



## EURONEST PARLIAMENTARY ASSEMBLY

### The Bureau

*- On the occasion of the Video Teleconference of the Leaders of the Eastern Partnership to be held on 18 June 2020;*

*- Addresses the following message to the Heads of State and Government, in accordance with Article 18 of the Rules of Procedure of the Euronest Parliamentary Assembly.*

### **We need a forward-looking EU enhanced cooperation, security and economic resilience strategy with our Eastern Partners willing to pursue the EU integration efforts**

1. We, Members of the Bureau of the Euronest Parliamentary Assembly (Euronest PA), representing our Delegations from the European Parliament and from the Parliaments of Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia, the Republic of Moldova and Ukraine, reaffirm our strong commitment to the respect of all values at the core of the Eastern Partnership, namely democracy, respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms, the rule of law and good governance, sovereignty, territorial integrity and self-determination, all of which need to be upheld and strengthened, in the interest of the citizens that we represent.
2. We emphasise that today we find ourselves at a crucial juncture where new additional and comprehensive long-term flagship instruments and ambitious benchmarks need to be added to the EU strategy to help Eastern Partnership countries to consolidate their European choice and facilitate implementation of their European aspirations, strengthen their resilience, keep their motivation and momentum for reforms for the next decade to 2030.
3. We therefore call for a continuous impetus towards intense dialogue, enhanced cooperation and strategic partnership. The upcoming Eastern Partnership Summit must set a clear long-term vision and strategy of EU action for enhanced cooperation beyond 2020, based on reinforced commitment by all sides to full implementation of commitments undertaken as well as a setting of new goals and the next steps by the EU, which must include concrete actions and strong incentives for the next decade. The EU needs to upgrade and reform its policy instruments in order to show the way and incentivise the implementation of reforms by Eastern Partners.
4. We welcome the efforts undertaken by all parties and the results achieved so far as part of the Eastern Partnership, in particular in achieving progress with building a common area

of values and with reforms on democracy, rule of law, good governance, fundamental freedoms and human rights, in strengthening political association and economic integration with the EU and in establishing and reinforcing bilateral and multilateral cooperation. We however note that progress on the implementation of the 20 Deliverables for 2020 is uneven and that additional efforts to bring tangible results to the citizens are needed. We underline that the scope and depth of cooperation on common priorities shall be determined by the pace and quality of necessary reforms, according to the “more for more” principle.

5. We encourage the upcoming Eastern Partnership summit to come forward with innovative decisions on how to enhance political dialogue and enhanced cooperation. The next decade of the Eastern Partnership should be based on a sustainable and credible strategy for long-term engagement, focusing on not only stabilisation and market-access, but more so on democratisation and people’s well-being, with ambitious and transformational goals.
6. We recall that the Eastern Partnership is based on mutual interests, commitments, shared ownership and responsibility and is developed without prejudice to countries' aspirations for their future relationship with the European Union. In this context we call for fully respecting partner’s sovereign choice, ambitions and goals in their relations with the EU as well as to acknowledge European aspirations and to welcome European choice of some them. Our strategic goal remains the same, which is to accelerate political association and further economic integration between the European Union and interested partner countries and deepen our relationship in conformity with international law and core common values leading to the stability and prosperity of the entire region, while not excluding future EU Membership for those Partners who - in line with Art.49 TUE - are ready to join:.
7. On 19 May 2020 the Committee on Foreign Affairs adopted the report on the European Parliament recommendation to the Council, the Commission and the Vice-President of the Commission / High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy on the Eastern Partnership, in the run-up to the June 2020 Summit. The report takes a wide perspective on all matters related to Eastern Partnership, and it also considers the Euronest Parliamentary Assembly resolution of 9 December 2019 on the future of the Trio Plus Strategy 2030: building a future of Eastern Partnership, which has asked to present a special Flagship Initiative for the EU associated countries to support reforms and investments – the Trio Plus Strategy 2030., This message from the Bureau of the Euronest Parliamentary Assembly continues the tradition of such statements in the run-up to EaP Summits and wants to underline the parliamentary dimension of Eastern Partnership. This message stresses what is crucial from both sides – the EU and its Eastern Partners.
8. We welcome coordinated approach and common vision of Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine on the Eastern Partnership future. We take note of the Joint Statement of 5 December 2019 adopted by Ministers of Foreign Affairs of Georgia, the Republic of Moldova and Ukraine on the Future of Eastern Partnership, and of the Joint Letter of 15 February 2020 adopted by the Ministers of Foreign Affairs of Georgia, the Republic of Moldova and Ukraine on the MFF 2021-2027, as well as common position of Georgia. Moldova and Ukraine following EC/HRVP Joint Communication on the future of the Eastern Partnership, asking the EU to consider establishing the EU+ Three Associated Partners enhanced dialogues in the areas of DCFTAs implementation and sectoral integration, including, but not limited to, transport, energy, justice and digital economy and foreseen increased funding in the next EU Multiannual Financial Framework of 2021-2027.

