a specific development initiative, even extended outside the current frames of the European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP) cooperation programme with Belarus, Ukraine, Moldova, Georgia, Armenia and Azerbaijan. The six mentioned countries are the Eastern neighbours of the countries that joined the EU in 2004 and 2007 and were selected from the countries covered by the ENP. The countries remaining within the EaP are offered:

1. Association Agreement between a given partner country and the EU.
2. Establishment of a deep and comprehensive free trade area – DCFTA between the EU and particular countries covered by the programme
3. Cooperation enhancement in the field of common borders control, aiming at setting up a visa-free regime for both sides in a long term perspective, but in a short term - liberalisation of the visa systems.
4. Cooperation in the field of energy security.
5. The EU support in the economic and social development of the partner countries.

Cooperation between the EU and a particular country should be individualised and should be developed within four thematic platforms:

1. Democracy, good governance and stability,
2. Economic integration and convergence with EU policies,
3. Energy security,
4. Interpersonal relations.

According to the EC communication ‘the objectives of the EaP may also be advanced through (...) flagship initiatives’: Integrated Border Management Programme; an

56 The Kurdish issue, aggravated by the Iraqi war, has caused a small but noticeable political shift of Turkey from the USA towards Iran and Russia. The extended accession negotiations repel the nation of seventy million people from the EU. This process is not in favour to the Polish interests. Turkey is also a strategic partner concerning the energy resources, its influence in Azerbaijan and Turan countries of the Central Asia and it is also a transit country for the Nabucco gas pipeline.

SME facility; promotion of regional electricity markets; energy efficiency and renewable energy sources; development of the Southern energy corridor; and cooperation on prevention of, preparation for, and response to natural and man-made disasters.

Structural dialogue planned as an operational instrument of the programme is organised at four levels: the EaP summits (meetings of Heads of State or Government) should be held every two years; annual spring meetings of Ministers of Foreign Affairs from the EU and the partner countries attached to the GAERC; twice a year – meetings of senior officials working on the bases of the four platforms mentioned above; the four level will be constructed on the base of panels supporting the work of the thematic platforms. Their formats and participants will be determined according to the need.

The inter-parliamentary dialogue structure for EaP – EURO-NEST (*EU-Neighbourhood East Parliamentary Assembly*) – has been created too. It has been set in motion on the initiative of a group of the EPP-ED MEPs and it consists of the MEPs and the MPs from the partner countries – the latest delegated by their national parliaments as well as with the representatives of Belarusian democratic opposition⁵⁷. (The EU does not recognise the legality of the Belarusian “parliament” the members of which in fact have been appointed and not elected).

The third states may participate in the initiative on the *case by case* principle and if there is agreement that common interests in a topic, geographical proximity or existing economic links would amount to effective development of the cooperation.

A total sum of €450 million was allocated in 2008 for financing of the entire cooperation with the “six” EaP countries within the framework of the European Neighbourhood Policy. However this amount is expected to rise every year to eventually reach a total of €785 million in 2013. In December 2009 when the countries had been already included into the EaP the European Commission decided to grant additional sum of €600 mln exclusively for EaP for the years 2010-2013⁵⁸.

Table 1. Indicative breakdown of EaP financing⁵⁹

Year	2010	2011	2012	2013	Total
euro (mln)	85	110	175	230	600

57 J. Popielawska, *W jakim towarzystwie? Partnerstwo Wschodnie na tle innych inicjatyw UE na wschodzie*, „Analizy Natolińskie”, nr 5(37)2009, p.7.

58 *Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament and the Council*, Eastern Partnership, Brussels, 3.12.2008 COM(2008) 823 final, <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=CELEX:52008DC0823:EN:NOT>

59 *Vademecum on Financing in the Frame of the Eastern Partnership*, European Commission External Relations Directorate General Directorate European Neighbourhood Policy, 16 December 2009, p.6. http://ec.europa.eu/external_relations/eastern/docs/eap_vademecum_14122009_en.pdf

Advantages

The geographic scope of the project reflects Polish priorities. Furthermore, the reservation about Belarus seems to be natural (cooperation on the expert and technical level until political conditions will be changed – meaning: until the collapse of the dictatorial regime there).

The conditionality rule understood as the – diversification of the EU policy towards particular countries, determined by their ambitions and expressed will to cooperate, follows through the Polish postulate that was already included in the Eastern Dimension project in 2003. The project promotes Ukraine as the most advanced state in the field of the EU approach, and strongly declares its European ambitions, which also correspond to Polish interests. However, there is a need to abolish the conditionality rule for Belarus, because sustaining this *modus operandi* would provide Lukashenka with major initiative to improve relations with Brussels or to increase isolation of his fellow-citizens from “a negative influence of the West”.

The EaP was supported not only by Poland but also by neutral Sweden, which apart from an administrative benefits (the Swedish have more experience in operating in the EU institutions and comparing to Poland, a more developed public administration), also emphasises the European character of the EaP initiative which facilitates bringing it to the top of the agenda within EU institutions. This fact repeals eventual Scandinavian concerns over competitiveness between the EaP and the Northern Dimension of the EU. The Czech Presidency interest in the EaP, as well as the fact that in the second half of 2009 the EU leadership was taken over by Sweden, has created an opportunity to promote the development of the EaP project as a leading priority of the Presidency throughout the year. The Czechs lead the first EaP summit in Prague, however it was held at the time of the government crisis. Unfortunately, Stockholm has not undertaken any important activities to support the process of the EaP implementation, despite the fact that Sweden was one of the EaP's co-authors.

