



CONFERENCE
ENHANCEMENT OF EUROPEAN INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION AND
EASTERN PARTNERSHIP IN RESEARCH, DEVELOPMENT AND
INNOVATION

Vilnius
30 September – 1 October

DECLARATION

Towards a Common Knowledge and Innovation Space
Between the EU and Eastern Partnership Countries

Taking note of the following:

At the Prague Summit of May 2009, a specific dimension of the EU's European Neighbourhood Policy, the Eastern Partnership with Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine, was inaugurated with the aim of fostering political and economic cooperation and tightening the relationship between the EU and its Eastern Partners.

The Joint Declaration of the 2nd Eastern Partnership Summit (Warsaw, 29–30 September 2011) concluded that co-operation and policy dialogue under the Eastern Partnership on education and research should be further enhanced. In this context, it was jointly proposed to work towards the development of the Common Knowledge and Innovation Space (CKIS) linked to the Smart Growth Pillar of the EU 2020 Strategy and its Innovation Union flagship initiative. The objective of the CKIS is to pull together several existing strands of cooperation: policy dialogue, national and regional capacity building, co-operation in research and innovation, and increased mobility opportunities for students, researchers and academics.

A joint declaration supporting regional cooperation in e-infrastructures for research and education in the Eastern European region was sent to the EU on 11 February 2013 by the Eastern Partnership countries: Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine.

On 30 May 2013, the EU Council adopted conclusions supporting the Commission's communication of September 2012, "Enhancing and Focusing EU International Cooperation in Research and Innovation: a Strategic Approach". The Council emphasised the importance of the international dimension of the European Research Area and general openness of the EU Framework Programme for third countries. One of the key priorities of this new international strategy is to support CKIS development by fostering the integration of ENP countries into the European Research Area, including through their possible association to the Horizon 2020 programme.

After Moldova, which has been in association in FP7 since 2011, Armenia also formally requested association to the Horizon 2020 programme in July 2013.

A dedicated Panel on Research and Innovation under the current Eastern Partnership Platform IV, "Contacts Between People", will be launched on 13 November 2013. A new coordination platform, the INCONET EaP, selected from the 2013 FP7 Work Programme will be used to support the policy dialogue established through the panel and promote the concrete opportunities for cooperation offered through Horizon 2020.

Agreed that:

1. The role of research and innovation is crucial for further development of cooperation between the EU and the Eastern Partnership countries and for tackling global and common societal challenges. Research and innovation should therefore be considered a key priority within Eastern Partnership cooperation.
2. There is a set of best practices in EU research, development and innovation cooperation that can be applied in the cooperation with the Eastern Partnership countries. Among others, the best practices that need to be considered in this respect include:
 - the focus on the entire chain from research to innovation, mobilising universities, research centres and industry, and extending to organisations that provide support services, such as financial institutions and investors;
 - a need to reform, modernise and strengthen R&I capacities and systems;
 - links with the national economic policy-setting targets for spending on R&D;
 - promotion of a regional approach in addition to bilateral ones,
 - specific actions targeting networking and twinning opportunities.
3. There is a need therefore to develop a multi-annual regional roadmap for the cooperation with the Eastern Partnership countries under Horizon 2020 once the legislative framework is in place as an order of priority. This roadmap should be based on the principles of co-ownership and mutual interests in view of defining priority areas of cooperation to address joint societal challenges as well as structural issues faced by the Eastern European partner countries. The objective will be to promote a process of coordination between EU, EU Member States, and Eastern European partner countries policies and programmes with the aim of enhancing the scientific capacities of Eastern Neighbourhood countries, increasing the impact and coherence of initiatives in the region as well as the exploitation of research results, including their commercialization.
4. Support should be given in particular to regional cooperation in the fields of e-infrastructures, including research and education networks.
5. The dedicated Panel on Research and Innovation under the current Eastern Partnership platform IV, "Contacts Between People", should serve as a reference platform for bi-regional policy dialogue and the definition of the joint cooperation roadmap and develop future concrete activities building on existing achievements and experience of this cooperation.
6. The European Commission is invited to monitor the progress of regional cooperation in this area and report regularly. Also, the future Latvian Presidency of the Council of the EU in 2015 is invited to consider this occasion as an opportunity to make an assessment of the progress achieved and to discuss possible adjustments to the framework of Eastern Partnership cooperation on research and innovation.