



BASIS FOR DISCUSSION

The Parliamentary Dimension to the Eastern Partnership

1. “The main goal of the Eastern Partnership is to create the necessary conditions to accelerate political association and further economic integration between the European Union and interested partner countries. The significant strengthening of EU policy with regard to the partner countries will be brought about through the development of a specific Eastern dimension to the European Neighbourhood Policy. With this aim, the Eastern Partnership will seek to support political and socio-economic reforms of the partner countries, facilitating approximation towards the European Union.” (The Joint Declaration of the Prague Eastern Partnership Summit, 7 May 2009)
2. Parliaments and members of parliaments are, as decision-makers (legislators), inspirers and supervisors, central for the establishment and future of the Eastern Partnership’s parliamentary dimension.
3. A constructive discussion involving all concerned parliaments is now called for. Representatives from the National Parliaments in Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine have, at a meeting in Kiev on 18 May, adopted recommendations on, among other things, the direction and substance of the Eastern Partnership’s parliamentary dimension. (Please see attached document). The European Parliament has given a proposal on a EU-Neighbourhood East Parliamentary Assembly (EURO-NEST PA).
4. The Lisbon Treaty gives the European Parliament as well as the national parliaments increased influence on the EU. The European Parliament will have a strengthened role as a joint decision-maker. The national parliaments will have the role as monitors of the application of the principles of subsidiarity and proportionality. In several member states, the national parliaments play a vital role for the national position within the Council of Ministers.
5. The National Parliaments in Central and Eastern Europe have extensive experiences of transforming their societies into democracies governed by the rule of law and the establishment of a market economy. The three Baltic States, in particular, share several key insights and perspectives with the partner countries in this regard.

Goals

6. It is of utmost importance to identify what the partner countries want to achieve both as individual countries and as a collective and what is possible to achieve within the parliamentary dimension. The experience gained by the achievements of others is crucial to this matter.

7. One of the goals of the parliamentary dimension is to strengthen the standing of the national parliaments of the six partner countries. Experiences from reform processes elsewhere show that parliaments play a key role.

8. Another goal is to provide assistance to national legislators of the partner countries in their work to harmonize national and EU legislation.

9. The parliamentary dimension should contribute to facilitating the exchange of ideas and perspectives between the national parliaments of the six partner countries and the EU.

10. The dimension should also encompass and stress the importance of parliamentary monitoring of the executive branch of government within the Eastern Partnership.

How?

11. Members of parliaments generally have a heavy work load and are continually pressed for time. The work within the parliamentary dimension should therefore be conducted in a time-efficient way. Cost efficiency should obviously be strived for.

12. The partner countries have different interests and goals in their dealings with the EU. With this in mind, and depending on what concrete issues are in question, each parliament defines its level of participation.

13. Whereas the dialogue on certain matters with some partner countries could best take place on a bilateral basis, multilateral solutions are preferable in other contexts.

14. Participants of the parliamentary dimension are strongly encouraged to convey ideas, perspectives and conclusions generated through the Eastern Partnership's parliamentary dimension, to the competent authorities in their home countries.

Organisational questions

15. The questions on what should be achieved and how it should be achieved will direct the organisation of the future work.