A perspective of a visa-free regime between the EU and the EaP countries is the most important and the most concrete offer within the EaP. Polish accession to the EU implied the introduction of visa requirements for Poland's Eastern neighbours. It became an expensive barrier (the visa costs €35 for Ukrainians and €60 for Belarusians) and due to this complicated procedures, conditions of travel for Belarus and Ukraine citizens to Poland deteriorated. This fact was contradictory to the Polish political interests that require the opening, not closing, for interpersonal contacts with the Eastern neighbours. Poland cannot accept the situation when it is more difficult to travel to the EU for citizens of the EaP countries, than for the Russian citizens, especially in the light of the Russian activities of granting Russian citizenship to Ossetians, Abkhazians and Armenians in Georgia and Crimeans in Ukraine. The EU has adopted

a road map concerning a visa-free regime for Bosnia-Herzegovina⁶⁰ which is a good prognosis and a precedent and can be used by Poland to force analogical solutions within the EaP.

The EaP allows countries outside the EU to take part in the programme which opens possibility for cooperation with Turkey, and in the energy context even with Kazakhstan and Turkmenistan. Unfortunately, due to low financial resources the EaP cannot be a tool for the realisation of energy investments, but can be politically useful for promoting them. Despite the fact that the EU bureaucracy is slow and unwilling to take risks, an attempt should be made to add an energy dimension to the EaP, turning to the Black-Sea-Caspian direction and including the already mentioned states. The sooner such an energy dimension would be introduced the better. Energy security is a top issue on the agenda, especially due to the positive approach to the EaP of the Czech and Swedish Presidencies, and actual psychological consequences of the “gas war”. Such a situation has already been partially used. In March 2009, the EU committed itself to co-finance the modernisation of the Ukrainian gas transit network and to support installation of gas meters on the Ukraine-Russia border. Polish diplomacy should have ensured the implementation of these decisions because such favourable conditions would no longer repeat again. Unfortunately that task apparently has not been fulfilled by the Polish government. No evidence of the Polish diplomatic activity to implement the project are known to the public and the EU resigned from gas meters installation by autumn 2009 and decided to cover the costs of the modernisation of the Ukrainian gas transit network from the EaP budget which is “mission impossible” considering the available money and therefore should be treated as just the wording process of giving up the project.

Disadvantages

According to Polish plans, the project aims to divide the ENP countries into the *European neighbours* and the *neighbours of Europe* and to remain open for the former group with any opportunities concerning the lead to the final stage of the EU integration. However, this dichotomy has not been presented in any official EU document. Moreover, according to Benita Ferrero-Waldner, the former EU commissioner responsible for External Relations and European Neighbourhood Policy – Eastern and Southern dimension of the ENP, should be treated equally, which in practice weakened a positive interpretation of the EaP made by Radosław Sikorski, the Polish

60 Commission launches dialogue with Bosnia and Herzegovina on visa free travel, Brussels, 26 May 2008, IP/08/792, Europa Press Released Rapid, <http://europa.eu/rapid/pressReleasesAction.do?reference=IP/08/792&format=HTML&aged=0&language=EN&guiLanguage=en>

Minister of Foreign Affairs. This negative assessment was proved by decisions made under German pressure at the Prague summit.

The EaP financial resources, compared to its great number of tasks, are far too low. To compare, Poland within the Phare programme (Poland and Hungary: Assistance for Restructuring their Economies) received about €3,9 billion⁶¹, which is about €300 million yearly, while financial resources for the six countries of the EaP are allocated at the level of between €450 million – €785 million *per annum* in the years 2008-2013 within the overall budget of the ENP plus extra €600 mln allocated by the EC exclusively for the EaP. There will be as well €700 mln available for the EaP initiatives within the *Neighbourhood Investment Facility* budget, still that money are available for all the countries covered by the ENP and the EaP partners will have to compete for them with the Mediterranean neighbours of Europe⁶². Therefore, for those reasons, the scale of the EU financial support for the EaP countries will not have a significant impact on “the occidentalisation programme”. Especially, supposing that the UE money will be allocated on the EU priorities (“the flagship initiatives”), rather than on the partnership countries’ objectives, i.e. on the development of border infrastructure enabling an effective fight against illegal immigration to the EU, or for environmental purposes. Obviously, this is not a step towards any political rapprochement of these countries to the West. That situation will not change in the future and Poland does not have the necessary tools for correcting this defect.

It results from the main problem of the EU dimension of the Polish Eastern policy, which currently is based on a rule: “We (Poland) have an idea, and you (net payers to the EU budget) should pay for its implementation”. This attitude is a consequence of a relatively weak economic potential and nature of Polish – European policy. The attitude reduces capability to force through Polish political ideas on the EU agenda. This rule cannot be changed within the next 15-20 years and it cannot be replaced by a contrary rule: “We have an idea and furthermore, we declare remarkable participation in financing it”. At the moment, the described disadvantage of the EaP is difficult to overcome.

The idea of the establishment of a *deep and comprehensive free trade area* (DCFTA) does not have an “added value” for the majority of the invited to the EaP countries. This proposal was included in the Partnership and Cooperation Agreement which was signed in the 1990s. The problem is to carry out the project implementation – not the political decision on its adoption. The EaP does not include any of the new instruments of solving it.