9. We acknowledge that the AAs/DCFTAs agreements that have been signed with Georgia, the Republic of Moldova and Ukraine, as well as the Comprehensive and Enhanced Partnership Agreement (CEPA) signed with the Republic of Armenia are the evidence of a differentiated approach and should lead to further enhanced bilateral relation formats and roadmaps based on the principle of “more for more”. The CEPA, *inter alia*, offers a promising framework to deepen the Armenia-EU relations, increase the EU support for Armenia’s political and economic reforms, and strengthen Armenia’s contribution to regional security and stability.
10. We stress that the EU has to be innovative, engaging and smart too to mobilize the progress and keep the momentum of reforms in the Eastern Partnership region, and in this context we note the importance of Eastern Partnership initiative of supporting the EU associated countries (as endorsed by the EU Trio Plus Strategy 2030 adopted by the Euronest Parliamentary Assembly in Tbilisi, Georgia in December 2019) in their wish to move more rapidly with reform implementation and deeper political and economic integration with the EU.
11. Taking the above-mentioned provisions into account, we call for an ambitious, forward looking, flexible and inclusive EU strategy and framework for enhanced cooperation for the next decade until 2030 with our Partners willing to pursue the EU integration agenda. Therefore, while we emphasize the need for maintaining a balanced approach between differentiation and inclusiveness within the Eastern Partnership, we call on the Heads of State and Government to discuss the possibility of creating for the three associated countries an enhanced cooperation strategy, the Trio Plus strategy, that will be complementary to the Eastern Neighbourhood instruments, and that will be open to all Eastern Neighbourhood countries willing to further progress on their way towards closer cooperation with the EU. This strategy could aim at establishing a reform and investment support programme in areas such as capacity building, transport, infrastructure, connectivity, energy, justice, digital economy, integration with the EU single market, and assess how to allow such cooperation to generate positive effects for all Eastern European partner countries.
12. We need to build on good examples on the soft transformative potential of the EU, which has been proven through EU enlargement process, and explore the experience of the Western Balkans’ way towards the European Union. We believe that similar mechanisms should be offered to the Eastern Partnership countries in order to boost their cooperation with the EU. Gradual movement towards access to the EU Four Freedoms, the EU Internal Market and then to European Economic Area should become the next overarching benchmark of the Eastern Partnership, and generate a new momentum for further democratic and market reforms in the Eastern Neighbourhood. We underline the importance for Eastern Partnership countries to enhance intra-regional cooperation particularly through launching joint transport and connectivity projects; at the same time, the EU has to develop and consolidate its own commitments regarding European future of the EaP and openness to further progress in partners’ economic integration with the partners, as well as by establishing a common economic space.
13. With regard to the ongoing efforts to curb the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic, we believe that cooperation and solidarity on the entire European continent prove once again their importance and we therefore underline the need for a reinforced, strategic and

effective enhanced cooperation partnership between the EU and the Eastern European partner countries. This partnership should include economic and social recovery in line with the priorities of sustainable development; resilience of democracy, rule of law and integrated economies; respect for human rights; sustainable environmental and climate policies; digital transformation and the objective of fair and inclusive societies.