61 PHARE – the Chancellery of the Prime Minister, <http://www.dsc.kprm.gov.pl/strona.php?id=48&id2=23>

62 J. Popielawska, *op.cit.*, p.8.

The importance of the declaration concerning the EU support for integration of Ukraine and Moldova with the UCTE (*Union for the Co-ordination of the Transmission of Electricity*) and help with implementation of infrastructural projects concerning energy supplies and transit system diversification is contested due to the small financial scale of such an ambitious programme. In January 2009 the Russian-Ukrainian “gas war” showed the EU lack of interest in the solution of Ukraine’s energy security problem despite the fact the country was covered by the EaP. (On the other side since March 2009, Brussels has been interested in defending Ukrainian gas transit infrastructure from its takeover, resulting from “debts” increased due to excessive price dictated by Gasprom)

The goals of the EaP, as they have been declared, are beneath the ambitions of Ukraine that wants to have a clear perspective for the future accession of countries that will fulfil the appropriate criteria⁶³.

It is an unrealistic assumption to implement the EaP, simultaneously with the EU partnership with Russia⁶⁴. However, due to political correctness such a statement can be treated as inevitable. Still, it can be used by the “Russian friends club” (France, Germany, Italy, Greece, Cyprus, Slovakia, and Bulgaria⁶⁵) to block initiatives which are not in favour of Russia.

A slow pace of a structural dialogue with the EaP partner countries implies its low effectiveness. The EU-EaP countries summits are held less frequently (once every two years) than the EU-Russia summits (twice a year – once for each presidency). This shows a huge disproportion of frequency resulting in rather ceremonial than working character of the EaP summits. Therefore, Polish and Swedish or any of the Baltic States’s presidencies might come across obstacles and be unable to activate the EaP programme. Keeping in mind the presidential character of political systems in the majority of the EaP countries, the already accepted rule seems to be astonishing.

63 The Ukrainian government declaration concerning the EaP states: “We believe that the initiative of the ‘Eastern partnership’ should envisage a clear EU membership perspective to those European neighbours of the EU who can demonstrate seriousness of their European ambitions through concrete actions and tangible achievements.” *Statement of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Ukraine Regarding the Development of the Eastern Dimension of the European Union Foreign Policy*, May 26, 2008, <http://www.mfa.gov.ua/eu/en/news/detail/13105.htm>

64 In the European Commission’s statement is written: “The Eastern Partnership will be pursued in parallel with the EU’s strategic partnership with Russia”. *Eastern Partnership, Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament and the Council*, {SEC(2008) 2974}. Brussels, 3.12.2008, COM(2008) 823 final

65 Cutting off (in January 2009) gas supplies to Slovakia and Bulgaria can change pro-Russian policies of these countries. In recent years they acted in accordance with the interests of Moscow. After the forthcoming elections probably also Hungary will leave “the Russian club”.

There is a disproportion between EU expectations addressed to the EaP countries (adoption of the EU economic and political regulations) and the EU readiness to demonstrate the financial and political support for reforms in those states.

Conclusions

The Eastern Partnership initiative is a programme dedicated to a long-term effect of the EU countries of its Eastern neighbourhood with minimum use of financial resources and political incentive (no clear perspective for these countries future accession to the EU). This practice does not result from mistakes made by the Polish government at the planning stage of the initiative, but from the EU weaknesses itself. Brussels is unable to accept real political and financial commitments indispensable to meet the challenges that emerge in the East. Therefore the EaP displays a major weakness, playing the role of the main tool for the activities targeted to the Eastern countries. Consequently it cannot be treated as a principal instrument of the occidentalisation of the region in question.

In the light of such conditions, Poland should concentrate on:

1. Using the EaP in forcing through a maximal liberalisation of visa-free regime, leading to visa abolishment for the partnership countries, especially for Ukraine (due to its importance), Belarus (due to a need for breaking an isolation of its citizens from the Western influence) and Georgia (due to the action of granting Russian citizenship not only in South Ossetia and Abkhazia, but also in Javakheti, settled by Armenians, representing the local majority).
2. Making the EaP a political forum for discussion on the energy security of the region (in spite of the economic weakness of the initiative) and a tool to promote the idea of solving energy problems of the EU in cooperation with the EaP countries.
3. Promoting participation of the local youth and scientists in the EU education programmes (Socrates-Erasmus).
4. Directing EU funds for reconstruction and conservation of the European cultural heritage monuments in the EaP countries.
5. Analyzing the possibility of using the EaP programme (in the context of deterioration of the Russian economy) for strengthening economic relations between Poland and the EaP countries. This task should be the main priority for the government economic experts, in order to be ready for implementation during the Polish Presidency in 2011.

In contrast, the EaP programme cannot be used as tool helping to oppose the Russian military pressure directed on Georgia, or on any other partner country. Neither within the EaP, nor within any other activity, the EU cannot replace the importance of the USA – the hard power in the region. The slogan concerning work in-

tensification within the EaP, which has been repeated since August 2008, however in the light of Russian invasion on Georgia, it turns out to be a misunderstanding. There have not been constructed EaP mechanisms that are specifically built to face similar challenges. A military crisis cannot be solved by introduction of political and economic cooperation programmes, because their results cannot be demonstrated at the time of crisis, but rather in a long term perspective. Moreover, the EaP will not become the leading tool of energy security promotion in the region. As it requires very expensive investments in infrastructure, it cannot be financed from the already planned budget.

The Eastern Partnership in the current shape cannot be treated as the main tool of Polish Eastern policy. This tool is useful, yet insufficient. Therefore, it should be developed in accordance with the fact that NATO's Partnership for Peace was built as a substitute offer which enabled to avoid full NATO membership of the Central European countries. However, due to Polish diplomacy efforts and the other countries from the region, the Partnership for Peace was transformed into a path towards joining NATO, opened for countries which wanted to follow it. A similar evolution of the EaP would be much more difficult to carry out, but such a scenario has to be taken into account. The current shape of the EaP has been formed for a long term perspective. Thus, Polish incentives for bringing its Eastern neighbours closer to the West, which is being demonstrated on the EU forum, are important but not decisive. In order to make the considerable political shift of the EaP countries towards the West, Poland should gain the active support of the EaP countries, countries from the region (Baltic States, the Czech Republic, Romania, and Turkey) and in Washington (unfortunately according to the reduced possibilities that are offered by the new Barack Obama's Presidential Administration). In the EU arena, Poland should treat the EaP as a platform for political consolidation of the EaP countries. Consolidation, once achieved, could be used in other fields of the EU policy, also in the foreign one. The EaP development should not be a Polish excuse to avoid independent undertakings performed with the Eastern neighbours. Such activities based on bilateral relations or on regional coalitions – i.e. the Georgia crisis case – have been the most important instruments of the Polish influence on the region.

THE EU'S EASTERN POLICY AND THE STRATEGY OF THE VISEGRAD GROUP

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There are at least three main reasons why the EU's Eastern Policy, especially its new tool – the Eastern Partnership (EaP), plays an important role in the context of strategic directions of the Visegrad Group (V4).

Firstly, the Eastern dimension of the EU's policy, can be a "lever of subjectivity" of our region. This is connected with two important processes occurring in the European system: 1. forming internal hierarchy between the EU Member States, which is a natural consequence of constant accessions and 2. process of "externalization of the EU's policies", which is a tool of influence on the EU's international environment.

The EU Member States' hierarchy can evolve into different variants – to simplify this issue, one can point out only extreme issues related to the V4 interests. The hierarchy can follow unfavorable formula of "centers of integration", which would mean that the real power and influence of the Community's political processes will be focused on a limited group of the most important players. They will play a role of "distributors of integration" and according to their interests they would be able to include or exclude weaker states from deepening of the integration process. This variant can be an important argument for abandonment of solidarity mechanisms of the EU's policies, and for establishment of internal competitiveness system. It would also sentence mostly weaker countries to periphery. Such states due to their small size, relative poverty and secondary formal power (expressed by number of votes in the Council) have small political potential, which does not guarantee them involvement in the European compromises. Consequently such situation like tsunami, would wash off from the European policy, non-egoistic agreements like i.e. the Visegrad Group, and consequently would also undermine its sense of existence in its current shape. On the other hand, there is also more positive approach towards the internal hierarchy, defined as – "functional regionalization" of the EU. This idea identifies particu-

lar kind of political specialization of European macroregions composed of countries characterized by their competences, interests, and tools of influence; moreover, such idea has already been used i.e. while establishing personal compromises concerning nominations for the most important positions in the EU's institutions in which Member States try to find geographical and political balance. In the far-reaching context one can consider that some factors of this idea would be institutionalized by balancing voting weight in the Council, positions of important Commissioners, positions in the External Service or number of seats in the European Parliament – allocated not for one country but for regional groups of countries. Such variant would be an opportunity for the V4 countries to gather within one group and jointly reinforce their own potential. Both, in the first – negative and in the second – positive variant, the EaP within the EU's Eastern Policy can play an important role of “bargaining counter”, which can be used while competing for political position, or as an argument for subjectivity of regional integration. This issue is related to the phenomenon of externalization of the EU's policies, which from a perspective of subjectivity is an important factor determining evolution of the European policy, resulting from global strategy for locating EU in the world order. The phenomenon concerns gradual “spillover” of the European regulatory regime, which influences both, direct EU's environment and geographically chosen, global policy issues. The first process is supported by establishment, within the EU's Neighbourhood Policy, tight partnerships, activities of the European Economic Area, or finally, strategy for buffering path of the partner countries to the EU membership, based on offering other forms of cooperation with the EU. These forms extend from three-element scheme: a third country – an associated country – a membership country. Union for the Mediterranean, the Black Sea Synergy or the current shape of the EaP (in long-term approach, it should not be satisfactory, however it will be discussed later) – are good examples. At the same time, the EU develops system of agreements on partnership and cooperation with key partners who have different perspectives for accession, and tries to transfer to the third countries (which are preparing to the EU accession) standards and the Community's requirements, long before these countries would be official EU Members. Such method of arranging the external environment of the EU can be effective, because it allows to introduce Community's regulations without sharing resources – the natural consequence of joining the system (part of costs are transferred into a candidate country). On the other hand, if externalization is not well planned, and is developed according to internal interests within the European bureaucracy or between EU Member States, it would be very energy-consuming and would cause an adverse effect – transfer unimportant, very specific regulations which do not support real approach to the UE integration and is not an answer for real accession challenges. Due to the externalization phenomenon of the EU's policies, the V4 countries should be

capable to join their interests within common mechanisms, in order to include in the EU's component a package of our interests targeted to a particular neighbourhood country. Such strategy is conducted by the vast majority of the EU's countries and targeted to regions of their special interests.