14. The EU has a responsibility to continue supporting Eastern Partnership countries on their path of European integration reforms, therefore, in the context of the huge forthcoming challenges in managing socio-economic consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic resulting in job losses, closures of businesses and keeping in balance the public finances, we invite the European Commission to propose for Eastern Partners, especially for the ones associated with the EU and committed to EU integration reforms, a detailed and tailor-made economic and investment plan in the autumn of 2020, in the same manner as it will be done for the Western Balkans region in coordination with the European recovery strategy.
15. This plan should boost investments and support European integration reforms with incentives and smart conditionality and use (a) the additional allocations from the EU neighbourhood budget under the new Multiannual Financial Framework of the EU (2021-2027), (b) EU macro-financial assistance, (c) loans and (d) guarantees pooled in the investment platform designed by the EU in close cooperation with financial institutions. This plan should have a clear communication strategy and, if necessary, additional EU staff resources. The plan would be bringing not only a response to the crisis, but also an economic growth perspective to the countries ready to endorse the path of European integration; we call on the EU to ensure increased and adequate resources for the projects and programs in the Eastern Partnership within the next MFF (2021-2027).
16. We recall that strengthening parliamentary oversight remains crucial for the partner countries' progress in rule of law and democratic reforms, including public administration reform. Diversity and cooperation with stakeholder, such as civil society, are key to the functioning of a parliament that works for all its citizens. Democracy implies the equal representation of women and men in decision-making positions and the promotion of women in decision-making positions are therefore important areas of action. We urge the implementation of all electoral reforms that are in line with international standards and with the recommendations by the OSCE/ODHIR and Council of Europe's Venice Commission, in order to create transparent processes and equal opportunities. We highlight that countries must act in accordance with their international commitments and respect fundamental human and minority rights in their legislative processes. Enhancing the freedom of thought and independence of the media and of the academic world are key priorities.
17. We underline the importance of visa facilitation and liberalisation for enhancing people-to-people contacts and cooperation between our societies. We call for full implementation of existing agreements and for establishing conditions for opening negotiations on visa liberalisation agreements with the remaining Eastern Partnership countries, which have not concluded such agreements with the EU yet.
18. We draw attention to the strategic importance of facilitating digitalisation, as a process aimed at improving efficiency and stimulating economic growth in the EU and Eastern

Partnership countries, including through increased investments in infrastructure, enhanced harmonisation of legislation with EU norms, and an accelerated integration in the EU's Digital Single Market. We call on the Summit to come up with ways to stimulate economic growth by creating jobs and business opportunities, particularly to support small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), considering the devastating economic effects of the current pandemic.

19. We welcome the commitment of EU member states and of the Eastern European Partners to the Paris Agreement and stress that energy savings, energy efficiency and the use of renewable energy sources are the best way to reach the targets of the Paris Agreement and increase energy security while decreasing import dependency on energy resources from third countries. We call on the Summit to work towards the goal of a resilient energy policy with an ambitious climate policy at its core.
20. We underline that ensuring equal access to quality inclusive education is the key to developing prosperous societies and to achieving continued social cohesion, combating poverty, social exclusion and gender stereotypes. We therefore call on EU Member States and Eastern Partnership countries to make public investment in education at all levels, including by providing adequate financial resources, a priority in their policies.
21. We note that the success of the Eastern Partnership is of major importance for cooperation and cohesion across the whole European continent, bringing benefits in building strong democracies respecting the rule of law, and fostering peace and stability among its neighbours.

*Message approved by the Bureau of the Euronest PA on 12 June 2020*