Secondly, the EU's Eastern Policy and the EaP within its framework, are important from a perspective of institutional system, which is placed in the EU's political system, both, within its personal and structural dimension. The personal dimension includes fulfilled by a Pole function of the EP President and by a Czech – Commissioner for Enlargement and European Neighbourhood Policy. The structural dimension includes a fact that in 2011, the Presidency of the EU will be held by the two Visegrad countries: Hungary and Poland. Such accumulation means, that 2011 should be a decisive year for our neighbours, as they will conduct their talks with the EU institutions represented by partners from the Central European states –the EP President, the Commissioner and the Council representatives. At the same time, it is a great challenge for the V4 countries, because such chance will happen once for many years. Therefore, the Visegrad's strategy not only should be well organized, but also bearing in mind heritage of the Czech and Swedish Presidencies, we should do everything we can, to raise the EaP to a special level, which will provide the EaP countries with an accession perspective.

Particular important role can be assigned to the Polish Presidency of the EU. It is explained by the fact that Poland, within the Presidency trio, will play a role of a "big country", meaning that Poland should be a natural connector between an informal group of main players of the EU ("Big Six" – Germany, France, Great Britain, Italy, Spain, and Poland) and a collective Presidency consisted of three states. One should also hope, that in 2011, the political power of the Polish Presidency and the status of our country, will be strong enough to become a real and probable dominant pole for setting activities within external relations, especially in the context of crucial agreements with the new EU's political figures – President of the European Council and the High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy.

In the field of pragmatic approach, the key element, influencing effectiveness of the EaP promotion during the Polish and Hungarian Presidencies, will be the already shaped practice of functioning of these two new institutions. The question is whether they will remain subordinated to political will accepted by the Member States and will respect the role of a Presidency country, which has an important voice in a debate concerning directions of the EU's external relations and representation of the EU's interests on an international scale, or the question can be the other way round – the practice will show that when a country holding a Presidency of the EU is weak or passive, its role in these EU's policies will be marginal and the power will be transferred to supranational level (informally led by the stron-

gest players). Furthermore, it will be important, how relations within the European Commission, between the High Representative (as Vice-President of the EC) and the Commissioner of Enlargement and European Neighbourhood Policy (this position will be taken by Czech), which has much lower positions in the Commission's structure, will be shaped.

Despite the fact that the personal structure seems to be promising, it does not guarantee success neither a major breakthrough in the Eastern Partnership, in the next two years. There are a few crucial factors: firstly, courageous actions and determination of Poland and Hungary to build their status in the EU and in formal and informal network influence, secondly to obtain important positions in the European External Action Service (Poland and the other Visegrad countries should effectively apply for positions of the "EU's ambassadors" in the EaP countries, because without such actions the whole project will be marginalized) and political will to establish, as the 2011 political priority, an open path to the EU's accession for the EaP countries, and a natural development of the Partnership idea. However such will has not been made and softening of the Presidency content by the Polish government, which has been already done, can be worried.

Thirdly, the Eastern Policy and the EaP are important tests for a strategic dimension of the Visegrad Group. Mutual and loyal attitude towards the EaP as the V4's political priority, can be treated not only as a crucial condition for the Visegrad's effectiveness, but also as a step forward political maturity, close relations, and ability to develop offensive position within the EU policy. Thus the V4 should not be seen as a "coalition of insolvents", who focus on blocking expensive projects like climate policy, forced by the wealthiest EU countries.

At the same time one should bear in mind numerous conditions, which can influence possibility to realize assumed by the EaP goals.

First of all, one should bear in mind that the Eastern Partnership is not a project which is commonly and equally supported by all EU countries. Analyzing the EaP from a perspective of the Eastern Policy and the Visegrad's, but not only Polish, policy (assuming full loyalty towards the EaP within the V4), one can divide EU countries into three categories: opposing, neutral, and supportive. The first category consists of those states whose geographic preferences are located in other regions, and believe that setting new priorities of the external policy means undermining current goals, or those states which prefer "UE-Russia relations first" approach – as a factor determining the EU's Eastern Policy. The second group consist of states which due to their small international potential, do not have their own strategic preferences or see no obstacles to develop new direction of the EU's policies. The third group can be named as supportive group, and consists of countries which agree that the EaP realizes also their interests. We will focus on countries holding 2009-2011 Presidencies, rather

than analyze policies of all EU Member States. According to the already described categorization, the division would look as follows:

Opponents	Neutral	Allies
Spain Cyprus	Belgium Denmark	Czech Sweden Hungary Poland

According to a draft characteristic describing environment of our activities, it is evident, that there is a strong potential for development of the coherent Eastern Policy of the EU, however certain conditions should be fulfilled earlier.

Before we will identify the mentioned conditions, it should be explained that particularly important and decisive role, is played by Hungary. This country has unclear goals of its foreign policy related not to the EU's policy i.e. towards Ukraine, but rather to the Hungarian attitude towards this relation in the context of Russian and inter-EU neighbourhood relations between Hungary and Slovakia. If Russia perceives UE-Ukraine approach unfavorably, undoubtedly it will try to undermine this process, especially in the EU countries which are open for such arguments. It seems that Hungary, under the current rule, is one of such countries. If the Hungarian policy supports Ukraine and the EaP, and treats it as a potential for development of the whole region, as well as an improvement in relations with Slovakia (this would enable to introduce strategic dimension of the V4), then Hungary will become an important player in this project.

The second condition concerns the quality of the Visegrad Group. The V4 is in a phase of looking for its new identity and a role in the European policy, thus it needs to find a new "fuel" to conduct these activities. Undoubtedly, joint setting up priorities of the EU's Eastern Policy, would be for the V4, a natural field of specialization. However such situation is possible only under condition of internal – V4 harmony and breaking current impossibility caused by unequal potential of countries, lack of engagement of some countries, internal clashes with bilateral relations, and relative weakness of the V4 within the EU. The last argument results from the fact that the V4 was established by so called new Member States, which subjectivity within the EU policies, mostly is not in line with interests of the biggest EU's countries. Some of the V4 countries realize policy according to a saying "our home aside". If the V4 was able to overcome internal limitations and actively take part in the EU's forum, it would have a chance to play an important role within it. However, previously, the V4 should precise its goals in the Eastern policy and answer a fundamental question "who is the main, strategic partner in the East – Russia or Ukraine?"

As it follows from the above, draft analysis, introduction of the extended Eastern Policy based on the EaP, requires great skills in behaving in the EU's reality, playing different pianos, and developing "small steps" strategy, which will enable to convince other key players, and consequently reach critical mass – number and strength of influence enabling to formulate strategy in line with our interests, which should be approved as a part of common interests.

Bearing in mind political and institutional conditions of the introduction of the Eastern dimension, it is worth to point out two main tensions concerning goals which should be achieved by the Eastern policy.

These two, unanswered, fundamental questions regard: firstly, do we build proposition for structural cooperation (based on multilateral mechanisms), or do we promote individual programs for EU approach?; secondly, should cooperation have "light" character meaning that it will concern practical issues of the EU's policies, or should it have strategic character leading to the EU's accession?

		Form of cooperation	
		Structural multilateral	Individual
Principle of cooperation	Practical policies	Type A: the Black Sea Synergy	Type C: cooperation with former colonies
	Strategic policies	Type B: the Eastern Partnership?	Type D: Agreements on stabilization and cooperation in the Balkan region

As we can see, there are four possible ways of cooperation with the EU's Eastern partners.

The first variant (type A) has multilateral and practical character. It means that we creates proposition for cooperation within one EU's policy targeted to a group of countries, and every interested country should submit accession proposal. At the same time, cooperation will include particular undertakings concerning EU's sectoral policies i.e. environmental policy, transport networks, cultural exchange, joint investment projects, free trade etc. This type of political model, does not lead to any strategic consequences, but rather is used by the EU to stabilize its environment, transfer Member States interests to their direct neighbourhood area, guarantee to share responsibility for security or development with the neighbourhood countries, connected with co-financing of such activities. This is the easiest variant of the Eastern Policy to implement within the EU, is commonly used (i.e. last proposition of the Black Sea Synergy) and can be an effective tool for the interested countries.

The second possibility (defined in a table as type B) concerns strategic multilateral cooperation. This option consists of the other *finalité* of the EU's policies realized

within particular region, leading to total approach of the partnership countries to the EU. The approach could be achieved either through membership offer, or innovative formula for cooperation (i.e. selective membership) or association. Therefore, according to its assumptions, the aim of such multilateral Eastern policy would be an offer of an approach to the EU standards, and cooperation which do not envisage that partnership countries will permanently (in a predictable perspective) stay outside the EU, but rather that by conducting joint undertakings, will maximally shorten time to reach the targeted formula (in this case it is EU membership, which should be offered at the very beginning of cooperation).

In both variants, it is important to define a geographic scope of countries covered by such multilateral cooperation. The first type includes a wide variety of countries, therefore it assumes to be an open variant (however, at the same time weak and blurred), while the multilateral strategic cooperation assumes stricter qualification procedure for strategic candidate countries. Undoubtedly according to the Polish interests and independently on each variant, the Eastern Policy should cover such countries as: Ukraine, Georgia, Belarus, and Moldova. The problem might arise when all mentioned countries will not be interested in this form of cooperation. It can be easily imagined that Ukrainian preferences are not related to a practical multilateral cooperation, but are clearly inclined to strategic partnership leading to accession (Ukraine proved its approach at the discussion about the new EU-Ukraine agreement). Also other of the mentioned countries have ambitions for accession (Belarus is only a potential candidate, because its approach to the UE, results from its internal situation and type of government). Therefore an offer of practical multilateral cooperation can be adopted only temporally, or even can be rejected as unimportant, or even harmful for long-term interests of the partnership countries.

Therefore, one should take into account pressure from the Eastern partners to reject proposition concerning multilateral cooperation within the Eastern Partnership of the EU and change it to variants of "individual paths" targeted to particular countries. Such solution would undermine the whole concept of basing the Eastern policy on the ENP mechanisms and instruments (including financial factor). On the other hand it will open up much wider possibilities for development of a new policy – adjusted to particular needs and consisting modified to each country tools.

Also here we can deal with practical variant of such type of policy (type C), which shape is similar to a policy targeted to natural areas of the EU's influence. It seems that this type of variant can be used towards countries with long-term perspective for future accession, but due to political reasons are important partners (i.e. Central Asia and issues of energy supplies).

The last variant (type D) concerns strategic agreements with individual Eastern countries, which would be similar to agreements offered to Balkan states, with clear

perspective for accession. Ukraine seems to be in favor of such solution, therefore its determination should be carefully examined. At the same time, this variant is definitely rejected by some of the EU countries, thus is the most difficult to implement.

Of course, in the background of our analysis, we should keep in mind the role of Russia in the Eastern Policy, however it is a separated issue, thus it will not be included in this paper.

Before Visegrad Group will start battle with its EU partners to convince them to favorable variant, our diplomacies should answer all questions raised in the paper. Of course we have to be sure which variant is the best opportunity and what are expectations of our Eastern partners towards us. Answers will identify our possible allies, who will help us to achieve our goals. The EU puzzles are multidimensional, and include specific character of the EU policies, which we should learn.

COMPARATIVE STUDY ON THE EU EASTERN POLICY CONCEPTS

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The EU enlargement perspective and development of closer relations with the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) stimulated debate on the Eastern Neighbourhood at end of the 1990s. During the accession negotiation panels with the member countries of the Visegrad Group (V4), the questions appeared on the aims, means and methods of building the future EU Eastern policy.

Within the general objectives, which include propagating the ideas of democracy, free trade and human rights, the EU Eastern policy remains unchanged. The internal dispute among European countries concerns particular aims resulting from different needs and interests. For instance, Poland, Germany and Slovakia adopted a different political strategy towards Russia. Poland is trying to become a leader in sustaining partnership with the East, whereas Hungary and the Czech Republic see the CIS region through the general debate that is held on the EU forum and frequently keep their distance from the problems of the Eastern partners.

The EU Eastern policy (as every external EU policy) is a product of the actions undertaken by the individual countries and EU institutions, mainly The European Commission and a mechanism created over the position of the High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy. As a result, the concepts of EU Eastern policy were formulated within the frames of different political and analytical circles in Western, Central and Eastern Europe. Among the most active countries in this field it is important to mention Poland, the Baltic States, Germany, France, and the Scandinavian countries: Finland and Sweden.

At the Visegrad Group forum, Poland is the most dedicated country in the Eastern region. The differences between the V4 member states concern the opinions about the directions which future EU enlargement should follow. Poland chose the Eastern

scope: Ukraine and Belarus; Czechs and Hungarians – the Southern scope: Croatia, Serbia and Montenegro; and Slovakia decided that the Russian position within the CIS should be treated with a considerable concern and therefore keeps its distance towards EU Eastern enlargement.

Until now, the most important concepts for EU Eastern policies were:

1. The New Neighbours Initiative, October 2002
2. The Eastern Dimension of the EU, January 2003
3. The Wider Europe, March 2003
4. The European Neighbourhood Policy, May-June 2004

Each programme differs from another one in the aspects of geographical area where it was to be applied; the character of EU cooperation with its Eastern partners; as well as in the aspect of the mechanisms thanks to which they were to come into force.

Table 1. Comparative study on EU Eastern Policy concepts

Concept	Territorial area	Authors	Relation to partners	Financial resource
NEW NEIGHBOURS INITIATIVE (2002)	Ukraine Belarus Moldavia	Great Britain Sweden	Partnership	TACIS
THE EASTERN DIMENSION OF THE EU (1998 – 2003)	Ukraine Belarus Moldavia Russia	Poland	Integration for the most advanced countries in conducting reforms	TACIS + UE budget ; as external EU policy
THE WIDER EUROPE (2003)	Eastern + Southern neighbours	The European Commission	Lack of membership perspectives	TACIS
EUROPEAN NEIGHBOURHOOD POLICY (2004)	Eastern and Southern neighbours + Southern Caucasus	The European Commission	Lack of membership perspectives	EISP (2007) Open for Russia

Source: Self study

1. NNI – New Neighbours Initiative

NNI was the concept of dealing with more institutionalized relations with three countries: Ukraine, Belarus and Moldova, as future EU direct neighbours. The Initiative was brought on the agenda by the Prime Ministers of Great Britain and Sweden

in October 2002⁶⁶. The fact of choosing these Eastern countries, as the direction for initiating EU future partnership, provoked a wide discussion among the countries like France and Spain which prefer cooperation with the South and they also interpreted this situation as a promise for future Eastern accession. Furthermore, EU relations with its biggest Eastern neighbour, the Russian Federation, were unclearly defined and as a result it provoked further controversy.

2. The Eastern Dimension of the EU

The most ambitious proposition of shaping relations with the Eastern neighbourhood was put forward by the Polish delegation during its accession negotiations in 1998. Warsaw wanted to take advantage of its historic experience in sustaining of the contacts with the countries from the Eastern regions and building a strong political position in the EU and in the East. Simultaneously, the Eastern Dimension proposition was in accordance with the EU external policy specification at that time, within the framework of which the regions of the EU particular interest were defined: the North (Northern Dimension), the South (within the framework of the Bologna Process) and the Balkans (realised by the *Stability Pact* for the South Eastern Europe). Poland decided to strengthen an Eastern direction in the external EU policy.

In January 2003, the final proposition for the creation of the Eastern Dimension of the EU was presented. It was a programme prepared by the Polish Foreign Ministry entitled: *Non-paper with Polish propositions concerning the future shape of the enlarged EU politics towards the new Eastern neighbours*⁶⁷.

The geographic area of the Eastern Dimension (ED) encompassed four countries: Ukraine, Belarus, Moldavia and Russia. It was designed as a regional action strategy towards new EU neighbours on the East. The objective of this concept was to coordinate EU activities in the region and overcome the separation of Europe resulting from its enlargement.

The pivotal element of the ED was a promise of EU membership for the most advanced countries in passing EU reforms and fulfilling the conditions of accession. Such a European perspective was particularly attractive for Ukraine and Moldova which declared the will for integration with the EU. In contrast, building financial and political instruments adjusted to Russian and Belarusian conditions was much more difficult. Such requirements demanded the establishment of specific instru-

66 *NEW NEIGHBOURS INITIATIVE*, Draft Council conclusions, Brussels, 12 November 2002, (source URL: <<http://register.consilium.eu.int/pdf/en/02/st14/14078en2.pdf>>, March 2007)

67 *Non-paper with Polish propositions concerning the future shape of the enlarged EU politics towards the new Eastern neighbours*, „*The Bulletin of the European Union*”, (source: www.msz.gov.pl).

ments such as technical help and coordination of EU supporting activities, as well as facilitating the achievement of the above mentioned aims in those countries. Furthermore, two other programmes: TACIS CBC and INTERREG had to be adapted and coordinated. Additionally, the accessible resources had to be used in a more profitable way. Polish propositions included the creation of the European Democratic Fund or the European Freedom Fund, which would enable the accomplishment of aid programmes managed by the non-governmental organizations in every single country. These Funds were meant to be created in order to promote democratic values through the transfer of knowledge essential to undertake the process of transformation.

3. The Wider Europe

The pivotal concept supporting the shape of EU Eastern policy appeared in March 2003. It was proposed by the European Commission in a form of a document *Wider Europe – Neighbourhood: A New Framework for Relations with our Eastern and Southern Neighbours*⁶⁸. This document aimed to be a comprehensive vision presenting EU policies in relation to the states that are not yet invited to join the EU structures. This concept was of a great difference to the Polish concept of the Eastern Dimension.

Above all, the territorial aspect of this policy changed and took into consideration the interests of neighbours from the East as well as from the South⁶⁹. By the means of the concept of Wider Europe, the EU wished to build a stable model of cooperation by promoting equal rights and opportunities among all neighbours. The EU has already signed the Partnership and Cooperation Agreement with Russia, Ukraine, Moldova, or Association Agreement with Morocco, Tunisia, Israel, Palestinian National Authority, and Jordan, but it wished to create a new framework for cooperation based on mutual interests and dialogue. For these reasons, the EU proposed the Action Plans which were to be negotiated individually with every single state signing the agreement. In order to stimulate neighbour countries towards passing reforms, the EU proposed a number of concessions for the most advanced countries in this process. In *Wider Europe – Neighbourhood: A New Framework for Relations with our Eastern and Southern Neighbours* the European Commission declared its readiness for supporting reforms in the neighbouring countries, the chance for the rise of flexibility in the visa regimes and also addressed the need for extending the scope of aid programmes. The Commission suggested

68 *Wider Europe – Neighbourhood: A New Framework for Relations with our Eastern and Southern Neighbours*, Brussels, 11.3.2003, COM (2003) 104 final, (source URL: http://ec.europa.eu/world/enp/pdf/com03_104_en.pdf), (September 2007)

69 *Wider Europe – Neighbourhood: A New Framework for Relations with our Eastern and Southern Neighbours*, op. cit.

the actions which would gradually help to move forward the process of integration of neighbour countries with the European Single Market, particularly with reference to Russia, recognized as a key partner of the European Union⁷⁰. Russia was not interested in the EU neighbourhood proposition, finding its previous achievement in partnership with the EU as perfectly sufficient and underlining an individual Russian approach towards the organization. Since 2003, Russia has been building “a strategic partnership” with the EU within the framework of “EU-Russia Common Spaces” and does not want to be treated as one of the EU neighbours.

4. The European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP)

In 2004, several days after EU enlargement with Central and Eastern Europe, the final concept on the EU policy towards the new neighbours was published. On the 12th May 2004 the European Commission presented European Neighbourhood Policy Strategy Paper⁷¹. It was then approved by the European Council (17-18 June 2004)⁷². The countries from the Southern Caucasus: Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia – territories of Russian vital interests, were joined to the European Neighbourhood Policy (the Southern and Eastern group).

In principle, the European Neighbourhood Policy is based on inter-pillar cooperation between the EU institutions, with determined participation from member states. Every single time, the EU negotiates the Action Plans with countries involved in the ENP. Among the concessions accorded to every neighbour country, wanting to pass internal reforms, were: softening restrictions in the visa regimes and access to the internal market. Reforms were passed over financial assistance for EU neighbours. Since January 2007, the EU has adopted a new financial instrument advantageous also for Russia – the European Neighbourhood and Partnership Instrument (ENPI). Russia does not take advantage of the ENP, but is a “strategic partner” of the EU.

After having carried out a comparative study of the above mentioned Eastern policy concepts, one may conclude that the ENP occurs on two platforms. Within the

70 *Wider Europe – Neighbourhood: a New Framework for Relations with our Eastern and Southern Neighbours*, op.cit.

71 *European Neighbourhood Policy STRATEGY PAPER*, COMMUNICATION FROM THE COMMISSION, Brussels, 12.5.2004, COM(2004) 373 final, (source, URL < http://ec.europa.eu/world/enp/pdf/strategy/strategy_paper_en.pdf>, September 2007).

72 *Presidency Conclusions* – Brussels, 17 – 18 June 2004, 10679/04, (source URL: http://www.consilium.europa.eu/ueDocs/cms_Data/docs/pressData/PL/ec/81052.pdf, November 2007).

first, EU holds particular relations with Russia which in practice remain less clear. The second platform refers to relations with other Eastern partners which are based on the EU Neighbourhood Policy principles. EU offers its assistance for those countries undergoing the EU transformation process and supports the programmes focused on the cooperation within borderland. Moreover, EU is ready for a long-term and multifunctional partnership, however without promising membership for any of the Eastern neighbours.

The publication *Eastern Partnership in the context of the European Neighbourhood Policy and V4 agenda* aims to conclude Polish, Czech and Hungarian efforts into the Eastern Partnership inauguration as well as presenting future objectives of the Hungarian and Polish EU Presidency in 2011 in the matter of the European Neighbourhood Policy, the EU Enlargement Policy and cooperation within the Eastern Partnership.

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